



The 2025 Charity Challenge Pairs Thursday 13 March

We are raising funds for two support Charities again this year - [Mind](#), that wonderful charity supporting people with mental health problems, and [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) ... the work they do is just amazing. Please help us raise lots of lovely funds for them.

Last year you managed to raise over £5,000 each for them which was just amazing and incredibly generous of everyone. If you haven't already done so, please [click here to go to the page](#) that gives you all the information. And if you want to send a cheque or pay by bank transfer please note the change of bank account !

July sees our [Summer Charity pairs](#) for Kidney Research UK and the British Heart Foundation and then of course there will be the [Children in Need Pairs](#) in November – well we couldn't NOT run that could we !

Do join us for some of these events if you can – it's lovely to see lots of people joining in and we love to have your company.

We do hope you have enjoyed yourselves, and you will know by know whether the commentator has got it right! We are very grateful to Mark Horton for writing the Tuesday and Thursday commentaries, to Jack Stocken who penned the one for Friday and to Brian Senior for the Monday and Wednesday commentaries.

Thank you so much for joining us and please do so again in future !

Anna and Mark

Board 1	♠ J9 ♥ AJ83 ♦ 2 ♣ AK10763	Dealer N Vul: None
♠ K7432 ♥ KQ102 ♦ QJ9 ♣ 5	♠ AQ1086 ♥ 9 ♦ 85 ♣ QJ982	
	♠ 5 ♥ 7654 ♦ AK107643 ♣ 4	

If North opens 1♣ East overcalls 1♠ when South can choose between a negative double and 2♦. West has great support for spades, and 4♠ is the 'law' abiding bid, despite the lack of first round controls. Where South bids diamonds, the scientific approach is to cue bid clubs or diamonds, suggesting a good raise to the three-level, letting partner make the decision about a possible game. If EW bid 4♠ it is possible that South might go on to 5♦ or that either North or South might risk a double.

If North starts with a Precision style 2♣ and East overcalls 2♠ South bids 3♦. If West then bids 4♠ NS are in a similar position to the one already discussed.

There are four losers playing in spades and three if NS play in diamonds. However, were West to lead a top heart declarer could take the ♥A, cash the ♦AK and play the top clubs pitching a spade. Then running the ♥7 delivers 11 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	4	2	-	-
S	1	4	2	-	-
E	-	-	-	3	1
W	-	-	-	3	2
	=====				

Board 2 ♠ 87 Dealer E
 ♥ 7654 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 1052
 ♣ AQ108

♠ AQ1095 ♠ K42
 ♥ KQ10932 ♥ AJ8
 ♦ 75 ♦ AKQ
 ♣ 75 ♣ KJ63

 ♠ J63
 ♥
 ♦ J987643
 ♣ 942

If East opens 2NT West will immediately be thinking in terms of a slam. After 2NT-3♦*-3♥-3♠ East can bid 4♥. When West goes on with 4♠ East might ask for keycards and then sign off in 6♥ if West shows two along with the ♥Q. The same will apply if West responds 5NT, promising 2 keycards and a void.

There are numerous ways in which the auction might be developed, but ideally they will all lead to a small slam played by East. Then South will need to find a club lead to give the defenders a trick. Even more so if EW happen to play in 7♥ or 7NT!

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	2	6	5	6
W	3	2	6	4	6

Board 3 ♠ J Dealer S
 ♥ 832 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AK9
 ♣ AKJ1043

♠ KQ9875 ♠ A104
 ♥ QJ54 ♥ K1096
 ♦ 8 ♦ QJ6
 ♣ Q5 ♣ 862

 ♠ 632
 ♥ A7
 ♦ 1075432
 ♣ 97

The South hand does not look like a weak 2♦ opening, but at this vulnerability it might be tempting to some players. Were that to happen the practical bid for North is to jump to 5♦.

When South does not open West must choose between 1♠ and 2♠, North overcalling in clubs and East raising spades. With only three-card support for the unbid suits North will probably let matters rest.

EW should take nine tricks in spades, while anyone playing in diamonds will collect 11. If North competes with 4♣ there should be 10 tricks, East having the opportunity for a good defensive play by either leading a heart, or switching to the ♥K after leading the ♠A.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	4	5	-	-	1
S	4	5	-	-	1
E	-	-	2	3	-
W	-	-	2	3	-

Board 4 ♠ AJ7 Dealer W
 ♥ Q8 Vul: Both
 ♦ 3
 ♣ AQJ10875

♠ 1084 ♠ K652
 ♥ AJ765 ♥ K1032
 ♦ AK107 ♦ Q94
 ♣ 4 ♣ K2

 ♠ Q93
 ♥ 94
 ♦ J8652
 ♣ 963

When West opens 1♥ North overcalls 2♣ and East shows a heart raise according to agreements (using 2NT in competition to indicate a fit is becoming increasingly popular). If East does not raise directly to 4♥, West is likely to advance once hearts have been supported. For example, after 1♥-(2♣)-3♣ West can bid 3♦ leaving East with an easy 4♥ bid.

Although in theory the defenders can score three tricks against 4♥ that is only after an initial spade lead, so in practice declarer is likely to take 11.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	2	-	-	-	-
S	2	-	-	-	-
E	-	3	4	4	4
W	-	3	4	4	4

Board 5 Dealer N
 Vul: N-S

♠ K94	♠ AJ832
♥ Q732	♥ J
♦ K8	♦ 953
♣ J1087	♣ Q963

♠ 76	♠ Q105
♥ K10864	♥ A95
♦ A74	♦ QJ1062
♣ AK4	♣ 52

The East hand is ideal for an opening 2♠ that promises spades and a minor (and it will also serve those who want to start with a weak two). In either case it should be the only positive bid of the auction.

After a Multi 2♦ West's 'Pass or correct' 2♠ will have the same effect.

The play in 2♠ is not without interest. Say South leads the ♦Q and declarer puts up dummy's ♦A. Should North unblock the ♦K?

While you are thinking about that, how should declarer tackle the spades?

In isolation, the best line for three tricks is to play low to the ♠J, hoping to find the ♠KQ onside, or the suit breaking 3-3. However, if declarer does that here, South wins and (if North has unblocked the ♦K) cashes two diamonds and the ♥A and then plays another diamond, North's ruff promoting an additional trump trick. If North has not unblocked the same result

can be achieved as long as North switches to a heart after winning the ♦K.

If declarer tackles trumps by running the ♠7 the promotion line no longer works and there will be eight tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	-	1	2	-
W	2	-	1	2	-

Board 6 Dealer E
 Vul: E-W

♠ 5432	♠ J107
♥ K4	♥ Q9862
♦ Q74	♦ 9
♣ 8632	♣ AJ109

♠ AKQ	♠ 986
♥ 7	♥ AJ1053
♦ K1063	♦ AJ852
♣ KQ754	♣

If East opens 2♥, promising that suit and a minor West just about has enough to bid a direct 3NT. The alternative is to bid 2NT asking for partner's minor suit. When East bids 3♣ West must choose between a raise to 4♣ showing slam interest, 3♠, showing interest in 3NT or a direct 3NT. There is a case for using 4♣ to ask for keycards, allowing the partnership to stop in 5♣, but on balance the nine-trick game is likely to be easier.

If East does not open South is sure to start with 1♥ and West will double. If East bids 1NT West will probably raise to 2NT leaving East to decide if bidding game is a good idea. The answer is just about yes.

As the cards lie, there should always be nine tricks in no trumps, and 11 in clubs, declarer playing to ruff diamonds in the short trump hand.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	5	-	-	1	3
W	5	-	-	1	3

=====

Board 7 ♠ J2 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ9 Vul: Both
 ♦ AJ103
 ♣ Q1095

♠ AQ10	♠ 9654
♥ K8	♥ 1076
♦ 842	♦ Q975
♣ AJ863	♣ K7
♠ K873	
♥ J5432	
♦ K6	
♣ 42	

If West opens 1♣ North is not strong enough to overcall INT, so East gets a chance to respond, either 1♦ or 1♠, West rebidding INT in either case.

If West opens INT (12-14/13-15/14-16) that will end the auction unless South tries a frisky 2♣ for the majors. Opposite a passed hand, North should settle for 2♥.

If West plays in INT North does not have an obvious lead, and some players might start with the ♠J (especially if East has bid diamonds). If declarer wins with the queen and plays two rounds of clubs finessing, North wins and has only to find a switch to the ♦J to hold declarer to four tricks as long as South then switches to a low heart.

Were NS to play in hearts, nine tricks are likely, especially as West will probably lead a diamond. That allows declarer to draw trumps and dispose of a losing club after which playing a spade to the seven gives declarer time to set up a spade trick.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	1	3	1	2
S	2	1	3	1	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 8 ♠ A8652 Dealer W
 ♥ J9 Vul: None
 ♦ 4
 ♣ 109874

♠ K9	♠ 3
♥ AQ83	♥ K1074
♦ J1062	♦ AKQ93
♣ K62	♣ QJ5
♠ QJ1074	
♥ 652	
♦ 875	
♣ A3	

If West opens INT (12-14/13-15) I don't suppose many people will think of bidding with the North hand, so East will be able to locate the heart fit and then bid game.

Anyone who happens to bid on North's hand will strike gold, as South has exactly the right cards for a sacrifice in spades.

If West starts with 1♣/1♦ North might bid, either overcalling 1♠ or indicating a two-suiter (over 1♦) and all one can say is that it works this time.

It is easy to see that EW can take 11 tricks in hearts, while NS have nine in spades. The critical decision may revolve around what happens if NS do bid 4♠ over 4♥. Will EW go on to 5♥ and if they do will NS keep quiet?

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	3	-
S	-	-	-	3	-
E	-	5	5	-	1
W	-	5	5	-	1

=====

Board 9 ♠ AK82 Dealer N
 ♥ A4 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 984
 ♣ A842

♠ 10765 ♠ J43
 ♥ KQ109 ♥ J8753
 ♦ 1053 ♦ K6
 ♣ Q5 ♣ J106

 ♠ Q9
 ♥ 62
 ♦ AQJ72
 ♣ K973

If North opens 1NT (13-15/14-16/15-17) South has an easy raise to 3NT.

Opposite 15-17 anyone badly in need of a top who employs minor suit Stayman and uses it on this deal will score a goal, as with clubs 3-2 and the ♦K inside you can make a slam in either minor.

Those playing in 3NT who get a heart lead should record 11 tricks, but were East to lead anything else (perhaps the ♣J) there will be 12 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	6	6	2	5	5
S	6	6	2	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 10 ♠ 976 Dealer E
 ♥ KQ73 Vul: Both
 ♦ 5
 ♣ KJ1084

♠ 108542 ♠ KJ
 ♥ A96 ♥ J854
 ♦ J2 ♦ Q84
 ♣ Q92 ♣ A753

 ♠ AQ3
 ♥ 102
 ♦ AK109763
 ♣ 6

When South opens 1♦ it is barely possible that West might venture 1♠. If North makes a negative double one of East's options is to redouble, suggesting the

possession of a high spade honour (the idea is to help partner judge the best lead). If South rebids 3♦ North can continue with 3♠ and 3NT is reached.

If West keeps quiet, and North responds 1♥ South rebids 3♦. That is awkward for North, who will either pass or try 3NT hoping for the best.

An Acol pair might bid 1♦-2♣-3♦-3♥* (not necessarily a suit, but certainly a guard) making it easy for South to bid 3NT.

If West leads a spade against 3NT declarer might duck East's king, win the next spade and then play three rounds of diamonds. When East wins declarer will be able to establish a ninth trick in hearts. If South plays in diamonds and West leads a spade declarer wins and should play a heart to dummy. It is then possible to return to hand with a diamond and play a second heart, West taking the ♥A and exiting with a spade. Declarer wins, cashes a diamond and plays a club, hoping that West does not have the ♣A. When the ♣J loses to the ace declarer emerges with an overtrick, as East has no good return. Exiting with a diamond also works, but would fail were West to hold the ♦Q.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	4	3	2	3
S	3	4	3	2	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 11 ♠ KQ105 Dealer S
 ♥ J842 Vul: None
 ♦ Q5
 ♣ 654

♠ AJ62 ♠ 74
 ♥ ♥ AK9753
 ♦ A1043 ♦ 6
 ♣ AQ1073 ♣ K982

 ♠ 983
 ♥ Q106
 ♦ KJ9872
 ♣ J

If it is available, South can open with a weak 2♦. If West overcalls 3♣ East has various possibilities, including 3♦, 3♥ and 4♦. Over 3♥ West bids 3NT leaving East to consider the merits of continuing with 4♣.

When South passes initially West opens 1♣ and rebids 1♠ over East's 1♥. What now for East? Using the fourth suit (2♦) is a possibility, intending to bid 3♣ over 2NT (and considering bidding 4♣ over 3NT). Going down that route is likely to result in 6♣ being reached.

If North leads a top spade declarer wins and will probably cash a top club, collecting South's ♣J. A club to dummy confirms the 3-1 split and declarer can now play to establish the heart suit. Were both clubs and heart to break that would result in all the tricks being taken.

Another line in 6♣ is to play a crossruff, pitching two spades on the ♥AK.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	-	4	3	3
W	6	-	4	3	3
	=====				

Board 12 ♠ J10 Dealer W
 ♥ A107 Vul: N-S
 ♦ K1097
 ♣ KQ64

♠ Q87 ♠ K6542
 ♥ 62 ♥ Q984
 ♦ Q65 ♦ J84
 ♣ J10875 ♣ A

 ♠ A93
 ♥ KJ53
 ♦ A32
 ♣ 932

If North opens 1NT (12-14/13-15) and East overcalls say 2♣ for the majors, South probably doubles and West bids 2♠. What happens next depends on agreements, but there are only two possible outcomes – NS will defend 2♠ doubled or North will declare 3NT.

If North opens 1♣ and East overcalls 1♠ South doubles. Assuming North does not rebid 1NT South is going to become the declarer in 3NT.

Playing equal level conversion might East be tempted to double 1♣, planning to bid spades if West responds in diamonds?

Defending 2♠ doubled North is likely to lead the ♠J, declarer winning with dummy's ♠Q and playing a heart. If South wins that with the ♥J, the simplest defence is to continue with two rounds of spades. Although that appears to surrender a trick, it is a mirage, and declarer will be virtually certain to finish three down.

If North is in 3NT East leads a spade to West's ♠Q. If West returns a spade declarer takes East's ♠K with the ♠A and has various possibilities (the play may be easier if East has bid, especially after a Landy 2♣).

Suppose declarer crosses to the ♥A and plays the ♥10 for the queen and king. A club to the king sees East win and clear the spades. Declarer wins, pitching a club from dummy, cashes the ♦A and plays two more rounds of diamonds. West wins and returns the ♣J but declarer has nine tricks. If West plays the ♦Q on the second

round of the suit declarer must duck. If West finds the brilliant defence of playing the $\heartsuit Q$ under the ace, declarer must play a club to the queen, which forces East, down to $\spadesuit 65 \heartsuit 98 \diamondsuit J8$ to part with a spade, after which declarer can play two rounds of hearts, forcing East to lead into the diamond tenace at the end.

This is a tough hand to play, especially against silent opposition. For example, having won the second round of spades declarer could be forgiven for playing a heart to the ten.

Makeable Contracts

	\clubsuit	\diamondsuit	\heartsuit	\spadesuit	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	3	3	2	4
S	3	3	3	1	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 13

\spadesuit Q8	Dealer N
\heartsuit 873	Vul: Both
\diamondsuit 10832	
\clubsuit A1054	

\spadesuit K3	\spadesuit A972
\heartsuit AQ54	\heartsuit K1062
\diamondsuit 9	\diamondsuit KQ4
\clubsuit QJ8732	\clubsuit K9

\spadesuit J10654
\heartsuit J9
\diamondsuit AJ765
\clubsuit 6

If East opens 1NT (14-16/15-17) South might venture an overcall, but it should not prevent EW from reaching 4 \heartsuit . For example, after 1NT-(2 \spadesuit)-Dble-(Rdbl*) East bids 3 \heartsuit and West raises to game (here North's redouble indicates a high spade honour).

If South passes West can either employ Stayman, or transfer to clubs and then bid hearts. That usually suggests a hand with some slam interest (exchange East's $\diamondsuit KQ$ for the $\diamondsuit A$ and 6 \heartsuit would be reasonable). Here, EW should not go beyond 4 \heartsuit .

If East is the declarer in a heart contract, a club lead should give the defenders three tricks. If North is on lead a passive trump will allow declarer to draw trumps and play on clubs for 11 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	\clubsuit	\diamondsuit	\heartsuit	\spadesuit	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	5	-	4	2	2
W	5	-	4	2	2

=====

Board 14

\spadesuit J86	Dealer E
\heartsuit Q76	Vul: None
\diamondsuit AQJ63	
\clubsuit 74	

\spadesuit A32	\spadesuit KQ5
\heartsuit 4	\heartsuit K985
\diamondsuit K10954	\diamondsuit 2
\clubsuit AK86	\clubsuit QJ1032

\spadesuit 10974
\heartsuit AJ1032
\diamondsuit 87
\clubsuit 95

If East opens 1 \clubsuit South might overcall 1 \heartsuit . If West then bids 2 \heartsuit North can try a fit non jump 3 \diamondsuit . After East passes and South bids 3 \heartsuit the practical approach with West's hand is to jump to 5 \clubsuit .

If NS remain silent the auction might go 1 \clubsuit -1 \diamondsuit -1 \heartsuit -2 \spadesuit^* -2NT-3 \clubsuit -3NT. So far so good, but North might try a speculative double, asking for a diamond lead. If that happens will someone run to clubs?

Were East to pass initially South's options (apart from passing) are to open with something to show both majors, a simple 2 \heartsuit or a Multi. West can double 2 \heartsuit , leaving East with a decision. A natural 2NT is likely to see West raise to game, but for many players it will be conventional. In that scenario a response of 3 \clubsuit promises values and with a great hand in support of clubs West is likely to go on. However, bidding 3 \heartsuit will see East

bid 3NT, which is not guaranteed to make.

After a Multi 2♦ West can only pass and if North responds 2♠ South bids 3♥ (it is not unknown for a cunning player to pass with the South hand). If West doubles East may decide to leave it in.

If East and South pass initially West opens 1♦. The sensible move with the East hand it to respond 2♣. When West raises to 3♣ East might bid 3NT.

If EW play in an undoubled 3NT against silent opponents it has some practical chances – for instance South might lead a heart.

If EW play in clubs and NS have bid then declarer may have some useful clues and with trumps 2-2 there are various ways in which the contract can be made. For example, if South leads a diamond and North wins with the jack and returns a low heart (the ♥Q is no better) South wins and might try exiting with a club. Now declarer can play to ruff three hearts in dummy.

Suppose NS have not bid, and a trump is led against 5♣, easily the most testing defence?

Declarer can win in dummy and play a heart to the nine, South winning and exiting with a club. Declarer wins, takes three rounds of spades ending in hand and plays a diamond to the nine. North wins and will probably try exiting with a heart, but declarer ruffs in dummy, ruffs a diamond and plays the ♥K, pinning North's ♥Q and promoting the ♥5 into the game going trick.

A similar type of play is available in the diamond suit thanks to South's ♦87, but taking advantage if that is harder to see unless North has bid the suit.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-		-	-
S	-	-		-	-
E	5	1	-		
W	5	2	-		

=====

Board 15	♠	J9852	Dealer S
	♥	6	Vul: N-S
	♦	AQ962	
	♣	A10	
	♠	Q3	♠ A10
	♥	Q102	♥ AK94
	♦	J1073	♦ K854
	♣	Q982	♣ KJ6
	♠	K764	
	♥	J8753	
	♦		
	♣	7543	

If North opens 1♠ East doubles and South raises spades – 3♠ being the obvious move. At this point West might double suggesting scattered values – looks dubious – or East might try 3NT – brave to say the least.

If South leads a spade against 3NT what are the chances that declarer will put up dummy's ♠Q? Even if declarer clears that hurdle and plays on clubs, North will win and clear the spades, after which declarer will require four heart tricks. Starting with a heart to the ten will not be easy to find, the slender clue being that South has suggested a weak distributional hand.

If NS play in spades and the defenders start with two rounds of hearts declarer ruffs and plays a spade. If East does not go up with the ♠A and return the ♠10 declarer can play on crossruff lines and will take 10 tricks, the point being that if West ruffs in with the ♠Q at any point the ♣10 is discarded, while otherwise the ♥J is eventually established for a discard.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	3	-
S	-	-	-	3	-
E	2	2	2	-	2
W	1	2	2	-	1

=====

Board 16	♠	AJ7	Dealer W
	♥	10853	Vul: E-W
	♦	K106	
	♣	J107	
♠	KQ108653	♠	2
♥	72	♥	AKQJ64
♦	J8	♦	72
♣	Q4	♣	AK52
	♠	94	
	♥	9	
	♦	AQ9543	
	♣	9863	

Despite the poor 7222 distribution and the vulnerability, West will probably open 3♠, leaving East with three options, to pass, raise to 4♠ or bid 4♥.

Raising spades looks right, and if North fails to lead a diamond declarer will be in with a chance of securing 10 tricks. After three rounds of clubs to dispose of a diamond declarer plays a spade to the king (A spade to the ten allows North to win with the ♠J and exit with a heart. If Declarer then tries a loser on loser play in clubs North ruffs and returns a heart for South to ruff.) North winning with the ♠A and exiting with a heart. Declarer wins and plays a club, pitching dummy's ♦J, after which there will be only one more trump loser.

If East bids 4♥ (much more likely if West starts with a weak 2♠ or a Multi 2♦) then there should always be 10 tricks. For example, after a club lead declarer can play four rounds of the suit, discarding dummy's diamonds.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	3	-	4	3	-
W	3	-	4	3	-

=====

Board 17	♠	87	Dealer N
	♥	A754	Vul: None
	♦	Q64	
	♣	J974	
♠	6532	♠	KQ10
♥	K98	♥	6
♦	AJ82	♦	K1075
♣	86	♣	AK1053
	♠	AJ94	
	♥	QJ1032	
	♦	93	
	♣	Q2	

If East opens 1♣ South overcalls 1♥ and West either doubles or bids INT. If North raises to 2♥ East can double (takeout) if West has bid INT, while choosing between 3♦ and Double if West has made a negative double.

Playing Precision (or a Strong Club) East can open 1♦, intending to introduce clubs on the next round, promising at least nine cards in the two suits. If South overcalls 1♥ West has the same options, but will go back to diamonds if East bids clubs.

If EW play in diamonds and South starts with two rounds of hearts declarer ruffs and will probably play three rounds of clubs, ruffing. Then, after ruffing a heart and ruffing a club declarer plays a spade to the king and ace. If South exits with a diamond for the jack, queen and king, declarer cashes the ♠Q and ruffs a club for 10 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	2	4	-	2	1
W	2	4	-	2	1

=====

Board 18	♠ Q43	Dealer E
	♥ K108	Vul: N-S
	♦ AK4	
	♣ Q1054	
♠ A7		♠ 95
♥ Q754		♥ J6
♦ 976		♦ QJ1053
♣ AK97		♣ 8632
	♠ KJ10862	
	♥ A932	
	♦ 82	
	♣ J	

I know some players who would be happy to open the East hand with a weak 2♦. It is generally frowned upon to overcall a weak bid with a weak hand, but bidding 2♠ is tempting. Were West to then bid 3♦ North has an easy raise to 4♠.

If South does not overcall West might ask for more information by bidding 2NT, signing off in diamonds if East shows a poor hand with 3♣. (In the days when I occasionally partnered Brian Senior, 3♣ said 'I apologise for opening the bidding'). Not so easy for NS to get involved after that.

Where East passes initially South is going to open, be it 1♠, 2♠ or a Multi 2♦. If West doubles, NS may eventually finish in 4♠ (for example after 1♠-(Dble)-Rdbl-(2♦) South bids 2♠ and North jumps to game. After a weak 2♠ or a Multi 2♦ there is some chance that NS might stop short of game, although if North makes a forcing enquiry of 2NT 4♠ should be reached.

On this layout there will always be at least 10 tricks in spades.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	-	3	4	3
S	1	-	3	4	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 19	♠ 93	Dealer S
	♥ Q10	Vul: E-W
	♦ A6432	
	♣ QJ94	
♠ K10		♠ J752
♥ A4		♥ 96532
♦ K98		♦ Q5
♣ AK10762		♣ 85
	♠ AQ864	
	♥ KJ87	
	♦ J107	
	♣ 3	

If South opens 1♠ and West overcalls 1NT North doubles. If East decides to bale out into hearts, NS will want to be able to double for penalties. For many partnerships that requires South to pass at this point, North reopening with a takeout double.

Were West to prefer an overcall of 2♣ might North be tempted to pass, intending to convert a reopening double? On this occasion NS don't have enough ammunition. Were North to respond 2♦, South bids 2♥ and North gives preference to 2♠.

If West plays in 2♣ and the defenders play two rounds of spades declarer wins and plays on diamonds, setting up a ruff and easily securing eight tricks.

If EW play in hearts the strongest lead is a trump, easily restricting declarer to just six tricks. After a club lead declarer can win, play a diamond to the queen and a second club. South can ruff, and switch to a heart, but declarer wins with the ♥A and plays another heart and must come to seven tricks.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	2	-	2	1
S	-	2	-	2	1
E	2	-	-	-	-
W	2	-	-	-	-
=====					

Board 20	♠ 6	Dealer W
	♥ K1064	Vul: Both
	♦ 10543	
	♣ KJ102	
♠ KQ97542		♠ 8
♥ 53		♥ 8
♦ K		♦ QJ9762
♣ 543		♣ AQ976
	♠ AJ103	
	♥ AQJ972	
	♦ A8	
	♣ 8	

If West opens 3♠ South has a choice between passing or bidding 4♥. With partner likely to have some length in hearts, the latter is a clear winner.

Were West to start with a Multi 2♦, East might elect to pass. When South bids 3♥ North has an easy raise to game, but could make a mild slam try by bidding 3♠. Were that to happen South might drive all the way to 6♥.

If West leads a top spade against a heart contract, declarer wins, draws trumps and plays a club for the jack and queen. A diamond return is taken by the ♦A and after a ruffing spade finesse declarer can make a similar play in clubs and emerge with 12 tricks.

The only lead that prevents 12 tricks is the ♦K – will done if you found that.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	5	-	3
S	-	-	5	-	3
E	2	-	-	-	-
W	2	-	-	-	-
=====					

Board 21	♠ 52	Dealer N
	♥ Q104	Vul: N-S
	♦ AK62	
	♣ Q742	
♠ QJ10		♠ A76
♥ K8752		♥ AJ6
♦ 10874		♦ Q95
♣ J		♣ 10985
	♠ K9843	
	♥ 93	
	♦ J3	
	♣ AK63	

If North opens 1♣ South responds 1♠ and then makes a checkback bid over North's 1NT rebid. When North's rebid indicates a minimum without 3♠ South must choose between 2♠ and 2NT.

If North passes initially it might be East who starts with 1♣, South overcalling 1♠ and West making a negative double. If North then bids 1NT and South passes, it looks risky for West bid 2♥.

The friendly position in spades means that there should always be eight tricks in 2♠, but the outcome if North plays in notrumps is not so clear. It looks natural for East to lead the ♣10 (or ♣9 for some) but it works better to lead the ♣5. If declarer wins with the ♣Q and plays a spade to the king and a spade, West wins and switches to a heart giving the defenders seven tricks.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	-	-	2	-
S	3	-	-	2	-
E	-	1	1	-	1
W	-	1	1	-	-
=====					

Board 22 ♠ J754 Dealer E
 ♥ J962 Vul: E-W
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 7654

♠ 93 ♠ A
 ♥ AK1074 ♥ 853
 ♦ A10742 ♦ K983
 ♣ J ♣ K10832

♠ KQ10862
 ♥ Q
 ♦ QJ5
 ♣ AQ9

If East is minded to open 1♣ and South overcalls 1♠ West bids 2♥ and then goes on to game when East raises to 3♥. However, if North has found a raise to 2♠, South will surely bid 4♠ over 3♥, when West can either double or perhaps bid 5♦, which East would be happy to pass.

If East does not open South and South bids 1♠, West can come in with a two-suited overcall (2♠ will be the popular choice). Over that, East has enough to bid game and if North has not raised spades, might go via 3♠, suggesting very mild slam interest.

If South starts with a Precision 1♣, the normal move for West is to pass, intending to bid on the next round to show a good hand. For example, after 1♣-(Pass)-1♦*(Pass)-1♠ West can bid 2♠ to show hearts and a minor.

If EW play in hearts, after a spade lead declarer wins with the ♠A, crosses to the ♥K, ruffs a spade, plays the ♦9 for the ♦J and ace (it would be excellent play by South to follow with the ♦5, as then declarer would have to run the ♦9 to make 4♥) and runs the ♣J, South winning with the ♣Q. If South tries exiting with a spade declarer ruffs in the short hand and takes a ruffing finesse in clubs. Then a diamond towards the king leaves North with no good option.

If West is in 5♦ a spade to dummy's ♠A is followed by a diamond to the ace and the ♣J, South winning and exiting with the

♦Q. Declarer takes dummy's ♦K followed by the ruffing club finesse, the favourable layout providing an easy route to 11 tricks.

If South plays in spades, West leads the ♥K and switches to the ♣J. Declarer wins and plays a spade, East winning and returning the ♣10 which ensures two down.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	2	-
S	-	-	-	2	-
E	2	5	4	-	-
W	2	5	4	-	-

=====

Board 23 ♠ KQ43 Dealer S
 ♥ 10974 Vul: Both
 ♦ A96
 ♣ 52

♠ A105 ♠ 98
 ♥ KQ8 ♥ AJ652
 ♦ ♦ Q8742
 ♣ AK107643 ♣ 9

♠ J762
 ♥ 3
 ♦ KJ1053
 ♣ QJ8

If West opens 1♣ East responds 1♥, bids 3♦ after West's 3♣ rebid and then goes on to 4♥ over West's 3♥.

If 1♣ is strong, East responds 1♦ and then bids heart and diamonds as necessary before 4♥ is reached.

If the defenders lead a spade against a heart contract, declarer wins with the ♠A, cashes a top club, ruffs a club, cashes the ♥A and crosses to dummy with a heart. When South discards declarer plays the ♣K, overruffing when North ruffs and goes back to dummy with a heart to score the remaining clubs, losing only two spades at the end.

On a non spade lead declarer might decide to try for all the tricks, for example

ruffing a diamond, cashing the ♥KQ and the top clubs then ruffing a club, drawing trumps and returning to dummy with the ♠A.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	5	-	5	-	2
W	5	-	5	-	2

Board 24 Dealer W
Vul: None

♠ 3	♠ J10542
♥ 754	♥ K62
♦ A753	♦ 8
♣ J9863	♣ A1075

♠ AK	♠ Q9876
♥ AQ1093	♥ J8
♦ KQ10642	♦ J9
♣	♣ KQ42

When West opens 1♦ East responds 1♠ West must choose between rebidding 2♥ and 3♥. If you play 2♥ as forcing and 3♥ as game forcing there is not much in it, although the latter perhaps conveys the distributional aspect of the hand. After 1♦-1♠-3♥ East can bid 4♣, indicating a control in support of hearts and 6♥ should be reached.

After 1♦-1♠-2♥ East can continue with a fourth-suit 3♣. West bids 3♥ and now East can bid 4♣ as above.

If West starts with a Strong 1♣ and East responds 1NT to show spades the auction might continue 2♦-2NT-3♥-4♣ and we are in familiar territory.

North might bid over 1♣, for example 1♠, promising two suits of the same rank. If East doubles to show values, South bids 3♣, to indicate a preference for clubs, at the same time promising an even better fit in one of the majors. If West rebids 3♦ East can bid 3♠, but will then have to

make a decision if West continues with 4♥. Going on with 5♣ looks reasonable.

If West plays in hearts and North leads a spade declarer wins and will probably play the ♦Q, the favourable position in the suit resulting in 12 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	5	6	3	3
W	-	5	6	3	2

Board 25 Dealer N
Vul: E-W

♠ Q73	♠ 1094
♥ 106	♥ 984
♦ Q10832	♦ 976
♣ A52	♣ KQ64

♠ AKJ52	♠ 86
♥ AQJ	♥ K7532
♦ A	♦ KJ54
♣ J1097	♣ 83

South can open 2♥, especially if it promises hearts and a minor. If West doubles North can respond with a 'Pass or correct 3♣', South bidding 3♦. When West continues with 3♠, East has enough to go on to 4♠.

Where South passes and West opens 1♠ East will respond according to agreements. If that is 1NT West may be able to employ Gazzilli by rebidding 2♣. Then East bids 3♠, promising three card support and fewer than eight points.

If West starts with a Strong 1♣ East responds 1♦ and West rebids 1♠, which should result in a final contract of 4♠.

If North leads a diamond against 4♠ declarer wins and, short of entries to dummy perhaps cashes the top spades and plays the ♣J. If that holds declarer continues with the ♣10, remembering to

overtake if North withholds the ace. Then a heart finesse ensures that there will be 11 tricks.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	5	-	1	5	2
W	5	-	1	5	2

Board 26 ♠ Q1054 Dealer E
 ♥ 843 Vul: Both
 ♦ 43
 ♣ A963

♠ AJ762	♠ K983
♥ 7	♥ A105
♦ KQJ7	♦ 105
♣ KQ5	♣ J1082

 ♠
 ♥ KQJ962
 ♦ A9862
 ♣ 74

If South opens 1♥ West doubles and East responds 2♠, making it easy for West to go on to game.

Were South to open 4♥ (I know some who would) West must choose between double and 4♠. Put me down for the former.

If South elects to pass initially, hoping to make a descriptive bid later, and West opens 1♠, East will raise according to agreements. If South bids something West will bid 4♠, and have some information.

If West starts with a Strong 1♣, and East responds 1♠ (8+, balanced) South will bid something – perhaps 2♠ to show hearts and a minor. If West bids 3♠ East will go on to game.

There is not much to the play, but there is a potential pitfall. If North leads a diamond and the defenders play two rounds of the suit, anyone who wins in the West hand and plays a low spade to the king will go down. One way to avoid this is to unblock

an honour under the ♦A at trick one so that the ♦10 can take a trick in the suit. Another is to take the precaution of crossing to the ♥A at trick two and playing a low spade.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	2	-	-
S	-	-	2	-	-
E	3	-	-	4	-
W	3	-	-	4	-

Board 27 ♠ 532 Dealer S
 ♥ 108 Vul: None
 ♦ J7654
 ♣ AQ9

♠ 10	♠ AKJ97
♥ K75432	♥ A
♦ Q	♦ AK93
♣ 107652	♣ K84

 ♠ Q864
 ♥ QJ96
 ♦ 1082
 ♣ J3

If West opens 2♥, either weak or hearts and a minor, East will probably make some enquiries via 2NT before selecting a game, the majority vote going to 3NT.

If West starts with a Multi 2♦ things will not change much.

What should South lead against 3NT?

After a diamond to dummy's queen declarer runs the ♠10, South winning and perhaps returning the ♦10. Declarer wins, unblocks the ♥A and then cashes four spades. North must hold on to all three clubs, otherwise declarer will be able to exit with a club, finishing with 10 tricks.

Those who prefer to take their chances in 4♥ should do well, as declarer rates to lose only two hearts and a club.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	2	4	4	3
W	5	2	4	4	3

=====

Board 28 ♠ AK873 Dealer W
 ♥ KQ92 Vul: N-S

♦ 6	♣ 985	♠ 1062
♠ QJ5	♥ 94	♥ 1084
♥ AJ65	♦ 73	♦ K975
♦ J1083	♦ AQ42	♣ 763
♣ 104	♣ AKQJ2	

If North opens 1♠ South responds 2♣ and then bids 3♦ over North's 2♥. If North elects to bid 4♣ at this point South will not stop short of 6♣. If North prefers to bid 3♠ South is likely to sign off in 3NT.

How good is 6♣?

If West leads a diamond declarer should have an easy time, winning with the ♦Q and playing a heart. A trump lead is more challenging. Declarer wins in hand and does best to play a heart to dummy. If that wins, a diamond to the ace is followed by a second heart. If West takes that and exits with a trump declarer wins and can play three rounds of spades, ruffing and crossing to dummy with the ♣9.

If NS play in notrumps then 11 tricks should be the limit. The only danger will be if declarer manages to come down to an ending where West has ♠QJ5 ♥J ♦10. When declarer cashes the penultimate club West cannot throw a heart and must not part with a diamond, as then the last club will execute a double squeeze, both defenders being forced to part with a spade.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	6	3	5	5	5
S	6	3	5	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 29 ♠ 84 Dealer N
 ♥ 105 Vul: Both

♦ 1098	♣ AJ9732	♠ K965
♠ Q10732	♥ 9764	♥ AKQ2
♥ 9764	♦ 5	♦ Q764
♦ 5	♣ 1065	♣ K
♣ 1065	♠ Aj	
	♥ J83	
	♦ AKJ32	
	♣ Q84	

Opening 1NT with a singleton honour is in vogue, and some players might select it here. If South doubles for penalties West will do something, either showing the majors or bidding a direct 2♠. If North competes in clubs East might decide to bid 3♠, but will either side bid game?

If East opens 1♦ and South overcalls 1NT North might transfer to clubs. After 1♦-(1NT)-Pass-(2♠*)-Pass-(3♣*)- Pass-(Pass) will anyone double with East's hand?

Its easy to take 10 tricks in spades, but scoring 11 in clubs requires a Rabbinical view in the club suit.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	5	5	-	-	3
S	5	5	-	-	3
E	-	-	3	4	-
W	-	-	3	4	-

=====

Board 30 ♠ J852 Dealer E
 ♥ J9874 Vul: None
 ♦ 8
 ♣ 643

♠ KQ943 ♠ A76
 ♥ AQ6 ♥ 105
 ♦ A4 ♦ KQ102
 ♣ Q108 ♣ AJ75

♠ 10
 ♥ K32
 ♦ J97653
 ♣ K92

If East opens INT (12-14/13-15/14-16) West transfers to spades and might then jump to 4NT facing the higher ranges, 14-16, suggesting that a slam is possible opposite a maximum.

If East starts with 1♣ West responds 1♠ and must then decide what to do over East's INT rebid. Some form of checkback is likely to be employed, and once East shows a maximum with three spades, West might push on to 6♠.

If South is on lead against a notrump contract, a diamond lead looks favourable for declarer who wins with the ♦10, perhaps crosses to dummy with a spade and runs the ♣10. If South wins and switches to the ♥2 declarer is unlikely to take the finesse and will finish with only 11 tricks. If declarer cashes the ♠A at trick two and then crosses to dummy with the ♠Q before running the ♣10 South has a chance to be brilliant, ducking the ♣10 and then the ♣Q. Declarer is sure to repeat the finesse and end up losing three tricks (Gabriel Chagas once brought off this defensive coup, but if I remember correctly the contract was only 2♠.)

The way to avoid these pitfalls is to cross to the ♠K at trick two, cash the ♠Q and then run the ♣10. If it holds you continue with the ♣8 to the ♣J, temporarily blocking the suit. If South wins and switches to a heart you can safely finesse. If South follows with the ♣9 you return to dummy with the ♦A and play the ♣Q expecting to score four club tricks. When

South wins with the ♣K you are surprised, but still safe for 12 tricks.

If South leads a heart at trick one should declarer put in dummy's ♥Q?

If it wins, on a good day you might take all the tricks. If it loses and the club finesse is wrong you might sometimes be going down in 3NT.

6♠ is a good contract (as is 6NT by West) doomed by the bad break and the location of the ♣K.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	4	3	5	5
W	5	4	3	5	5

=====

Board 31 ♠ AK93 Dealer S
 ♥ KJ8 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQ5
 ♣ AKQ

♠ J104 ♠ Q72
 ♥ A943 ♥ Q1065
 ♦ J4 ♦ 972
 ♣ 8432 ♣ J109

♠ 865
 ♥ 72
 ♦ A10863
 ♣ 765

If North opens 2♣ South responds 2♦ after which the popular route will be the one devised by Eric Kokish, the bidding continuing 2♥*-2♠*-2NT* promising a powerful balanced hand. South can look for a 5-3 spade fit via 3♣, but the final contract will be 3NT.

With 10 top tricks in sight, making 11 will depend on a winning view in the heart suit.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	3	5	2	5	5
S	3	5	2	5	5
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

=====

Board 32 Dealer W
 Vul: E-W

♠ AQ5	♠ K1042
♥ 65	♥ AQ1072
♦ K1074	♦ 85
♣ AJ94	♣ K10

♠ J9873	♠ 6
♥ J84	♥ K93
♦ AQ63	♦ J92
♣ 8	♣ Q76532

If North opens 1NT (12-14/13-15/14-16) and East shows the majors, South might decide to compete with 3♣. When West bids 3♠ North may press on with 4♣, in theory the last making contract.

If North opens 1♣ and East overcalls 1♥ South probably bids 3♣ (even facing a 1♣ opening that promises 2+♣). If West raises to 3♥ North might compete with 4♣.

If East doubles 1♣ (possible if you play equal level conversion, where correcting a response in diamonds by partner would not show additional values) the spade fit will be located, and it is again a question of who blinks first.

Nine tricks are available in spades, 10 in clubs.

Makeable Contracts

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	4	2	-	-	1
S	4	2	-	-	-
E	-	-	2	3	-
W	-	-	2	3	-

=====