

2025 9-High Corwen Trophy Qualifier

Hand Analysis

(Calls marked with an asterisk should be announced/ self-alerted)

<p>Board: 1</p> <p>Dealer: North</p> <p>Vul: None</p> <p>♠ 876</p> <p>♥ Q65</p> <p>♦ J42</p> <p>♣ AK64</p>	<p>♠ 52</p> <p>♥ J42</p> <p>♦ AT965</p> <p>♣ J82</p> <p>♠ AQJT43</p> <p>♥ K97</p> <p>♦ K3</p> <p>♣ Q7</p> <p>♠ K9</p> <p>♥ AT83</p> <p>♦ Q87</p> <p>♣ T953</p>	<p>After 1 Spade from East, West must decide from three possible options: 1NT (hand is balanced), 2 Spades (3 card support) and 2 Clubs (10 points partner). I prefer 1NT as there is no ruffing value and the isolated honours aren't worth full value.</p> <p>This makes the auction easy. East rebids 2 spades and there matters rest.</p> <p>On a club lead (safest) declarer can take three clubs, throwing a heart, finesse the spade (which loses), crosses to dummy on the third spade and leads a diamond to the King, losing 1 trump, 1 heart and 1 diamond.</p> <p>You can make game (and in no trumps on a non-diamond lead) but don't bid thin games at pairs.</p>																				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1S</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>2S</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	W	N	E	S	1NT	Pass	1S	Pass	Pass	Pass	2S	Pass										
W	N	E	S																			
1NT	Pass	1S	Pass																			
Pass	Pass	2S	Pass																			
<p>Board: 2</p> <p>Dealer: East</p> <p>Vul: NS</p> <p>♠ AKT72</p> <p>♥ K974</p> <p>♦ K5</p> <p>♣ Q3</p>	<p>♠ Q63</p> <p>♥ J3</p> <p>♦ AJ732</p> <p>♣ 985</p> <p>♠ 8</p> <p>♥ AQT65</p> <p>♦ Q94</p> <p>♣ AKJ4</p> <p>♠ J954</p> <p>♥ 82</p> <p>♦ T86</p> <p>♣ T762</p>	<p>West's 2NT bid is the Jacoby convention, promising trump support and values for game and asking for more information about the hand. It is usually made on relatively balanced hands since with 12-15 points and a singleton or void players would make a "splinter bid" in the suit. East shows the singleton spade and a good hand, and West launches into Roman Keycard Blackwood (RKCB). If you still use normal Blackwood, I recommend that you switch (preferably to the 1430 version). East shows two Key cards (The King of the trump suit counts as one) and the Queen of hearts. West then bids the slam. There is an argument for bidding 6NT (better scoring and protects the King of Diamonds from the opening lead) but the high card point total (31 is a couple short).</p> <p>The play presents no problems: force out AD.</p>																				
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2NT*</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1H</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4NT</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3S*</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6H</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5S</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	W	N	E	S	2NT*	Pass	1H	Pass	4NT	Pass	3S*	Pass	6H	Pass	5S	Pass		Pass	Pass	Pass		
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6H	Pass	5S	Pass																			
	Pass	Pass	Pass																			
<p>Board: 3</p> <p>Dealer: South</p> <p>Vul: EW</p> <p>♠ T764</p> <p>♥ JT65</p> <p>♦ 965</p> <p>♣ A4</p>	<p>♠ KQJ</p> <p>♥ 973</p> <p>♦ AQ874</p> <p>♣ Q3</p> <p>♠ 985</p> <p>♥ A8</p> <p>♦ KJT3</p> <p>♣ KJ92</p> <p>♠ A32</p> <p>♥ KQ42</p> <p>♦ 2</p> <p>♣ T8765</p>	<p>The question is: what should North open in third position? You don't need a rebid. In pairs playing in a minor is usually a poor score so whenever you have a minor suit you should consider playing in no trumps. Since the hand is otherwise balanced 1NT is preferable to 1 diamond. East has no bid available. South will be concerned about the singleton diamond but there is nothing they can do. (and with 9 points they do know the side has the majority).</p> <p>East will probably lead the JD (top of internal sequence). North will win and should lead twice towards the KQ of hearts to make 7 tricks. A club lead and diamond switch will result in the same, provided North just covers the diamond West leads. Finessing the Queen on a small diamond results in another loser.</p>																				
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W	N	E	S																			
Pass	1NT*	Pass	Pass																			
Pass			Pass																			

Board: 4 ♠ AK6
 Dealer: West ♥ J4
 Vul: All ♦ AKQT54

♠ J87 ♣ AQ ♠ QT9543
 ♥ KQT65 N
 ♦ 72 W E
 ♣ J96 S ♣ T53

♠ 2
 ♥ 9872
 ♦ 983
 ♣ K8742

W	N	E	S
Pass	2C*	Pass	2D*
Pass	2N	Pass	3C*
Pass	3N*	Pass	Pass
Pass			

An aggressive west might open 2H (weak) – the suit is reasonable despite only 5 cards, but the shape is dreadful, they are vulnerable, and the two jacks do offer some defence. North opens 2C (alerted as a 22-23 balanced or a strong hand in any denomination), East passes at the vulnerability. South bids 2D (alerted as waiting) and after North shows the strong balanced hand (6322 is balanced) uses some form of Stayman to look for the heart fit. Again, I prefer Puppet Stayman (looking for 5-card suits as well as 4 card suits), in any case North will deny one (by bidding 3D over normal Stayman).

With South almost certainly showing 4 hearts, East won't lead the Ace (although it leads to one off). And will then have the mortification of seeing NS making anything up to 13 tricks (on a club lead) although 10 is more likely. Players who bid and make 5D (if North rebids 3D) will be disappointed at the poor result.

Board: 5 ♠ AK87
 Dealer: North ♥ A9764
 Vul: NS ♦ 9

♠ 642 ♣ J96 ♠ JT95
 ♥ 85 N
 ♦ KJ862 W E
 ♣ Q43 S ♣ K752

♠ Q3
 ♥ KT2
 ♦ AT543
 ♣ AT8

W	N	E	S
	1H	Pass	2D
Pass	2S	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	Pass	

North's 2 spade bid is NOT a reverse bid under the usual meaning (17+ points and 5-4). The high card strength requirement only applies after a 1-level response. Here South has shown 10+ points by his 2-level response. The distribution requirements still apply so South has an easy raise to 4 hearts.

West has a passive lead of the Jack of Spades, although a club lead (the unbid suit) has possibilities. The club suit combination comes up quite frequently (more often AJT in one hand). Players should not be scared to finesse twice – it gains a trick at least 2/3rd of the time – even at No Trumps – and in pairs frequency of gain is paramount.

As the cards lie, North has an easy 11 tricks by ruffing the spade loser.

Board: 6 ♠ 8
 Dealer: East ♥ T65
 Vul: EW ♦ KJ832

♠ - ♣ Q872 ♠ 7652
 ♥ AJ873 N
 ♦ QT765 W E
 ♣ J94 S ♣ AT53

♠ AKQJT943
 ♥ 94
 ♦ 9
 ♣ K6

W	N	E	S
		1NT*	4S
Pass	Pass	Pass	

South has some options when East opens 1NT. 4 Spades (my choice) is "blasting", 2 Spades feels like an underbid, a double is possible but it is almost certain that EW will escape (make sure the partnership knows how to wriggle out of 1NTX) at least if EW do wriggle then you can still bid 4 spades – here you need to do so to prevent EW making 4 hearts (by ruffing a diamond high)

Four spades should go one off losing a diamond, club and 2 hearts. When you are in a high-level contract Aces are paramount and here South is missing three of them. Also: beware of strong suits – they look nice, but you often find out that you have lots of losers in the other suits (As here).

Board: 7 ♠ 76
 Dealer: South ♥ KQ4
 Vul: All ♦ QJ97643

♠ Q954 ♣ 9 ♠ AKJT832
 ♥ J82 N ♥ A73
 ♦ K85 W E ♦ 2
 ♣ A43 S ♣ T2

♠ -
 ♥ T965
 ♦ AT
 ♣ KQJ8765

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	4S	3C
Pass	Pass		Pass

South can open 1 club or 3 clubs. With the spade void I lean towards 3 clubs (you are vulnerable so the hand is about right in terms of strength) although some won't want to do so with a four-card major. North shouldn't bid – South has 7 clubs and may have no diamonds. (With some more clubs they could make a psychic 3S call!).

Note East's jump to 4 spades. In the balancing position (i.e. the auction would end if you passed) you are entitled to assume partner has something like 8-10 points and if you do then 4 spades looks a good contract. Be careful balancing with minimum bids when you hold a lot more in terms of strength. Partner should not get excited when they hold 8-10: that is what they are being played for. (An immediate overcall looks for a bit less 7/8). Anyway – 10 tricks made by leading towards the King of diamonds. NS have a good sacrifice in 5C, but it is hard to find with the singleton Club in the North hand.

Board: 8 ♠ AK64
 Dealer: West ♥ QJ52
 Vul: None ♦ 9532

♠ QJ97 ♣ 5 ♠ T852
 ♥ 83 N ♥ KT94
 ♦ K864 W E ♦ QT
 ♣ 864 S ♣ AKT

♠ 3
 ♥ A76
 ♦ AJ7
 ♣ QJ9732

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1NT*	3C
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Since most players use 2 Clubs as conventional when opponents open 1NT (Landy being the usual) South will have to bid 3 clubs if they wish to compete: the hand is just about worth it with 6 cards and two Aces.

Note North's pass. You DON'T bid no trumps when partner shows a long suit, and you have the other suits. Where will your tricks come from? The singleton club suggests the club suit will be hard to set up and you have no long suits of your own (4441 is a poor attacking hand). Yes, North has 10 points BUT South won't have 15 (or they would have doubled). Had North two or three clubs then 3NT would be much likely. Support for partner is a reason to bid 3NT as their suit should be able to be set up.

Three clubs might go off – declarer must lead a club from dummy to hold the losers to four.

Board: 9 ♠ 63
 Dealer: North ♥ JT542
 Vul: EW ♦ 75

♠ QT874 ♣ 9873 ♠ KJ952
 ♥ K87 N ♥ 96
 ♦ AT3 W E ♦ J2
 ♣ 65 S ♣ QT42

♠ A
 ♥ AQ3
 ♦ KQ9864
 ♣ AKJ

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	2C*
Pass	2D*	Pass	3D
Pass	3H	Pass	4H
Pass	Pass	Pass	

If 2 clubs is game forcing then NS should reach four hearts on the auction shown. South should remember that their 2C bid already shows a game-forcing hand and be content to agree hearts as trumps – and leave everything else to North who (with a minimum hand) passes. A similar auction will occur if South is playing Benji Acoll and opens 2 Diamonds.

Cautious players who open the South hand with 2 clubs (8 playing tricks) might not reach game as North may pass a 3 diamond rebid – but if South rebids 2NT then North will transfer and at least the right denomination will be reached, even if North doesn't go on to game.

Correct play (ruffing the third diamond high) should result in 11 tricks, but declarer may ruff low or accidentally set up a second spade trick for the defence by playing three rounds of trumps.

Board: 10 ♠ T
 Dealer: East ♥ QT93
 Vul: All ♦ AQT6

♠ QJ85	♣ AJ82	♠ K764
♥ K7	N	♥ A864
♦ K93	W	♦ J87
♣ K643	S	♣ Q5

♠ A932
 ♥ J52
 ♦ 542
 ♣ T97

Although North has 13 points, they cannot take any action over 1NT. East would probably like to use Stayman, but the hand is too weak in case West responds 2 Diamonds.

North has an unattractive combination of possible leads. Although he knows South has at least 4 spades (East would transfer with five and West probably not bid 1NT with five) the singleton ten is not attractive. As it happens a heart lead (ten – top from an internal sequence is safe and constructive.

W	N	E	S
1NT*	Pass	Pass Pass	Pass Pass

I will expect a range of results here: EW can certainly make 3 spades and two hearts and will probably make a club and a diamond, although double-dummy the contract goes off (South leads a club when in with AS.)

Board: 11 ♠ K42
 Dealer: South ♥ Q864
 Vul: None ♦ AJ7

♠ AT53	♣ A85	♠ QJ98
♥ A72	N	♥ J93
♦ T842	W	♦ Q93
♣ T4	S	♣ Q62

♠ 76
 ♥ KT5
 ♦ K65
 ♣ KJ973

North has a pretty good 1NT bid in third position and South should pass. It IS possible for South to envisage 9 tricks with a perfect hand opposite – but partners very rarely have perfect hands.

East will probably lead the Queen of spades (don't lead 4th highest when you have a sequence or broken sequence of honours – you don't want declarer to win a cheap trick). If West wins and returns the suit, then North should duck (rule of 7: deduct the total cards you have from seven and that tells you how often you should duck to block a 5-card suit from having an entry in the suit.) On winning the third round, North finesses the Jack of clubs, runs the suit and then leads a heart setting up the ninth trick. Not only did North have a perfect hand but two finesses won and a 4-4 spade break as well. Anyone bidding and making 3NT should apologise!

W	N	E	S
Pass	1NT*	Pass	Pass Pass

Board: 12 ♠ 5
 Dealer: West ♥ A7632
 Vul: NS ♦ QT8

♠ AKQJ8	♣ KQ93	♠ 7642
♥ KJT84	N	♥ Q9
♦ 2	W	♦ KJ953
♣ 64	S	♣ A5

♠ T93
 ♥ 5
 ♦ A764
 ♣ JT872

Usually, you would prefer to overcall a 5-card major rather than make a take-out double: here the suit is so poor that a take-out double is preferable. With 8 losers, East is worth a bid to the three level and the only question is whether this hand is worth a 2NT overcall promising a “good” raise to three. (Truscott). This is a good convention to have as it frees up a direct raise to three to show a weaker hand with support (5-9 points).

In any case, with only 5 losers, West will bid game, and NS won't sacrifice at adverse vulnerability.

W	N	E	S
1S 4S	X Pass	3S Pass	Pass Pass

A trump lead (as is often the case) is the worst lead leading to 11 tricks. A diamond or heart lead should result in a ruff and a club lead sets up a club trick resulting in 10 tricks.

Board: 13 ♠ 86
 Dealer: North ♥ K832
 Vul: All ♦ AKQ8
 ♠ 92 ♣ AQ7 ♠ AT54
 ♥ J4 N ♥ QT76
 ♦ T742 W E ♦ J6
 ♣ K8543 S ♣ J62
 ♠ KQJ73
 ♥ A95
 ♦ 953
 ♣ T9

W	N	E	S
	1D	Pass	1S
Pass	2NT	Pass	3S
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

After North's 2NT rebid (showing 18-19 points and a balanced hand, South rebids his spades to show five. This is forcing: (all bids after this sequence are – if you want a sequence that is not forcing you must use a convention (Wolff sign off) where responder bids 3C and the auction can die at the three level.) Here with only two spades, North bids 3NT.

On this auction the usual lead is the unbid major and since East has no attractive lead elsewhere then he should make it. Declarer plays low from dummy and wins the Jack with the King. Correct timing (AK of diamonds, throwing the nine in dummy, spade to the King (East must hold off twice), diamond finesse, spade to Queen, club finesse, results in 11 tricks.) Why finesse the diamond on the third round? When East plays the Jack on the second, West is twice as likely to hold the ten. This is known as the principle of restricted choice. Generally, you assume a player to not have a choice when they play a card (here the ten or jack of diamonds)

Board: 14 ♠ K865
 Dealer: East ♥ T32
 Vul: None ♦ Q75
 ♠ AQT4 ♣ 862 ♠ 92
 ♥ AJ N ♥ K97654
 ♦ AJ82 W E ♦ -
 ♣ T43 S ♣ AQJ75
 ♠ J73
 ♥ Q8
 ♦ KT9643
 ♣ K9

W	N	E	S
		1H	3D
X	Pass	4C	Pass
4H	Pass	Pass	Pass

At this vulnerability, South makes a weak jump overcall of 3 diamonds. This is not an ideal hand for it (the suit is weak and there are defensive values) but I find that pre-emptive bidding works most of the time. In this case it may prevent EW from reaching a slam in hearts or clubs. The slam is a good one – the club finesse may win, or the hearts play for no loser. (The spade loser goes on the Ace of diamonds)

How high do you play your negative doubles? I think 3 Diamonds should be the lowest ceiling so you can show the other major although some will play it to a level higher (after all 4 of a major is game). A double beyond that limit is for penalty.

Board: 15 ♠ T743
 Dealer: South ♥ A975
 Vul: NS ♦ 984
 ♠ KQJ9 ♣ Q9 ♠ A6
 ♥ K82 N ♥ QJT4
 ♦ Q32 W E ♦ T5
 ♣ AK7 S ♣ JT532
 ♠ 852
 ♥ 63
 ♦ AKJ76
 ♣ 864

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1S	Pass	1NT	2D
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pas

South's 2 diamond bid is a matchpoint risk. He would like a diamond lead if possible. At the vulnerability he might be "caught speeding" since he will go two off and if doubled that will cost more than a non-vulnerable game. Still such overcalls work a high percentage of the time since many players can't adjust their mindset from declaring the contract to defending – EW continue bidding and South escapes.

If you have a hand like South – with no entry to your good five-card suit then the best tactic is to lead small in the hope that partner will get in and have a card to return. In this case East doesn't have the two entries required to finesse in clubs (the percentage play in isolation) so is forced to play the AK, dropping the Queen. Five clubs, four spades and the Queen of diamonds comes to ten tricks and South's dangerous overcall was wasted.

Board: 16 ♠ T8763
 Dealer: West ♥ A4
 Vul: EW ♦ A9732

♠ J2 ♣ T ♠ Q4
 ♥ JT96 ♠ N ♥ Q872
 ♦ KJT854 W E ♦ Q
 ♣ 3 ♣ S ♣ Q98654

♠ AK95
 ♥ K53
 ♦ 6
 ♣ AKJ72

W	N	E	S
2D*	Pass	Pass	X
Pass	3S	Pass	4N
Pass	5H	Pass	6S
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Again, a matter of style – do you open a weak two with a four-card major? The books say no, but at pairs it is best to get in there quickly: the chances of having game in the major is small.

South balances and North mustn't make a "lazy bid" of 2 Spades! He has a fifth spade, two aces and a singleton. South (who could have balanced on 10 points less) gets excited, launches Roman Keycard Blackwood, finds that North has two Aces but no Queen of Spades (the bid with the Queen of Spades would have been 5 spades) and settles for a small slam.

After the QD lead, two rounds of trumps exhausts the opponents and North can ruff three of South's losers in his hand (or he can ruff two diamonds and throw one away on the King of clubs). In doing so he may find that both East and West must discard two hearts when the last trump is cashed making the three good for the 13th trick. A classic double squeeze.

Board: 17 ♠ J
 Dealer: North ♥ 42
 Vul: None ♦ K943

♠ T9832 ♣ AKQ642 ♠ K654
 ♥ A983 ♠ N ♥ KJT65
 ♦ JT86 W E ♦ 2
 ♣ - ♣ S ♣ T95

♠ AQ7
 ♥ Q7
 ♦ AQ75
 ♣ J873

W	N	E	S
	1C	Pass	1D
Pass	3D	Pass	3S
Pass	4C	Pass	5C
Pass	Pass	Pass	

After North's jump response in diamonds (12 points but there are only 5 losers), South bids his spade fragment hoping North can bid 3NT. (Some partnerships will bid the weak suit looking for support there). North denies a heart stop and rebids his clubs to show six and South then raises to 5 clubs. Note the danger of using Blackwood when you have two losers in the unbid suit.

A heart lead is suggested on the bidding and EW will take their two heart tricks and it is now up to declarer to make the rest (an underlead of the King of Spades by East will probably defeat the contract since declarer will play for the 3-2 diamond split.). Having drawn trumps and played the AK of diamonds (discovering the bad break), declarer now must take the spade finesse to dispose of their loser. Anyone who starts ruffing spades too early will deserve their fate.

Board: 18 ♠ T76
 Dealer: East ♥ AQJ5
 Vul: NS ♦ 63

♠ 8542 ♣ KJ63 ♠ AKJ93
 ♥ 732 ♠ N ♥ K96
 ♦ 985 W E ♦ K7
 ♣ AT2 ♣ S ♣ Q98

♠ Q
 ♥ T84
 ♦ AQJT42
 ♣ 754

W	N	E	S
		1S	2D
2S	3D	3S	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Assuming EW aren't playing a strong no trump, the one spade and 2 diamond overcall are standard. Although West has 4 spades the hand is balanced so a single raise is enough. North has a problem but assuming partner has overcalled on a six-card suit they might bid 3 diamonds. A responsive double is also available showing the other two suits, but ideally there should be more distribution to do so. With a fifth spade East might bid on although the King of diamonds looks like a wasted asset and suggests cards will lie well for North South. No one should be bidding at the four level in a part score hand.

The hand is a good example of why you shouldn't lead an Ace even if partner has shown the suit (by support or bidding it): they don't have to have the King. This is known as the "Elvis Coup" – the King lives. On any other lead 3 spades goes one off – a better result than letting 3 diamonds make (which it does with 6 diamonds, 2 hearts and a club losing 2 Clubs, a heart and spade).

Board: 19 ♠ K82
 Dealer: South ♥ T9
 Vul: EW ♦ QJT742

♠ J643	♣ A3	♠ Q97
♥ Q653	N	♥ AK84
♦ A	W E	♦ K985
♣ KQ65	S	♣ 82

♠ AT5
 ♥ J72
 ♦ 63
 ♣ JT974

W	N	E	S
1C	1D	1H	Pass
2H	Pass	3H	Pass
Pass	Pass		Pass

4441 hands are defensive in nature (the four cards in each suit restricts the opponents from being able to set up their own suits) and play poorly (that fourth card is often a loser that is hard to get rid of). Thus, when East Invites game, west is perfectly entitled to refuse it.

The traditional bid with a 4441 hand is a red suit unless (as here) with a singleton diamond.

Note that the spade suit is effectively frozen – whichever side leads it will concede a trick UNLESS East leads the nine of spades and after Ten, Jack, King finesses the seven on the next round – will never happen. Even 3 hearts could go of if declarer draws three rounds of trumps – what are they to do with all their losers? The correct play is to establish and cash a club trick and the diamonds and then cross-ruff the minor suits.

Board: 20 ♠ QJ93
 Dealer: West ♥ J84
 Vul: All ♦ 98742

♠ T84	♣ 3	♠ K2
♥ AQ7	N	♥ 96532
♦ AKQ	W E	♦ 3
♣ AJ85	S	♣ Q9742

♠ A765
 ♥ KT
 ♦ JT65
 ♣ KT6

W	N	E	S
2NT	Pass	3D*	Pass
3H	Pass	4H	Pass
Pass	Pass		Pass

I expect everyone to open 2NT on the West hand but the hand (IMHO) is a bit weak for 2NT – it is flat, the AKQ of diamonds offer limited potential for extra tricks.

After 2NT East seems to have a standard transfer bid and it remains to be seen what they will bid next. 3NT (not nice with a singleton diamond), 4H (on that poor suit?) or 4 Clubs (If Natural and not Gerber – but that takes the hand beyond 3NT which might be the best contract.) 3NT is down on a top spade lead from North (no entry for the club finesse). 4H and 5C require the club suit to be picked up for no loser – which means leading the Queen of clubs, getting back to hand (by ruffing a winning diamond!) and then finessing against the ten.

Board: 21 ♠ 862
 Dealer: South ♥ 42
 Vul: NS ♦ A43

♠ A75	♣ JT964	♠ T94
♥ KQJT87	N	♥ A6
♦ K86	W E	♦ T92
♣ 7	S	♣ AK832

♠ KQJ3
 ♥ 953
 ♦ QJ75
 ♣ Q5

W	N	E	S
1H	Pass	2C	Pass
3H	Pass	4H	Pass
Pass	Pass		Pass

When East bids 2 clubs, the high card strength promised means that West can rebid 3H with that solid suit (suit quality matters!) and, with nothing in the other suits, East raises to game.

The key to the hand is the diamond suit (and West should be pleased they have the eight!). If we assume a club lead then declarer cashes the Ace, King of clubs (throwing a spade) and leads the ten of diamonds. When South covers with the Queen, he can play the King, losing to the Ace and then has the 98 against the Jack.

Note that diamonds might have to be played twice (if the Queen and Jack were in different hands) so it is important for declarer to lead a diamond each time they are in dummy. As the cards lie this is unnecessary and bad declarer play won't be penalised.

Board: 22 ♠ AKQT43
 Dealer: East ♥ 84
 Vul: EW ♦ A9864

♠ 52 ♣ - ♠ J97
 ♥ J7532
 ♦ KJT3
 ♣ QJ

N
 W E
 S
 ♠ 86
 ♥ QT9
 ♦ Q75
 ♣ AK652

W	N	E	S
		Pass	1C
Pass	1S	Pass	2C
Pass	2D	Pass	2S
Pass	4S	Pass	Pass
Pass			

One of the disadvantages of opening very light is that occasionally you may overbid on a misfit, as here. If South passes then NS might be able to stay out of 4 spades on a 1S – 2C – 2D – 2S auction but this is still unlikely.

East will surely start off with a top heart and may decide not to cash the King (setting up the Queen). If he does then North can cash three spades and the Ace of diamonds and then lead a second heart. East must then give dummy access to the AK of clubs resulting in 10 tricks. If he cashes the second heart and leads a diamond then declarer can cash two spades and concede a spade! Three discards still leaves declarer with a diamond loser and only nine tricks will result.

Both plays are very unlikely – Declarer is likely to draw trumps and lead a diamond to the Queen. West can win but must either concede a diamond on the return of the suit or give access to dummy. One down.

Board: 23 ♠ AQT65
 Dealer: South ♥ AQ8
 Vul: All ♦ 5

♠ 982 ♣ 9874 ♠ 3
 ♥ JT96
 ♦ KT32
 ♣ J2

N
 W E
 S
 ♠ KJ74
 ♥ K73
 ♦ AJ6
 ♣ AQT

W	N	E	S
			1S
Pass	4D*	Pass	4NT
Pass	5S	Pass	5NT
Pass	6S	Pass	Pass
Pass			

South opens 1 spade and North makes a splinter bid of 4D (alerted). If you don't play splinter bids (which shows a game raise in partner's suit and a singleton/ void in the suit bid) then I recommend that you do: it helps identify situations where all the high card strength is working (and a slam is possible) from those where they aren't (and a slam is unlikely)

With no diamond losers and an above strength hand, South goes straight into Roman Keycard Blackwood. The 5S response shows two key cards and the Queen of spades and South now bids 5NT – this tells partner "We have all the key cards, have you anything else." South wants the King of Clubs but North hasn't anything extra so the contract ends in 6 Spades.

Missing the King and Jack of Clubs South could finesse twice but the best line of play if trumps were 2=2 is to eliminate the diamonds and hearts whilst drawing trumps and then take the club finesse. If it fails, then West has either to return a club into the AQ or give a ruff and discard. This line works even if West has both the King and Jack of clubs.

Board: 24 ♠ A982
 Dealer: West ♥ Q7543
 Vul: None ♦ T532

♠ 7543 ♣ - ♠ -
 ♥ KJ8
 ♦ Q8
 ♣ 9876

N
 W E
 S
 ♠ KQJT6
 ♥ T9
 ♦ K9
 ♣ AKT4

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	1D	1S
Pass	3S	Pass	4S
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Third in hand, East opens 1 diamond: south overcalls 1 spade (which he might do without anything other than those spades), West must pass and now it is up to North. With excellent shape, the hand is definitely worth 3 spades but it is not quite good enough to warrant a cue bid (or jump cue bid). No matter – South has extras and bids 4 spades knowing that the King of diamonds is probably well placed.

The easiest way of making ten tricks on a diamond lead to the Ace and a diamond return is to ruff two club losers in dummy. The losers should be ruffed before the Ace and King are cashed to minimise the risk of one of the top two cards being ruffed. (Club ruff, spade to King, club ruff, Ace of spades, 2 of spades to the Queen, draw trumps and cash the AK of clubs.) Declarer concedes the last two heart tricks.