

ECatsBridge Simultaneous Pairs for Children in Need

Friday 15th November 2024



Together we can ...

... and by competing in this Simultaneous Pairs you have once again certainly shown that **together we can indeed do something to help make a difference** to children who really need our help. Over the past years we (well you) have helped raise an amazing **£1,346,939.83** ... hopefully we will be a good bit more to that this year!

Thank you so so much for coming along and joining in, playing and donating – please don't forget the donating bit though, will you – just go to :

<https://www.ecatsbridge.com/sims/donations.asp>

and you will see how you can do it – if you haven't already done so of course!

Our thanks, as always, go to our commentators: Brian Senior for his words of wisdom on Monday and Wednesday, Mark Horton did the analysis for the Tuesday and Thursday and session and Julian Pottage completes the crew, writing up the Friday event. It's always interesting to see if they got it right but you will have discovered that by now of course !

With very best wishes

Anna & Mark – the ECatsBridge Team

Board 1	♠ 4	Dealer N	
	♥ AQ9432	Vul: None	
	♦ J964		
	♣ K2		
♠ J9875		♠ AK3	
♥ K76		♥ 1085	
♦ KQ8		♦ A53	
♣ A3		♣ J1094	
	♠ Q1062		
	♥ J		
	♦ 1072		
	♣ Q8765		
West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

With six good hearts and four poor diamonds, North rebids the hearts and does not bother with the diamonds. East, with a sterile shape and lacking four spades, cannot enter the bidding (by doubling 1♥). South's 1♠ response makes it difficult for West to act on the first round; reopening with 2♠ is a possibility.

North escapes for one down in 2♥; the winners to make are five trump tricks, a club and (eventually) a long diamond.

East-West score better if they buy the contract. If West declares a spade contract and knows from the bidding that South holds four

spades and short hearts, it is reasonable to make nine tricks. Win the diamond lead in hand, cross to dummy with a trump and run the ♣J. Win the second diamond in hand also, unblock the ♣A, cross to dummy and run the ♣10 for a ruffing finesse. Whether or not South covers, declarer gets to discard a heart on a club, thus losing one trick in each black suit and two hearts but no heart ruff.

In a no-trump contract East-West, making nine tricks is quite easy via four spades, a heart, three diamonds and a club.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

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Board 4 ♠ Q65 Dealer W
 ♥ J10 Vul: Both
 ♦ KQ5
 ♣ AK986

♠ A84 ♠ J109732
 ♥ AQ ♥ 86
 ♦ A10984 ♦ J32
 ♣ 1043 ♣ Q2

 ♠ K
 ♥ K975432
 ♦ 76
 ♣ J75

West	North	East	South
1♦	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

Counting A-10-9-8-x as worth more than 4 points, West decides that a weak no-trump opening on the hand would not be appropriate. North, with strong no-trump values and the diamonds held, overcalls 1NT. If non-vulnerable East would bid 2♠; some will make the bid even vulnerable.

Even though the singleton ♠K might not be pulling full weight, it will be difficult for South to stop short of game once North shows 15-17 points.

The way the hearts lie, 4♥ must fail by a trick with two trump losers and the two pointed suit aces to lose. The fall of the ♣Q is incidental because one of South's clubs can go on the ♠Q or the third round of diamonds.

If East-West declare a spade contract, they will find the ♥K onside and one trump honour onside but the ♦K-Q offside and so lose one trick in spades and two in each minor.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 5 ♠ J1072 Dealer N
 ♥ AKQ7 Vul: N-S
 ♦ 104
 ♣ J53

♠ AQ984 ♠ K63
 ♥ J8 ♥ 54
 ♦ J ♦ KQ9832
 ♣ KQ1096 ♣ 87

 ♠ 5
 ♥ 109632
 ♦ A765
 ♣ A42

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

These days just about everyone opens 1♠ on hands with 5-5 in the black suits. While perhaps the argument is less for a fourth seat opening, ordinarily there is too much danger that opposing bidding would make it difficult to show the fifth spade if you start with 1♣.

Liking the good six-card diamond suit and the spade support, East upgrades the hand to a two-over-one response (though if you use the rule of 14 then the hand satisfies that in any case).

With spades 4-1, East-West will be doing well if they buy the contract in 2♠ because they have a trump as well as four top tricks in the side suits to lose.

If they can somehow get into the bidding, North-South will do well. Since the hearts split 2-2, it is not a problem ruffing two diamonds in the North hand. Indeed, if West were to lead the ♣K – not such a crazy choice looking just at the West hand – they would be able to make ten tricks with hearts as trumps, just losing one trick in each side suit.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 6 ♠ Q10975 Dealer E
 ♥ Q74 Vul: E-W
 ♦ KJ52
 ♣ Q

♠ J862 ♠ A43
 ♥ K6 ♥ 932
 ♦ 963 ♦ A
 ♣ J1074 ♣ AK9832

 ♠ K
 ♥ AJ1085
 ♦ Q10874
 ♣ 65

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♥
Dble	1♠	2♣	2♦
Pass	3♥	All Pass	

Preferring to reserve the unusual 2NT for hands with pure values (which the singleton ♠K is not), South makes a simple overcall. West's double implies four spades, albeit on minimum values! North might simply bid 2♣ on the first round to show a 3-card heart raise. The 1♠ bid anticipates further bidding and can result in a better overall description. East is close to rebidding 3♣ rather than 2♣. The former might silence South.

After a club lead and a switch to the singleton ♦A, 3♥ fails by a trick because West can give East a diamond ruff after getting in with the ♥K. The ruff, together with the trump trick and one in each side suit gives the defenders five in all.

East-West fare better by declaring. With the ♥K onside and nothing terrible happening elsewhere, they can easily make 10 tricks in a club contract. Indeed there is some possibility that if declarer can strip the red suits, draw trumps and duck a spade of making an eleventh trick. The way to thwart this is either an initial spade lead or a switch to spades after getting in with a heart.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 7 ♠ A4 Dealer S
 ♥ A1098643 Vul: Both
 ♦ Q4
 ♣ Q7

♠ 973 ♠ QJ5
 ♥ Q52 ♥ J
 ♦ 87 ♦ 10632
 ♣ AJ863 ♣ K10942

 ♠ K10862
 ♥ K7
 ♦ AKJ95
 ♣ 5

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Some players will stretch to a high reverse on the South hand, taking into account the partial fit for hearts and the good diamond suit. Since in Acol a 3♥ rebid by North over 2♠ is not forcing, North has a slight problem on the second round and guesses to bid game. This could be wrong if South has six spades and no hearts. It is a good hand for the 'Bourke relay', by which North can bid 3♣ as an artificial game force.

The opening lead against a heart contract is crucial. After a club lead and continuation, dummy has to ruff. This not only means the defenders score a club trick but also means that West gets to score a trump trick. Without an initial club lead, declarer can (by applying standard restricted choice principles, finessing on the second round), pick up the trumps without loss and get both clubs away on the diamonds, thereby making all thirteen tricks.

If North-South somehow play in diamonds, the club force does not prevent from taking the optimal play in hearts; this means twelve tricks result, thirteen without a club lead because then declarer would ruff the hearts good.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 8 ♠ K72 Dealer W
 ♥ J9 Vul: None
 ♦ J8653
 ♣ K83

♠ 53	♠ 986
♥ K63	♥ 742
♦ AK2	♦ Q1074
♣ AQ762	♣ 1054
♠ AQJ104	
♥ AQ1085	
♦ 9	
♣ J9	

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

While it is unusual (if you excuse the pun) to play the Unusual No-trump in the protective position, there seems no reason why if you play Michaels in second seat that you cannot play it in fourth seat. South has a better hand than minimum and conveys this by bidding on over 2♠. Whether it is better to bid the fragment or the shortest suit is perhaps a matter for partnership agreement.

If East-West play a strong no-trump, it will be harder for South to envisage game after West has opened INT.

As expected, given the bidding, the ♥K is offside while the ♣A is onside. In a spade contract, this makes the losers one in each of the three side suits.

Because hearts split 3-3 and East holds the fourth diamond, meaning that the defenders cannot play an effective forcing game, a heart contract also yields ten tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 9 ♠ A6 Dealer N
 ♥ K103 Vul: E-W
 ♦ AJ542
 ♣ K103

♠ K1074	♠ J9852
♥ 8754	♥ AQ9
♦ 10	♦ K86
♣ J976	♣ Q5
♠ Q3	
♥ J62	
♦ Q973	
♣ A842	

West	North	East	South
	1♦	1♠	2♦
2♠	Pass	Pass	3♦
3♠	All Pass		

Too strong for a weak no-trump, North opens 1♦. East, with poor spades but opening values, overcalls 1♠. West, looking at four-card spade support and a singleton, might well compete to 3♠ in spite of the unfavourable vulnerability.

Given the vulnerability, 3♠ is not a great spot for East-West. With the ♠Q and ♥K, escaping for one down is not too difficult. Indeed since potentially one of East's clubs could go on a long heart or the lowish heart on the third round of clubs, the defenders must exercise a degree of care in taking their winners.

Suppose the cards winning the first four tricks in a spade contract are the ♦A, ♥J, ♥A (capturing the ♥K) and ♠A (capturing the ♠10); then the defenders need to cash their two club winners next or lose one of them. Moreover, if declarer would guess to take the backward finesse in clubs (starting with the ♣9 and finessing the ♣7 later), North does need to switch to a heart at trick two (or at trick three after cashing the ♠A); otherwise the ♥9 goes on a club.

On a normal spade lead, North-South do not make nine tricks with their nine-card fit as trumps either. 3♦ would go one down, the losers being two in hearts and one in each other suit. Larry Cohen, where are you?

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

=====

Board 10	♠ Q84	Dealer E	
	♥ 3	Vul: Both	
	♦ QJ108		
	♣ AQ865		
♠ A53		♠ 962	
♥ 8542		♥ AKJ1097	
♦ 6543		♦ K	
♣ J3		♣ 1042	
	♠ KJ107		
	♥ Q6		
	♦ A972		
	♣ K97		
West	North	East	South
		1♥	Double
2♥	Dble	3♥	Pass
Pass	4♣	All Pass	

East's opening and South's takeout double are routine. Vulnerable and with a 10-loser hand, West's raise to 2♥ seems ample. After this start North is too good for 3♣ but does not want to go past 3NT or totalling commit to clubs by jumping to 4♣. South with what looks like a poor heart holding and only 3-card club support feels disinclined to proceed further over 4♣.

With clubs as trumps, it is easy (given the 3-2 club split and that the ♦K is onside) to make eleven tricks, with just one top trick in each major to lose.

If diamonds are trumps and North has had to ruff a heart at trick three, declarer needs to stop drawing trumps after two rounds and knock out the ♠A.

As the cards lie North-South score best with spades as trumps. Although East can obtain a diamond ruff for a third defensive trick, the fact that spades is a major means that ten tricks in 4♣ score better than 11 in 5♣ or 5♦.

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

=====

Board 11	♠ 943	Dealer S	
	♥ K986	Vul: None	
	♦ K92		
	♣ Q54		
♠ Q1075		♠ KJ62	
♥ Q3		♥ 105	
♦ AQ5		♦ J873	
♣ K762		♣ J103	
	♠ A8		
	♥ AJ742		
	♦ 1064		
	♣ A98		
West	North	East	South
			INT
All Pass			

South, with a moderate heart suit and a stopper in the doubleton might well open a weak INT if that is an option. Nobody will have anything positive to say after that. If South judges to open 1♥ (or playing a strong no-trump has no choice), West makes a takeout double and North raises hearts. A raise to 3♥ will shut out East whereas a raise to 2♥ probably will not.

If East-West pass throughout, declarer will take the standard 'eight ever nine never' play in the heart suit and cash the ace-king. In a no-trump contract, there will not be time to make a ninth trick with the ♣Q because the defenders would score three spades and a trick in each minor for five tricks first. In a heart contract, declarer would have time to develop both the ♦K and the ♣Q.

It does not necessarily follow that those playing in hearts will score an extra trick. If South opens 1♥, West is almost certainly going to make a takeout double. The knowledge that West is short or shortish in hearts might then induce declarer to finesse East for the ♥Q.

East-West can make seven tricks in a spade contract, with two tricks in each rounded suit and one trick in each pointed suit to lose.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 12 ♠ A872 Dealer W
 ♥ 9 Vul: N-S
 ♦ KQ95
 ♣ J1097

♠ KJ	♠ 10953
♥ AQJ65	♥ 1042
♦ A1074	♦ 32
♣ 53	♣ AQ64

♠ Q64	♠ 2
♥ K873	♥ QJ5
♦ J86	♦ Q9543
♣ K82	♣ J752

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	All Pass

For a rebid, West might choose INT (assuming that shows extra values); the two very low clubs suggest that bidding the second suit is a better option. After West's 2♦, East gives preference back to hearts.

If the East-West system means that East raises 1♥ to 2♥, North has a textbook hand for a protective double, the vulnerability notwithstanding – and South has a nightmare shape for seeing partner double!

North is likely to lead the ♣J against a heart contract, especially if West has bid diamonds. If declarer judges that North is unlikely to have led from the ♣K, there is a case for ducking this in dummy – but a tough play to find in real life. If the ♣K captures the ♣Q at trick one, South does best to return a club. There are a number of ways the play could go, some resulting in eight tricks and some resulting in nine.

With no fit anywhere, North-South can make little. The play in 2♠ is somewhat scrappy, one down probably being the most common outcome.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 13 ♠ Q963 Dealer N
 ♥ K1074 Vul: Both
 ♦ J82
 ♣ 86

♠ AJ75	♠ 2
♥ 962	♥ QJ5
♦ 1076	♦ Q9543
♣ AK3	♣ J752

♠ K1084	♠ 2
♥ A83	♥ QJ5
♦ AK	♦ Q9543
♣ Q1094	♣ J752

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	All Pass	

Playing four-card majors and a weak no-trump, North-South uncover their spade fit. Those playing a strong no-trump are likely to miss it because North is a bit weak and flat to be using Stayman.

In a spade contract, with the ♣J onside, who declarer plays for the ♠J is likely to mean the difference between eight tricks and nine. At a few tables, if declarer guesses correctly in trumps and squeezes East in the rounded suits, a tenth trick results – but 170 will be a rare score.

In a no-trump contract, if West fishes out a diamond at trick one, the defenders should come to at least six tricks. They might even score seven if declarer gets the spades wrong.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 14 ♠ KQ8 Dealer E
 ♥ Q85 Vul: None
 ♦ AK54
 ♣ AJ5

♠ J5 ♥ KJ3 ♦ Q73 ♣ KQ982	♠ A93 ♥ A1097 ♦ J2 ♣ 10764
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West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
INT	Dble	Pass	2♠
All Pass			

North has plenty enough strength to double West's weak INT opening. While East has no reason to disturb INT doubled, South does not fancy defending and retreats to 2♠. Bearing in mind that South is likely to have a very weak hand to remove the double, North does not raise 2♠ to 3♠.

If East-West play a strong no-trump, West opens 1♣ and North doubles. West might then raise East's 1♥ response to 2♥ or perhaps rebid INT.

In a spade contract, although the ♠A is offside, the ♠J is doubleton. This means only one loser in trumps to go with one in diamonds and three in hearts.

In a diamond contract, if declarer guesses to play for a doubleton ♠J, there is a slight possibility of nine tricks if the defenders do not cash their hearts. It is more likely that they will get the same five tricks as they do in a spade contract.

West can make INT doubled by way of four tricks in hearts (playing North for the queen) and one in each of the other three suits.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 15 ♠ K43 Dealer S
 ♥ 2 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AJ9652
 ♣ 984

♠ 102 ♥ A9743 ♦ Q108 ♣ 1075	♠ AJ976 ♥ J108 ♦ 3 ♣ AKJ6
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West	North	East	South
		2♠	INT
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♦	Dble	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

With the adverse vulnerability, lifeless shape and poor intermediates South could pass as dealer with this hand – but bridge players are like airline passengers: love to upgrade but hate to downgrade! East's 2♠ overcall for many these days shows spades and a minor (Multi Landy). North, holding a six-card diamond suit and a singleton, happily competes to 3♦. East, being maximum for not doubling INT and with partial support for hearts has another go, doubling 3♦.

If North-South play a strong no-trump, East probably gets to overcall 1♠ and then double 2♦ for takeout.

In a heart contract, so long as the defenders leave the spade suit well alone, they should score four tricks, typically one in each suit.

With the the ♠K protected, 3♦ is makeable from the North seat – declarer can arrange to discard a spade on one of South's heart honours. A winning view in trumps then restricts the losers to two in clubs and one in each major.

In a no-trump contract, a winning (or losing) view in diamonds is likely to make a difference of more than one trick.

Makeable Contracts

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

=====

Board 18 ♠ 102 Dealer E
 ♥ 973 Vul: N-S
 ♦ AQJ3
 ♣ A432

♠ KQJ764 ♠ 953
 ♥ A ♥ KQJ62
 ♦ 1076 ♦ 9542
 ♣ J107 ♣ Q

 ♠ A8
 ♥ 10854
 ♦ K8
 ♣ K9865

West	North	East	South
		2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	All Pass

The chunky five-card suit will persuade anyone with a free wheeling style about weak twos to open one on the East cards. West's 2♠ response, though non-forcing, is encouraging for most, hence East's raise. Even if East does not open a weak two, it will be difficult for North-South to enter the bidding.

The defenders have five top winners to cash against a spade contract. They will need to take them before declarer can get to dummy with a club ruff, so have a couple of chances to do so. If North kicks off with the ♣A, South should give a suit preference of the lowly ♣5 to indicate a desire for a diamond switch.

If they can somehow get into the auction, North-South do well in a club contract. The blockage in the East-West hearts created by West's singleton ace means that a remarkable ten tricks are available. Suppose the defenders start with a heart followed by a switch to the ♠K. Declarer wins, draws two rounds of trumps and plays on diamonds. If declarer plays four rounds and West ruffs, declarer lets West win a spade trick and then obtains a ruff and discard. If West does not ruff, declarer can ruff the second round of spades and exit with a trump – or when East (understandably) does not cover the ♠10 declarer can discard a heart, again putting West on play.

Makeable Contracts

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

Board 19 ♠ Q9653 Dealer S
 ♥ AQ4 Vul: E-W
 ♦ A8753
 ♣

♠ A84 ♠ K2
 ♥ 73 ♥ KJ1096
 ♦ J4 ♦ KQ1062
 ♣ Q109752 ♣ J

 ♠ J107
 ♥ 852
 ♦ 9
 ♣ AK8643

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1♠	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♦	3♠
All Pass			

Facing a passed hand, East feels comfortable making a Michaels 2♠ overcall (hearts and a minor) even if the strength is a trifle awkward. Holding only 3-card spade support, South is reluctant to bid 3♠ immediately, which though not a strong action (a good hand would cue bid 3♥) would suggest 4-card support if the 1♠ opening only promised four spades. West's 3♣ is 'pass or correct', East duly correcting to 3♦.

Most routes seem to lead to one down in 3♠. If East were to find the remarkable lead of the ♠K, no diamond ruffs in the South hand would be possible – but endplaying East in diamonds to concede a trick to the ♥Q would be feasible. On the normal normal lead of the ♦K, declarer can ruff a diamond or two in dummy – but East gets to ruff the second top club.

Lacking a fit anywhere, East-West cannot make very much. Curiously they do better with diamonds as trumps than with hearts as trumps because South could score two diamond ruffs if hearts were trumps.

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

=====

Board 20	♠	K9874	Dealer W	
	♥	8	Vul: Both	
	♦	K872		
	♣	K97		
♠	2		♠	AJ65
♥	10653		♥	K74
♦	QJ64		♦	A109
♣	Q862		♣	A43
	♠	Q103		
	♥	AQJ92		
	♦	53		
	♣	J105		
West	North	East	South	
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass	
INT	All Pass			

Playing 4-card majors, West does not want to pass 1♠ with a singleton spade and 5 points.

If East-West playing a strong no-trump, East opens INT in third seat. North might take advantage of being a passed hand to overcall 2♠ – the reason for caution is that both sides vulnerable is the least attractive vulnerability for declaring on a part-score deal because if anyone goes down they are doing so at 100 a trick.

If, in spite of East's 1♠ response, North leads a spade, declarer will be doing well to get out for one down in INT. There are only five obvious winners – three in diamonds and the black aces – and a shortage of entries to the West hand for taking the diamond finesse. An initial diamond lead is less threatening, though again declarer has just five obvious winners – but North has a limited number of entries and eventually the defenders need to do something helpful.

If they would defeat INT by only one trick, North-South do better to declare because eight tricks are available in a spade contract. Indeed the defenders need to exercise a modicum of care to prevent a ninth trick.

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

=====

Board 21	♠	KJ3	Dealer N	
	♥	986532	Vul: N-S	
	♦	954		
	♣	2		
♠	106		♠	Q875
♥	Q7		♥	KJ4
♦	763		♦	AKQ1082
♣	AQ10986		♣	
	♠	A942		
	♥	A10		
	♦	J		
	♣	KJ7543		
West	North	East	South	
Pass	Pass	1♦	2♣	
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass	
3♦	All Pass			

East has a three-way choice when two passes follow South's 2♣ overcall. One is to double; after all, the hand has support for the other three reasons. The danger is that West will look at the vulnerability and leave in the double on hands that appear suitable defensively but are ineffective when you void in trumps. A second option is simply to repeat the strong 6-card diamond suit. The example auction goes for the third option, a reverse into spades.

If East did double, West would judge (!) to pass. North might equally judge to retreat to 2♥.

For a change the play with the most likely suit as trumps is straightforward. Against a diamond contract the defenders can make two spades and a heart. Declarer can ruff one spade in dummy and discard the other on the ♣A.

Why does a no-trump contract potentially yield only eight tricks? At a glance, it looks like declarer would have six tricks in diamonds, two in hearts and the ♣A. The answer is that North leads a heart and South ducks. Discarding a spade on the ♣A would then leave the spades open while not cashing the ♣A means going to bed with it.

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

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Board 22	♠	A9654	Dealer E	
	♥	3	Vul: E-W	
	♦	AK95		
	♣	KJ7		
♠	10		♠	KJ32
♥	AKQ10875		♥	92
♦	106		♦	QJ32
♣	1095		♣	Q82
	♠	Q87		
	♥	J64		
	♦	874		
	♣	A643		
West	North	East	South	
		Pass	Pass	
3♥	3♠	All Pass		

Vulnerable against not, a 3♥ opening suffices on the West cards. North has a close decision whether to make a takeout double or overcall in the indifferent spade suit. As the overcall is likely to keep the bidding lower, that is my choice.

South has only the sort of strength that North would have been assuming (it is usual for the overcaller to assume around 8 points opposite) and so knows not to raise 3♠ to 4♠.

How does North make 3♠? Seemingly there are two losers in trumps (if dummy ruffs the fourth round of diamonds) and one in each side suit. In essence the way to do it is by playing East for ♣Q, rejecting the club finesse and instead putting East in with the fourth round of trumps for a club lead away from the queen. Given the wide range of West's third seat 3♥ opening, that line is not obvious.

West would go down one in 3♥, with five losers on top: two in each minor and the ♠A.

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

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Board 23	♠	K4	Dealer S	
	♥	KQ107	Vul: Both	
	♦	Q103		
	♣	Q764		
♠	J96		♠	A10532
♥	53		♥	A9642
♦	9542		♦	K76
♣	A1082		♣	
	♠	Q87		
	♥	J8		
	♦	AJ8		
	♣	KJ953		
West	North	East	South	
			INT	
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦	
Pass	2NT	All Pass		

Playing a weak no-trump and Stayman, South shows a minimum balanced hand without a four-card major. North is close to insisting on game rather than merely inviting – but the spade situation does not look too good. East will be tempted to come in over 2♣, though it is dangerous bidding a 5-card major when responder has indicated holding one or both majors.

If North-South play a strong no-trump, South opens 1♣, North responds 1♥ and East has an easy 1♠ overcall.

When the INT opener denies a major in response to a Stayman enquiry, it is usually right for the opening leader to choose a major. With more help in spades than hearts, the most effective suit to lead, spades, is actually a reasonable choice. What is tougher to find is the nine or the jack rather than the six. After the low spade lead, an inspired declarer can block the spades by capturing the ten with the queen. Knocking out the ♥A rather than the ♣A then allows declarer to make eight tricks.

If West ignores the bidding and the general advice that four-card suits headed by the ace are often a poor choice, thus leading the ♣2, declarer can make nine tricks in a no-trump

contract. In this case, with the ♣A known to be in the West hand, it is clear to knock out the ♥A before the ♣A.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 24 ♠ 975 Dealer W
 ♥ Q10642 Vul: None
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 9643

♠ KJ10862	♠ Q4
♥ AK109	♥ K93
♦ A72	♦ QJ8642
♣ A72	♣ 105

♠ A3
 ♥ AJ875
 ♦ 75
 ♣ KQJ8

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	1NT	2♥
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	5♥	Dble	All Pass

If South did not overcall, West might introduce the diamonds. With a 2♦ rebid no longer an option, West simply stresses the spades. Even if a double of 2♥ would be for takeout, it is generally a mistake to make a low-level takeout double with a void in the opposing suit if there is a reasonable alternative.

North, reluctant to push East-West into 4♠, does not raise hearts initially but takes out the sacrifice when they reach 4♠ under their own steam.

West starts with a top diamond against a heart contract. This enables declarer to enter dummy with a diamond ruff, pick up the trumps without loss and avoid losing a club ruff, so ten tricks made. How West finds a club lead I do not know!

Curiously a club lead works best against a spade contract too. If declarer ducks, South can (if inspired) switch to a diamond and thereafter give North a ruff. If declarer wins with the first club, South holds up the ♠A until the second round and scores two club tricks.

Either way just ten tricks result. By contrast, an initial heart lead allows declarer to ruff, knock out the ♠A, draw trumps and run the diamonds for twelve tricks.

Makeable Contracts

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

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Board 25 ♠ K63 Dealer N
 ♥ J Vul: E-W
 ♦ 9743
 ♣ K10963

♠ 874	♠ Q1092
♥ A832	♥ 1076
♦ Q6	♦ AKJ102
♣ QJ85	♣ 2

♠ AJ5
 ♥ KQ954
 ♦ 85
 ♣ A74

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	2♦	Double
Pass	3♣	All Pass	

Holding five good hearts and no semblance of a diamond stopper, most people will open 1♥ on the South cards even if a weak no-trump is available. East might double 1NT (for takeout) planning to convert 2♣ to 2♦ – the strength of the diamond suit suggests that the simple overcall is the more pragmatic option. South's double of 1NT (takeout in my methods) is a little on the aggressive side.

If East starts with three rounds of diamonds against 3♣, declarer can get home by ruffing with dummy's ♣A and thereafter playing West for four trumps – this line seems a bit inspired to me; many will ruff the third round of diamonds low, hoping that West is overruffing from a three-card trump holding.

2♦ doubled would fail by a trick with two hearts, three spades and a club to lose. It does not matter if (as is likely) the defenders crash heart honours at trick one because North can ruff a heart if need be.

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

Board 26				Dealer E Vul: Both	
♠	J64	♠	Q92	♠	A85
♥	J8	♥	A97543	♥	K106
♦	AQ1095	♦	K87	♦	6
♣	J72	♣	6	♣	AK10854
♠	K1073	♠	Q92	♠	A85
♥	Q2	♥	A97543	♥	K106
♦	J432	♦	K87	♦	6
♣	Q93	♣	6	♣	AK10854
West	North	East	South		
All Pass		2♥	3♣		

With the moderate suit, the East hand is not classic for a vulnerable weak two – but this will not stop many. South, holding at least one heart stopper, is vaguely tempted to overcall 2NT – but 3♣ seems normal – North can (with a suitable hand for 3NT but lacking a heart stopper) bid 3♥ over 3♣. Here North is too weak to be doing that and goes quietly.

West's most effective lead against 3♣ is a spade – that way the defenders make two tricks in spades and one in each rounded suit (declarer is unlikely to take a losing heart guess after East has bid the suit). On the more common lead of the ♥Q, declarer can win, optionally draw a round of trumps and return a heart. It is then possible to discard one of dummy's spades on the third round of hearts and later ruff a spade in dummy.

A spade is also the most effective lead against 3NT. If South is declarer, 3NT fails by two tricks after a spade lead. By contrast, a heart lead would allow 3NT to make if declarer plays a heart back either at trick two or at trick three having cashed one top club.

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

Board 27				Dealer S Vul: None	
♠	AJ82	♠	K95	♠	1074
♥	K96	♥	A5	♥	QJ8743
♦	4	♦	QJ103	♦	K987
♣	AQJ73	♣	K842	♣	
♠	AJ82	♠	K95	♠	1074
♥	K96	♥	A5	♥	QJ8743
♦	4	♦	QJ103	♦	K987
♣	AQJ73	♣	K842	♣	
West	North	East	South		
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass		

After South opens a weak two in hearts, West does not have a perfect bid. I suggest that the singleton diamond is a bigger flaw for a takeout double than it is for a 2NT overcall. East has an easy raise of 2NT to 3NT.

While the computer says that 11 tricks are possible 3NT, making them depends upon taking backward finesse in spades – start with the jack and run the right on the way back. Since this way of playing spades depends upon the position of two cards (the ♠Q and the ♠10), it is not the normal way to tackle the suit. More normally declarer will make only three tricks in the spade suit for ten in all. I suppose if you knew that an average on the board was no good for you then you might make the anti-percentage play in spades.

Likewise the computer says that 6♣ makes, again taking the backward finesse in spades. Since the field will evidently not be in 6♣, declarer would have no reason to play the spades in that abnormal way. A more realistic path to 12 tricks is if North errs in the diamond suit, playing the ace on a low lead towards dummy. Then a ruffing finesse against South's ♦K would allow declarer to discard two spades on dummy's diamonds.

Makeable Contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
	=	=	=	=	==
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	1	1	5	5
W	6	1	1	4	5

=====

Board 28		♠	7542	Dealer W	
		♥	Q72	Vul: N-S	
		♦	KJ97		
		♣	A3		
♠	K3			♠	J1086
♥	J863			♥	AK94
♦	A104			♦	82
♣	10976			♣	KQ4
		♠	AQ9		
		♥	105		
		♦	Q653		
		♣	J852		
West	North	East	South		
Pass	Pass	INT	All Pass		

If East-West play a weak no-trump, INT from East is likely to be the only positive action on the deal. If a strong no-trump is in use, they will find their heart fit after a prepared 1♣ opening.

This is a somewhat unexciting last board.

Whether hearts are trumps are not, the usual way to play the suit is to bash out the ace-king. This caters for a doubleton queen on either side. Starting with the jack and then playing for the drop only caters for a short ten with South.

In INT, the normal play in hearts results not just in the loss of a heart trick but in the loss of a second spade trick as well because the defenders have time to set up a spade trick as well as the diamonds. This means one down.

If hearts are trumps, making the normal but losing in hearts costs only one trick, so 2♥ would make.

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

=====