

Tuesday 25 January 2022

Our January Charity Pairs, raises funds for UNICEF to help children in danger through the world.

They need so much help now, not just because of war, famine, the need for medicines, clean water but now there is the added threat from the coronavirus. Please help us raise as much money as we can – send your donations to us and we will gather them together and pass them on to UNICEF from bridge players all over the world.

Just go to : <https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/FAQ/howtopay.asp> and you will see how to do it ... there is no specified amount but we do suggest £3 per player if you can manage that !

Help us to help these children who are in such need. Please. And please read the bit at the end of the commentary about future events.

Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.

♠ —	♠ A K 10 4 2
♥ K J 9 8 5	♥ A 7 4 3 2
♦ A J 5 3	♦ Q 7
♣ A 10 9 7	♣ 5
	♠ Q J 6
	♥ Q 10
	♦ K 9 6 4
	♣ Q 8 3 2
	♠ 9 8 7 5 3
	♥ 6
	♦ 10 8 2
	♣ K J 6 4

After North opens 1♠, South raises – how high will depend upon your methods. West will come in with a take-out double regardless. With trumps 3-0, 4♠ has to go down a trick. If North-South buy the contract any lower, they will score well. East-West can make something in any of the other three denominations. They can take most tricks in diamonds, 10, with a club, a heart and some sort of trump trick to lose. If they can play in 3♥, they might get 140 and a top.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

	♠ 7 2	
	♥ J 9 8 2	
	♦ Q 7 5	
	♣ A J 6 3	
♠ 10 9 8 3		♠ A K 6 4
♥ K Q 6 5 3		♥ A 4
♦ J 10 9 8		♦ K 4 3
♣ —		♣ K 10 7 4
	♠ Q J 5	
	♥ 10 7	
	♦ A 6 2	
	♣ Q 9 8 5 2	

With four good spades, East opens 1♠. As on the deal before, responder has a choice of how high to raise. This time it makes no difference since East has enough to go on with 2NT over 2♠. Accurate play in 4♠ results in an overtrick: declarer can ruff three clubs in dummy, take the diamond finesse and throw the last club on the third round of hearts. I suspect that many will make only 10 tricks. 4♥ is also on but 3NT is not due to the club situation.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

♠ A J 7 4 ♥ K 10 3 2 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ J 6	♠ 9 ♥ A 6 ♦ J 10 6 5 4 3 2 ♣ A Q 4
♠ K 6 3 ♥ Q 5 ♦ K 9 8 ♣ K 9 8 3 2	♠ Q 10 8 5 2 ♥ J 9 8 7 4 ♦ — ♣ 10 7 5

West has a tough problem if North opens 1♥ in third seat, East overcalls 2♦ and South jumps to 3♥. Being maximum for a passed hand, West has to do something. Whatever it is, East has to notice the vulnerability and West's initial pass. 5♦ doubled is down 500 on a heart lead from South, With the ♥Q and the ♠K both onside, 4♠ is a lucky make. 4♥ is not on, however, after a spade lead. East can take the first heart, put West in with a club and score a ruff.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

♠ A Q J 7 ♥ 6 5 3 ♦ K 8 2 ♣ K 8 6	♠ K 9 2 ♥ K J ♦ A 10 5 4 ♣ Q J 9 5
♠ 10 8 6 3 ♥ 8 7 2 ♦ 6 3 ♣ 7 4 3 2	♠ 5 4 ♥ A Q 10 9 4 ♦ Q J 9 7 ♣ A 10

When North opens 1NT, South probably transfers into hearts and then shows the diamond suit. If it is not a cue bid agreeing diamonds, North might then bid 3♠ to allow South to bid 3NT with club values.

If South never shows the diamonds, it is easier to reach 3NT rather than 4♥: North has poor trumps and no ruffing value. With the helpful heart layout, making 11 tricks is easy in 4♥. Getting that many is harder work in no-trumps; some will score only 630.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

♠ Q 4 3 ♥ A 10 6 5 2 ♦ 9 6 ♣ K 6 5	♠ 8 2 ♥ J 9 7 3 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ A 9 8 3
♠ A K J 7 5 ♥ K Q 4 ♦ A 4 ♣ Q J 4	♠ 10 9 6 ♥ 8 ♦ K Q J 10 8 7 ♣ 10 7 2

All is fair in love and war: at any rate, West's 20 points make up for the 0 on the deal before. If West gets to open 2NT in fourth seat, East looks for a heart fit and settles for 3NT. Looking only at the East-West cards, 3NT is poor. The delectable 6-2 diamond division changes that, shutting South out of the play. The defenders make a heart, a diamond and a spade, leaving West with an overtrick. The 5-1 heart break means that game fails in the 7-card major fits.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

♠ 9 6 4 ♥ K 7 3 ♦ K Q 10 9 6 ♣ 5 2	♠ 10 3 ♥ A Q 8 5 4 2 ♦ 8 5 2 ♣ Q 4
♠ J 8 2 ♥ J 10 9 6 ♦ A 4 ♣ A J 10 8	♠ A K Q 7 5 ♥ — ♦ J 7 3 ♣ K 9 7 6 3

If East opens a weak 2♥ or Multi 2♦, East-West will be in the bidding and find their heart fit. The layout is lucky for them again, with the ♥K and ♣K both onside, making 10 tricks available. The side with spades often tends to win the auction, especially when the vulnerability is in its favour. Most tables will see South play in spades. With the ♣A offside and East potentially able to overruff dummy in clubs, 4♠ has to go down a trick.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

	♠ 9 3	
	♥ Q 9 8 6 4 2	
	♦ J 5 3 2	
	♣ J	
♠ K Q		♠ A 10 8 7 6 2
♥ A K J 7		♥ 10
♦ A Q		♦ K 10 9 7 4
♣ K 9 6 4 3		♣ Q
	♠ J 5 4	
	♥ 5 3	
	♦ 8 6	
	♣ A 10 8 7 5 2	

With values concentrated in the short suits, West has a clear-cut 2NT opener. East probably transfers into spades, then shows the diamonds and eventually finds an excuse to bid 6♠. The one sequence to avoid is 2NT-3♥-3♠-4NT, which West might well take as quantitative rather than asking. 6♠ is an easy make: six spades, two hearts, three diamonds and a club. If the defenders do not cash the ♣A at trick one, they still make a trick one way or another. 6NT fails.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

	♠ 7 6	
	♥ K 8 5 2	
	♦ Q 10 7 4	
	♣ A 9 6	
♠ 3 2		♠ A 10 9
♥ Q 10 4		♥ A J 9 6 3
♦ A 9 5 2		♦ J 3
♣ 8 5 3 2		♣ Q J 10
	♠ K Q J 8 5 4	
	♥ 7	
	♦ K 8 6	
	♣ K 7 4	

In first seat, East might open 1NT. In third seat, 1♥ seems better: on a part-score deal, it is likely to be right to play in hearts and West may be too weak to look for a fit. If East opens 1NT, South's 2♠ ends the bidding for sure. If East opens 1♥, South bids 1♠ and reopens with 2♠. Given West's 2♥ raise, East might bid 3♥ now: love all is a great time to declare. It will be tough to bid 3♠ after that. 3♠ may make, depending on the diamond play. 3♥ is down one.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

	♠ 10 8 7 4	
	♥ J 6 5	
	♦ 9 3	
	♣ A K 9 3	
♠ 6		♠ K Q 3 2
♥ A 10 8 2		♥ 9 3
♦ A Q J 7 6 5		♦ K 10 8 4 2
♣ 10 4		♣ 7 5
	♠ A J 9 5	
	♥ K Q 7 4	
	♦ —	
	♣ Q J 8 6 2	

South opens 1♣ in third seat and West overcalls 1♦. Since double would show both majors, North bids 1♠. East then jump raises diamonds. 4♦ would buy the contract but South bids 3♠ over 3♦. With the two-suit fit North may advance to 4♠, especially if West competes with 4♦. 4♠ is a good game but can go off on a diamond lead since the 4-1 trump break proves troublesome. 5♦ doubled is down 500, a disaster even if some pairs find the making 5♣.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

	♠ K 4 3	
	♥ A K J 10	
	♦ K 6 3	
	♣ J 6 2	
♠ A 9 8 7 5		♠ Q J 10 6 2
♥ 5 2		♥ 4 3
♦ A 8 7 5		♦ J 4 2
♣ A 8		♣ Q 5 4
	♠ —	
	♥ Q 9 8 7 6	
	♦ Q 10 9	
	♣ K 10 9 7 3	

West opens 1♠ in third seat. North has just about enough to overcall 1NT. East raises to 2♠ and South tries 3♥. North has any easy raise to 4♥. With the ♣Q onside, there are 11 tricks to take – no need to guess the diamonds since the clubs provide discards. As on the previous deal, it would be a mistake to sacrifice. 4♠ doubled is down 800, a trick too many. With three aces, West is not saving anyway. East, with many losers, should also exercise caution.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

♠ A Q 9 5 3 ♥ K Q J 9 6 3 ♦ 10 ♣ K	♠ J 10 8 ♥ A 10 8 ♦ K 9 5 3 ♣ Q 9 8
♠ K 7 2 ♥ 2 ♦ Q 8 7 6 4 ♣ 6 5 4 2	♠ 6 4 ♥ 7 5 4 ♦ A J 2 ♣ A J 10 7 3

Even if South's 2♣ response did not slightly improve the value of the bare ♣K, I think North has enough to reverse. After pass-1♥-2♣-2♠-3♥, North may just settle for 4♠. As a passed hand, South is unlikely to have three out of the four crucial cards, the ♠K and the missing aces. North might make one cue bid just in case. The fortuitous spade position means that gamblers who bid 6♥ will be in luck. 3NT is not on but 4♠ scrapes home even if West gets a ruff.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

♠ Q 6 4 2 ♥ A K 5 ♦ Q 9 5 ♣ Q J 6	♠ 5 ♥ Q J 10 4 3 ♦ 8 7 ♣ A 10 7 5 3
♠ 9 8 7 3 ♥ 7 2 ♦ J 10 4 3 ♣ K 9 4	♠ A K J 10 ♥ 9 8 6 ♦ A K 6 2 ♣ 8 2

Given a free run, INT-2♣-2♠-4♠ seems the likely sequence. If East enters the fray, South may have a Lebensohl option to show four spades but no heart stopper. To stop the overtrick in 4♠ East leads a heart at trick one and West flies in with the ♣K on the first round to continue hearts. If the contract is 3NT, North has to be careful, ducking the first heart. It is then possible to set up a club safely and score 10 tricks to beat everyone who just makes 4♠.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.

♠ Q 7 4 3 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ J 7 6 ♣ 7 5 4	♠ A J 9 6 ♥ Q ♦ 9 4 ♣ A K Q J 6 2
♠ K 10 8 ♥ A K 10 9 4 ♦ K Q 10 2 ♣ 10	♠ 5 2 ♥ J 8 5 3 ♦ A 8 5 3 ♣ 9 8 3

If the bidding starts 1♣-1♥-2♠, nothing will keep West out of a slam. If East rebids a cautious 1♠, things are tougher. After West uses the fourth suit to set up a force, East has to take the initiative. 6NT is clearly the best spot. Most will knock out the ♦A to ensure 12 tricks rather than try to guess the spades for an overtrick. In fact, a slam is on in anything other than diamonds. In 6♠, declarer needs to play North for the ♠Q. In 6♥, declarer will need a trump coup.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

♠ 8 ♥ K J 9 8 6 ♦ Q 9 7 6 5 3 ♣ 2	♠ Q 6 5 4 2 ♥ A 7 3 ♦ 2 ♣ Q 9 8 7
♠ K J 10 7 ♥ 10 4 ♦ 8 ♣ K J 10 6 4 3	♠ A 9 3 ♥ Q 5 2 ♦ A K J 10 4 ♣ A 5

After a pass from East, South opens 1♦. West then comes in with 2♣ or possibly 3♣, so long as that is neither Ghestem not strength showing. Holding only 6 HCP, North probably raises diamonds rather than introducing the hearts. A raise to 5♦ will certainly induce South bid to bid the slam. 4♦ may also be enough to do so. With the friendly breaks, both 6♦ and 6♥ make. 6♠ doubled down 800 is a good save. 7♣ doubled is costlier, down 1100 on best defence.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ 9 ♥ Q 9 4 ♦ K J 8 5 2 ♣ K Q J 3</p>	<p>♠ Q J 10 7 4 3 2 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 6 3 ♣ 8 2</p>
<p>♠ K 8 6 ♥ J 7 6 3 ♦ Q 9 ♣ 10 9 5 4</p>	<p>♠ A 5 ♥ A K 10 8 ♦ A 10 7 4 ♣ A 7 6</p>

Suppose the bidding starts 1♥-2♦-2NT (forcing). A useful convention here is that 3♣ asks whether South is maximum or minimum; it suggests slam interest in the latter case. If South opens 1♦ and North makes a 3♠ splinter, again South knows the partnership is in the slam zone. If you are a good guesser, you want to be in 7NT; if not, 6♦ is the safest spot. East may bid the spades, helping declarer to play West for the ♦Q. 6♠ doubled is down 1400, 7♠ doubled down 1700.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

<p>♠ A 6 4 3 ♥ 6 4 ♦ J ♣ A Q 9 8 7 6</p>	<p>♠ 10 7 2 ♥ Q 10 9 5 ♦ A 7 4 ♣ 10 3 2</p>
<p>♠ 9 8 5 ♥ K J 7 ♦ 10 6 3 2 ♣ K J 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q J ♥ A 8 3 2 ♦ K Q 9 8 5 ♣ 5</p>

North-South might bid 1♣-1♦-1♠-3NT. I suppose South should proceed more slowly since if North is 4-1-3-5 then a diamond slam is not far away. To stop the overtrick in 3NT West in theory needs to lead a red card other than the ♦10. In real life, declarer may have to play quite carefully just for 9 tricks. One winning line is to win the heart and knock out the ♦A – cashing even one spade first could be fatal. With spades 3-3, 4♠ is on, beating all the 400 scores.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

<p>♠ J 10 7 6 4 ♥ A Q 7 6 5 4 ♦ — ♣ 8 4</p>	<p>♠ 9 ♥ K 2 ♦ A Q J 9 7 4 ♣ Q J 6 2</p>
<p>♠ A K 8 5 2 ♥ 9 3 ♦ K 10 5 ♣ 9 7 3</p>	<p>♠ Q 3 ♥ J 10 8 ♦ 8 6 3 2 ♣ A K 10 5</p>

Is this a quiet part-score deal? No, 3NT is on one way and, with 17 points between them, North-South can make 4♥ – and that is with the ♥K offside and the foul spade split. This is all rather academic as few will reach 4♥ or 3NT. More likely East plays in diamonds. On any lead other than a club, the limit is 9 tricks. On a club lead, East can make 10. In theory, the par result is 100, which comes when East-West sacrifice in 4NT doubled, going one down.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ A K J 4 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ A Q 10 6 ♣ 3 2</p>	<p>♠ 8 3 ♥ K 10 9 6 4 ♦ J 8 3 2 ♣ J 4</p>
<p>♠ Q 10 9 7 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ 9 5 4 ♣ Q 10 8</p>	<p>♠ 6 5 2 ♥ A J ♦ K 7 ♣ A K 9 7 6 5</p>

If the bidding starts 1♣-1♦-3♣, North rebids 3♠, expecting South to call 3NT with a heart stopper. There the bidding may end. The marked heart lead means there is no time to set up the clubs. One path home is to cash the top diamonds and, when the jack does not drop, fall back on the spade finesse. Given that 3NT is not certain to make, 6♣ is a reasonable spot. You need trumps 3-2 and, as in 3NT, something helpful to happen in spades or diamonds.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

<p>♠ 10 7 ♥ A Q 10 3 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ 10 9 5 4</p> <p>♠ Q J 9 5 2 ♥ J 9 7 5 2 ♦ A 7 ♣ 7</p>	<p>♠ A K 6 3 ♥ 8 6 ♦ J 10 6 2 ♣ K Q 8</p> <p>♠ 8 4 ♥ K 4 ♦ K Q 9 8 ♣ A J 6 3 2</p>
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Rather than face the prospect of rebidding the poor club suit, South may open INT. If West comes in with 2♣ (Landy, both majors), East will find it hard to bid any less than 4♣. The natural lead of a top diamond defeats 4♣, giving the defenders a trick in each minor together with two hearts. If South opens 1♣, West may use 2♣, Michaels, again to show both majors. East has more warning now that the ♣K-Q may be wastepaper. 3♣ is on for North-South.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ K 10 4 3 ♥ A ♦ A K 10 9 4 2 ♣ 10 5</p> <p>♠ A Q ♥ J 9 7 6 4 2 ♦ 6 5 ♣ Q 8 4</p>	<p>♠ J 9 7 6 ♥ Q 8 5 ♦ 8 ♣ K J 9 7 6</p> <p>♠ 8 5 2 ♥ K 10 3 ♦ Q J 7 3 ♣ A 3 2</p>
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Even if a weak 2♥ or Multi is available, West surely looks at the moth-eaten hearts and passes. South has a tricky response to North's 1♦. With nine losers, a raise to 3♦ seems too much, while with 10 HCP and a fit, INT and 2♦ seem too little. Aggression pays today, with 5♦ and 3NT both making, the latter with an overtrick. With nine certain tricks, 3NT is the better spot, especially at pairs. 5♥ doubled could be very expensive, down 1100.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

<p>♠ J 9 6 5 4 3 ♥ 10 3 ♦ 10 2 ♣ 10 9 5</p> <p>♠ A K Q ♥ A K 9 ♦ Q J 8 7 4 3 ♣ 2</p>	<p>♠ 10 2 ♥ Q 7 6 4 ♦ A 9 ♣ A Q 8 7 4</p> <p>♠ 8 7 ♥ J 8 5 2 ♦ K 6 5 ♣ K J 6 3</p>
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Whether East opens 1♣ or INT, West immediately thinks of a slam. West needs to find East with little more than the ♣A and one high diamond or two top diamonds. A INT opening works better as the cards lie since a club lead from North would defeat 6NT played by West. Moreover, if East has opened 1♣, South might well double 6NT to ask for a club lead. A grand slam is a poor proposition, needing North to hold a doubleton diamond king, and duly fails.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ J 10 7 3 2 ♥ 9 6 3 ♦ J 3 ♣ 10 9 7</p> <p>♠ 9 8 4 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ Q 9 ♣ A K Q 8 2</p>	<p>♠ A Q 5 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ 10 8 7 ♣ J 6 4 3</p> <p>♠ K 6 ♥ K 10 8 5 ♦ A K 6 5 4 2 ♣ 5</p>
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After East opens INT, should West jump to game or merely invite? Although the 5-card suit is a plus, the two unsupported honours are poor features. With a flat shape, East would decline an invitation. In real life, South may show the diamonds, reducing West's options. To make 3NT you win the third diamond and run the clubs. Trying to protect both majors and keep some diamond winners, South is in a hopeless position. 2♦ doubled is down one. 3♣ makes.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

♠ A J 2		
♥ K Q 10 7 5		
♦ Q 8 7		
♣ 9 8		
♠ 9 3	♠ 10 6 4	
♥ A J 4 3	♥ —	
♦ K J 10 4	♦ A 6 5 3 2	
♣ Q 6 2	♣ A K J 4 3	
	♠ K Q 8 7 5	
	♥ 9 8 6 2	
	♦ 9	
	♣ 10 7 5	

After two passes, North opens 1♥. East may come in with 2NT, unusual, for the minors. South may then bid 3♥ directly or pass intending to do so next time. If South does not bid 3♥, West may jump to 5♦, not realising the ♥A is facing a void. Another option, as a passed hand, is to cue bid 3♥ to show strength. To make 5♦ West needs to play the opening bidder for the ♦Q. As North can otherwise ruff the third club, this play is crucial. 5♥ doubled would be down 800.

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

	♠ Q	
	♥ J 9 4 3	
	♦ A Q 10 2	
	♣ K J 8 4	
♠ A 7		♠ 9 5 3 2
♥ K Q 7		♥ A 10 8 2
♦ J 8 4		♦ K 9 6
♣ A Q 10 9 7		♣ 6 5
	♠ K J 10 8 6 4	
	♥ 6 5	
	♦ 7 5 3	
	♣ 3 2	

Playing weak jump overcalls, South can bid 2♠ after West opens 1♣ and East responds 1♥. West has no good call over this. 2NT is a stretch. The 'expert' choice is the flexible double. I am not sure what East does if West does double. East cannot bid hearts again with only four; the spades are weak for calling 2NT or leaving in the double. 2♠ doubled is making as it happens. Double dummy 3NT is makeable as North has to defend solo. 3♣ and 3♥ are on too.

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

	♠ Q 10 7 4 2	
	♥ A Q 8 2	
	♦ 9 8	
	♣ K 3	
♠ A K J 9 3		♠ 8 6
♥ 10 6 4 3		♥ —
♦ K 6 4		♦ 10 7 5 3
♣ 10		♣ A Q 8 7 6 5 2
	♠ 5	
	♥ K J 9 7 5	
	♦ A Q J 2	
	♣ J 9 4	

If North opens, as appears highly likely given the vulnerability, North-South head inexorably towards 4♥. With the ♣A and ♦K both offside, 4♥ has to fail. Depending upon what method of jump overcalls are in use, East may well have something to say. 3♣ makes, though South will not permit this contract to play unless North passed as dealer. Any West who views to double 4♥ scoops a bushel of matchpoints – few will double a freely bid game.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

	♠ K 10 4 3	
	♥ A Q 10 4	
	♦ A 8 7 6	
	♣ 9	
♠ 9 8 5 2		♠ A Q J 6
♥ J 3 2		♥ K 9 8 7
♦ K		♦ 9 4 3
♣ A K 10 7 5		♣ Q 4
	♠ 7	
	♥ 6 5	
	♦ Q J 10 5 2	
	♣ J 8 6 3 2	

If East opens INT, West uses Stayman. East shows the hearts first and, when West rebids 2NT, goes 3♠ to show a minimum with four spades. If they play so called 'non-promissory' Stayman then West bids 2♠ over 2♥; again they find the spade fit. In a way, the cards lie well, with the ♥A and ♠K onside; then again, both blacks break badly. 9 tricks is par. More will make 8 than 10. North-South can make 2♦. In 1♥, North could be two down on a diamond lead.

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

	♠ J 8 7 4	
	♥ J 3	
	♦ Q 2	
	♣ J 10 7 6 3	
♠ 10		♠ A K 9 6 5 3
♥ 7 6		♥ A Q 10 9 4
♦ K 10 9 8 6 4		♦ 7 5
♣ A K 5 2		♣ —
	♠ Q 2	
	♥ K 8 5 2	
	♦ A J 3	
	♣ Q 9 8 4	

South's hand is even worse as 12-point hands go than East's was on the previous. Nevertheless, many will open INT. After West bids a natural 2♦, East will bid spades first and hearts later in the hope of finding a fit. 4♠ fails if South leads the ♠Q or the ♦A – unlikely choices. 4♥ can make on any lead. With North unable to get in to cash the fifth club, 3NT by East makes via four hearts, a diamond and two ace-kings. 3NT by West can fail on a low spade lead.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.

	♠ A J 9 7 5	
	♥ —	
	♦ J 9 4 3 2	
	♣ A 10 8	
♠ 10 2		♠ 8 6 3
♥ Q 10 9 8 6 3		♥ A K 7 4
♦ 10 5		♦ Q 8 6
♣ J 7 3		♣ Q 9 5
	♠ K Q 4	
	♥ J 5 2	
	♦ A K 7	
	♣ K 6 4 2	

If the bidding starts 1♠-2♣-2♦, South must avoid bidding a lazy 4♠. With so many honours in North's suits, a slam must be close. Indeed, 6♦ is a good contract. Most will not manage that and will play in spades. If you guess everything right, you can make all 13 tricks in spades, ruffing three hearts in the North hand and picking up the diamonds by leading the jack. More normal is to cash the ♦A-K, when you are in danger of losing another trick as well.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

	♠ Q 6 5 4 3	
	♥ J 3	
	♦ A 10 7 4	
	♣ 9 7	
♠ K		♠ A J 9 2
♥ A K Q 9 4		♥ 10 8 7 2
♦ 9 3 2		♦ 5
♣ 5 4 3 2		♣ A J 8 6
	♠ 10 8 7	
	♥ 6 5	
	♦ K Q J 8 6	
	♣ K Q 10	

It is not completely impossible for all four players to pass. West might take a dim view of the singleton spade. The hand certainly does not meet the rule of 15, adding high cards to spades, which is what many people use in fourth seat. Before that happens, South might well bid 1♦, for the lead if nothing else. If West does bid 1♥, as an opening or an overcall, East may or may not jump to game. 4♥ turns out to be an easy make. 5♦ doubled could be down 1100.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

	♠ J 3	
	♥ K 5	
	♦ A K 4 3	
	♣ A J 10 8 7	
♠ Q 9 7 5 2		♠ A K
♥ 10 8 3		♥ Q J 7
♦ 10		♦ J 9 8 7 5 2
♣ 9 5 3 2		♣ Q 6
	♠ 10 8 6 4	
	♥ A 9 6 4 2	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ K 4	

East's opening bid may make it hard for North-South to judge that they have game on. If East opens 1♦, I do not think I would bid on the South hand. The hearts are poor and the ♦Q-x is defensive. North is too good for a protective INT and has to double. I suppose South then bids 2♥, North 2NT and South raises to 3NT. Since the bidding marks West with a very weak hand, declarer might guess the clubs and make an overtrick – I only say might.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

♠ A K	
♥ 9	
♦ A K 10 7 6 2	
♣ J 7 5 3	
♠ 3	♠ J 9 8 2
♥ 10 7 6 3	♥ K 8 5
♦ Q J 8 4	♦ 9 5 3
♣ Q 10 9 2	♣ K 8 6
♠ Q 10 7 6 5 4	
♥ A Q J 4 2	
♦ —	
♣ A 4	

With a four-loser hand facing a five-loser hand, North-South will be doing very well if they manage to stay out of a slam. 1♠-2♦-2♥-3♣-3♥ seems the obvious start. If North bids 3NT at this point, it will apply the brakes. The snag is that J-7-5-3 is a shaky stopper facing a possible singleton. In any event, having shown no spade support to date, A-K bare looks like a good holding. Even with the helpful heart layout, the 4-1 spade split scuppers 6♠.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

♠ 8 3 2	
♥ A K 4	
♦ 10 5 4	
♣ A 9 7 6	
♠ K 10	♠ A J 7 5
♥ 9 6 3	♥ Q J 8 5
♦ A Q 7	♦ K J 9 6 3
♣ K Q J 8 3	♣ —
♠ Q 9 6 4	
♥ 10 7 2	
♦ 8 2	
♣ 10 5 4 2	

West opens 1♣ and rebids INT over East's 1♦ response. East then searches in vain for a fit in a major. At almost every table, West will finish in 3NT and the defenders will make exactly three tricks: North's three top winners. 5♦ makes 11 tricks, with the two top hearts to lose. Might playing in 4♥ yield a better score? The only sure way to prevent the overtrick is for South to get a diamond ruff, so the defenders have to lead diamonds at every turn.

Remember that we are planning to run other Charity events during the year – the **Charity Challenge** for 2022 will be raising money for two Cancer Charities, which have been so badly affected by COVID ... Cancer Research UK and Marie Curie with the funds split between them. That will be held from 14th – 18th March with different hands each day and we are sure it will be a “hybrid” event with some clubs playing online and others face to face, but we are getting used to that aren't we ☺

In July there will be the **Summer Charity Pairs** – that will be another full week of pairs, starting on 4th July and with different hands each day through to Friday 8th July ... this will raise funds for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

Then comes November and our **Children in Need event** – As ever, different hands each night and I am looking at the dates being from Monday 7th to Friday 11th November rather than starting on the Friday. We don't yet know when the BBC will be doing their CiN “night” but I am guessing it will either on 18th so our dates should be just fine.

Do keep an eye on the website – obviously we will publish the amounts raised for the various events, and of course it's quite different with individuals donating but hopefully we can raise some goodly amounts for charity – the charities are all having such a tough time of it at the moment, so hopefully by doing these events we can all help a bit.

Thank you for joining us, thank you for your support – really truly we appreciate it so much.

Best wishes

Anna & Mark

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