

Analysis by Brian Gunnell, author of *Bridge Bites* and founder of The Wednesday Game (www.wednesdaygame.com).

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Set 69893

1

♠ T854
♥ AQ952
♦
♣ Q972

♠ KQ
♥ KJ863
♦ T86
♣ K84

♠ 93
♥ 74
♦ AKJ7542
♣ 65

♠ AJ762
♥ T
♦ Q93
♣ AJT3

Dir North
None Vul

(the finesse is unlikely to work and is dangerous), ruffs the last Diamond, cashes the ♥A, ruffs a Heart and loses a trump and the ♣K. 11 tricks.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	3♠	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

After East's beefy preempt, N-S stumble into 4♠ and West's opening Diamond lead is ruffed on the board. What's the percentage play in the trump suit? There's not much to choose between running the Ten or running the Eight. Both plays protect against Spade length with East but that's unlikely on the auction. So Declarer plays a Spade to the Ace, ruffs a Diamond, crosses to the ♣A

2

♠ J543
♥ A
♦ J9432
♣ 854

♠ AK8
♥ J9873
♦ QT6
♣ KQ

♠ Q972
♥ T64
♦ AK85
♣ A6

Dir East
N-S Vul

If East opens 1♥ he'll play in Hearts, maybe game if West takes a shine to his lovely 4-6 shape. South leads the ♦A, after which the most testing defense is ♣A and a Club. Then a Heart to the King and Ace. North plays another Club, and Declarer must guess to ruff high and then run the ♥9. Not 100% obvious (but neither was South's Club shift!). So, 9 or 10 tricks.

If East opens 1NT then the Heart fit may well be lost. The way that most play nowadays, Stayman followed by 3♣ is a strong sequence, so West will simply bail out in 3♣ (perhaps via a transfer). That's 8 or 9 or 10 tricks depending on how many Heart ruffs North gets: (a) if North is on lead she starts with the ♥A and gets two ruffs; (b) if South is on lead she'll start with the ♠A and, as there is a singleton Diamond on the board, North can play *low* (suit preference for Hearts), but that's still only one ruff for North.

3

♠ KJ763
♥ 94
♦ T87
♣ 953

♠ 2
♥ JT6
♦ A632
♣ KQ842

♠ QT54
♥ A85
♦ KQ4
♣ JT7

Dir South
E-W Vul

and it's all South's fault ... she would have done better to open 1♠, getting North off to the right opening lead ... having not done so and having got that trump lead instead, she should have ducked the first trick (nice defense!). Now Declarer cannot manage more than 11 tricks.

South	West	North	East
Pass?	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Some Souths will open that square 12-count (those Tens look useful, don't you think?), but either way we expect E-W to reach 4♥ (the auction above got there via a Forcing NT).

The Play in 4♥: If N-S are having a bad day then the play might go: trump lead to the Ace; trump continuation; ♠A; Spade ruff; back to the ♠A; draw the last trump, etc. That's 12 tricks.

4

♠ A7654
♥ K2
♦ AKJ8
♣ 83

♠ T
♥ J5
♦ Q742
♣ AQ9752

♠ Q982
♥ AT9763
♦ 9
♣ K4

♠ KJ3
♥ Q84
♦ T653
♣ JT6

Dir West
Both Vul

strategy) by declining to over-ruff. But Declarer gets to 9 tricks anyway ... cash the ♠A, finesse the ♠J, finesse the ♦J, cross to the ♠K, another Diamond finesse, etc.

5

♠ JT986
♥ AQ65
♦ J5
♣ AK

♠ KQ2
♥ K2
♦ A74
♣ 96543

♠ 53
♥ J7
♦ KQ98632
♣ Q8

Dir North
N-S Vul

arrange a Heart ruff) but they probably won't get into the auction.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♦
All Pass			

South will want to play this one in a Diamond part-score, and will make a Weak Jump Shift if that is available. But for most Souths that won't be an option, so she'll get to 3♦ via a 1NT response (forcing or otherwise). Declarer has four obvious losers, with little chance for more or less. Playing in Clubs, E-W are likely to score 10 tricks (only 9 if the defense is able to

6	♠ AT874	
	♥ KQT5	
	♦ Q6	
	♣ 42	
♠ Q963		♠ KJ
♥ J87		♥ 9642
♦ AJ43		♦ KT5
♣ 87		♣ KT53
	♠ 52	
	♥ A3	
	♦ 9872	
	♣ AQJ96	

Dir East
E-W Vul

third round. With two tricks already lost and with three apparent trump losers, one might conclude that 3♠ is down one. Not so! Declarer cashes the ♠A and exits a Spade. She wins the Heart return in Dummy, ruffs another Diamond, cashes ♥KQ, finesses the ♣Q, cashes the ♣A. Now, at Trick 12, Declarer has just one trump left (the Ten), and West has two trumps (Q9). A Club is led from the board and the ♠T scores a trick *en passant*! That may seem double dummy, but perhaps it isn't so obscure. After all, the play on the first two rounds of trumps did suggest that the suit might be 4-2, in which case that was the only way to make the hand.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠?
Pass	3♠?	All Pass	

It's hard to imagine South not opening 1♣, and after she does what else can she rebid but 2♠? Now the auction gets distinctly awkward, and we have arranged for North to play in a perilous 3♠ contract so that she can show off her superior Declarer skills.

The Play in 3♠: The defense starts with Diamonds and Declarer ruffs the

7

♠ 982
♥ 95
♦ 82
♣ AT9654

♠ Q5
♥ AT743
♦ A953
♣ 73

♠ KJ7643
♥ KJ8
♦ K64
♣ K

♠ AT
♥ Q62
♦ QJT7
♣ QJ82

Dir South
Both Vul

to guess the trumps correctly. But there's a trap here! If Declarer plays on trumps immediately and then knocks out the ♠A, the defense can cash two Clubs, holding Declarer to 10 tricks. The route to 11 tricks is to play on Spades first (and if the defense plays two rounds of Clubs, Dummy must ruff with the Jack, cleverly unblocking). Nicely done, that's 11 tricks.

The Play in 4♠: An easier 11 tricks, assuming the correct Heart guess.

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
1♦	1♥	Pass	??

What next? If E-W play a new suit opposite an overcall as forcing, then there's little to be lost by bidding 1♠ ... and if a new suit is not forcing then East might raise Hearts immediately (perhaps via a cue-bid). The bottom line is a contract of 4♥ or 4♠.

The Play in 4♥: Declarer (West) will win the opening Diamond lead in hand (he'll need Dummy's ♦K as an entry to the Spades), and South's

8

♠ QT65
♥ T9643
♦ K3
♣ 76

♠ 9874
♥ KJ7
♦ 94
♣ AKT5

♠ A32
♥ AQ8
♦ J876
♣ Q82

♠ KJ
♥ 52
♦ AQT52
♣ J943

Dir West
None Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	1NT	Pass
2NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

After all that space consumed by the Coup en Passant on Board 6 and the delicate timing and unblocking on Board 7, we are relieved that brevity will suffice here. East ends up in 2NT and if South leads a Club it's 8 easy tricks ... if South leads a Diamond (despite East's opening bid) then Declarer will have to guess the Clubs to make 8 tricks. He probably won't.

9

♠ KT8
♥ T52
♦ J8752
♣ KT

♠ J52
♥ 3
♦ KQ4
♣ QJ7653

♠ A74
♥ KQJ986
♦ A3
♣ 92

♠ Q963
♥ A74
♦ T96
♣ A84

Dlr North
E-W Vul

A Might-Have-Been: If South were dealt ♥ATx then we just know that you N-S pairs would have arranged a trump promotion ... after winning the ♥A, you'd cash ♠A, ♠Q, ♠K ... now a Diamond promotes South's ♥T!

10

♠ KQJ2
♥ 643
♦ K72
♣ QT7

♠ 9754
♥ Q8
♦ AJ
♣ J5432

♠ T863
♥ K52
♦ 986
♣ 986

♠ A
♥ AJT97
♦ QT543
♣ AK

Dlr East
Both Vul

greedy and risky way to play the hand. Having got to the superior spot of 3NT, Declarer should maximize her chances of beating the 4♥ pairs, and with that in mind she won't unblock the Clubs, eventually scoring just 11 tricks. But no matter, +660 still beats those who played in 4♥.

11

♠ T984
♥ AK65
♦ 9832
♣ Q

♠ K6
♥ QT43
♦ J
♣ J98764

♠ 3
♥ J9872
♦ AK65
♣ K53

♠ AQJ752
♥
♦ QT74
♣ AT2

Dlr South
None Vul

trumps (no reason to play the non-vul and silent West for two singletons). Better for West to lead a Heart, win the ♠K, then lead a Diamond and get the ruff for down one! But an awake Declarer will stop that malarkey by cashing both Hearts (pitching Diamonds) before trying the Spade finesse.

12

♠ T9642
♥ 92
♦ QJ6
♣ KT9

♠ Q83
♥ 3
♦ K8
♣ QJ76532

♠ KJ7
♥ AKJT76
♦ A32
♣ 4

♠ A5
♥ Q854
♦ T9754
♣ A8

Dlr West
N-S Vul

Diamond, and Declarer takes the ♠K, ♠A and ruffs a Diamond. Now a Spade to the King and South's Ace, at which point the contract can only be beaten if South continues Spades and later underleads her ♠A to North's King. Now a Spade ruff is the 4th defensive trick. Nice defense!

The Play in Clubs: Trumps can be played for two losers (a Club to the Queen and King, and later a low Club). But not against good defenders, they have two ways to conjure up a third trump trick: (a) Spade attack, North wins her ♠K, Spade ruff with the Ace, North wins a third trump; or (b) Heart leads, producing a trump promotion for North!

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

East has a little bit extra but not quite enough for a 3♥ rebid. So he contents himself with a top-of-the-line 2♥ rebid and that's where he plays it. South might well lead a Spade, low from Dummy, North inserts the Ten and Declarer wins the Ace. Next come three Diamond tricks, Declarer pitching a Club loser. When the Hearts break 3-3 Declarer cruises home with 9 easy tricks.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3♦
Pass		Pass	3NT

All Pass

South did well to offer a choice of games with her 3NT bid.

The Play in 4♥: Declarer does not have the entries to take two Heart finesses and manages only 10 tricks.

The Play in 3NT: No fewer than 12 tricks are possible on a Club lead by unblocking both black suits, and leading towards the ♦K. But that's a

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	??	

If that ♠Q were tucked into a 4-card suit, then North would have a limit raise. But the actual hand is good enough (though tempting!), so North either bids a top-of-the-range 2♠, or (if playing Bergen Raises) shows a so-called constructive raise. Either way, South will barrel into game.

The Play in 4♠: If West leads his singleton Diamond, the defense gets the ♦K, ♦A and a ruff. But that's all, as Declarer will surely guess the

trumps (no reason to play the non-vul and silent West for two singletons). Better for West to lead a Heart, win the ♠K, then lead a Diamond and get the ruff for down one! But an awake Declarer will stop that malarkey by cashing both Hearts (pitching Diamonds) before trying the Spade finesse.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	3♥	All Pass

White vs Red, it's common practice to throw in a preempt on the flimsiest of pretexts, but perhaps it's not such a great idea for West to open 3♠ when holding two outside stoppers.

The Play in Hearts: "Normal" bidding gets E-W to 3♥, but some pairs might stumble into 4♥. The good news for the sound 3♥ bidders is that 4♥ can be beaten, but the bad news is that it probably won't be. South leads a

13

♠ 4
♥ AKQ8
♦ QJ2
♣ Q8743

♠ K865
♥ 54
♦ A843
♣ A65

♠ Q92
♥ T7632
♦ K9
♣ KJT

♠ AJT73
♥ J9
♦ T765
♣ 92

Dlr North
Both Vul

and 5 Hearts in their hand and perpetrated an overcall of 1♥. They'll get what they deserve. Instead of scoring +200 on defense they will manage a small plus or (more likely) go minus.

14

♠ K94
♥ KJT87
♦ Q2
♣ A63

♠ Q62
♥ 5
♦ AK75
♣ KQ872

♠ T8
♥ AQ
♦ J9863
♣ T954

♠ AJ753
♥ 98432
♦ T4
♣ J

Dlr East
None Vul

How should Declarer play the Spades? By now it will be pretty clear that West started with 3=1=4=5 distribution, but who has the ♠Q? There seems to be room for it in either hand, so we suppose that Declarer will take the straightforward finesse against East, rather than the more exotic backwards finesse (which also requires the Ten to be with East). So down two unless North is a terrific guesser.

15

♠ KQT7543
♥ K3
♦ Q
♣ KJ9

♠ 86
♥ JT62
♦ T962
♣ AT2

♠ AJ92
♥ A9654
♦ AJ3
♣ Q

♠
♥ Q7
♦ K8754
♣ 876543

Dlr South
N-S Vul

The Play in Hearts: We don't see many E-W pairs getting to game on these cards, but the fact is that East has 10 tricks playing in Hearts. South leads a Club, and Declarer must rely on a 2-2 Heart break. When he gets that he uses Dummy's Spade ruffs as entries to play on Diamonds (he needs just one of the missing honors to be onside).

16

♠ 5
♥ 75432
♦ KQJ
♣ K962

♠ KJ9864
♥ JT9
♦ 75
♣ 85

♠ AQT3
♥ KQ
♦ T632
♣ JT7

♠ 72
♥ A86
♦ A984
♣ AQ43

Dlr West
E-W Vul

If West passes in first seat then East will open in 3rd seat. Even playing 5-card majors, he may well try 1♠, reckoning that his side is likely to be defending and that a Spade opening lead from Partner is more desirable than a Diamond. After a 1♠ opening, a stubborn West may not sell out to 4♥, even at this vulnerability (but look at all those losers!). 4♠ will be doubled for -500, after which West may wish he had opened 2♠!

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

An ugly deal for the N-S pairs! South can hardly leave North to flounder in 1NT, and cannot bid 2♦ (that would be New Minor Forcing for most), so she must hope that 2♠ turns out to be playable. It's not and -200 is the best that South can hope for.

A 1♥ Overcall? We know that you wouldn't do it, but perhaps some other East players counted 9 HCP

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

Some Wests will prefer to open 1♦ (planning to rebid 2♠), but West's plan above was to rebid 1NT if East responded 1♥. East's Double was highly speculative, but worked well when the defense turned out to have four sure tricks. The play starts: Club to Declarer's Ace, ruff a Club, lose to the ♥Q. The ♥A and two Diamonds are cashed, and West exits a Club.

Here's another trouble deal for N-S. North has a pretty good hand but chooses the wrong time to compete to 3♠. Down two and -500 is the best that North can hope for and if she misguesses the Clubs it will be -800.

Anyone for a Redouble? South might have tried an SOS Redouble, but 4♠ doubled is no better, and also has that -500 or -800 look about it.

The Play in Hearts: We don't see many E-W pairs getting to game on these cards, but the fact is that East has 10 tricks playing in Hearts. South leads a Club, and Declarer must rely on a 2-2 Heart break. When he gets that he uses Dummy's Spade ruffs as entries to play on Diamonds (he needs just one of the missing honors to be onside).

West	North	East	South
2♠?	Pass	3♠	Dbl?
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

If you think that West's (vulnerable) 2♠ is quite abominable then you are not being unkind. On the actual deal, a 2♠ opening is likely to have one of two outcomes ... either E-W will steal the pot for 3♠ down one ... or (more likely) N-S will be pushed into a game they might otherwise have missed (4♥ is cold but to get there South must dredge up a Double of 3♠, which we suppose that she will).

17

♠ 976
♥ J98
♦ J74
♣ 9852

♠ AK2
♥ 6542
♦ 85
♣ KQT4

♠ Q
♥ KQT7
♦ AKQT96
♣ 63

♠ JT8543
♥ A3
♦ 32
♣ AJ7

Dlr North
None Vul

Spade won in Dummy (the entry situation does not allow Declarer's Club losers to be dumped on the Spades), and immediately finessees the ♥T (reasonably assuming that the ♥A is with South). When that works there are 11 tricks and even those pairs who flirted with slam and played at the 5-level will live to tell the tale.

18

♠ KT7
♥ K7
♦ Q8764
♣ K98

♠ QJ6543
♥ Q3
♦ A
♣ QT32

♠ 98
♥ 96
♦ J9532
♣ J765

Dlr East
N-S Vul

can ruff his ♦K on the board and finesse Spades ... if it loses then the ♥Q is available as an entry for the Spade finesse. Nicely done, except for the slight problem that *both* major-suit Kings are offside and Declarer is held to 10 tricks. Perhaps you noticed that there is a double dummy route to 11 tricks (you don't finesse the Spade, instead you rattle off all the trumps, strip-squeezing North in the black suits).

19

♠ J
♥ 9743
♦ K962
♣ KJ96

♠ 86432
♥ 852
♦ AQ4
♣ AQ

♠ K7
♥ KQJ
♦ T853
♣ T432

♠ AQT95
♥ AT6
♦ J7
♣ 875

Dlr South
E-W Vul

+90) but, having pretended to have an opening bid on account of the lovely Spades, South might further pretend that she has a 6-card suit and elect to rebid 2♠. Good choice, that's also 8 tricks and +110.

If N-S play that 1NT is not forcing then they can do even better if South passes. That's 8 tricks yet again for +120.

20

♠ QJ8732
♥
♦ AJT
♣ AK82

♠ A5
♥ J97542
♦ 75
♣ QT5

♠ T964
♥ AKT8
♦ 432
♣ J4

♠ K
♥ Q63
♦ KQ986
♣ 9763

Dlr West
Both Vul

has been lost and Declarer can manage only 9 tricks!
The Winning Line in 4♠: As before, the ♥A is ruffed and the ♠K loses to West's Ace. But then, when a Heart is returned, Declarer pitches a Club. Now Dummy's ♥Q stops the force and Declarer has 10 tricks.

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	1♠
Dbl	Pass	4♥	All Pass

East may have only 16 HCP (and two of those are wasted) but it's a hand with great playing strength (just four losers) so he's good value for that majestic leap to 4♥. As for West, he might have tried for slam, but sensibly decided that his hand had too many flaws (rotten trumps, no Diamond honors, and every one of his HCP in Partner's short suits).

The Play in Hearts: South leads a

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

For most, that East hand is too good for a Weak Two, in which case West might end up declaring 4♥ via the auction above. Let's say that North starts out with a Diamond (the only lead not to blow a trick). That is won by Dummy's Ace, and Declarer now has the chance to make a fine play. He leads a *low* Heart from Dummy, finessing the Jack ... if it wins then he

South	West	North	East
1♠?	Pass	1NT	Pass
??			

There have been some debatable opening actions in this set and here's another. The South hand does not quite pass the Rule of 20 (add the HCP to the number of cards in the two longest suits) but, even so, at this vulnerability that Spade suit begs to be bid don't you think? After which ...

If N-S play that 1NT is forcing then South is probably supposed to bid 2♠ (which North passes for 8 tricks and

+90) but, having pretended to have an opening bid on account of the lovely Spades, South might further pretend that she has a 6-card suit and elect to rebid 2♠. Good choice, that's also 8 tricks and +110.

If N-S play that 1NT is not forcing then they can do even better if South passes. That's 8 tricks yet again for +120.

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠

All Pass

West declines to open an alarmingly vulnerable 2♥ (thereby avoiding -800 in 4♥ doubled) and N-S wind up in the sensible contract of 4♠.

The Losing Line in 4♠: The ♥A is ruffed; the ♠K loses to West's Ace; Heart ruff; the ♠Q and ♠J are cashed. Oops! If Spades had been 3-3 it would have been 12 tricks but, when they turn out to be 4-2, trump control

21

♠ Q984
♥ 9
♦ AT6
♣ AJT73

♠ A
♥ AQ763
♦ QJ74
♣ Q92

♠ JT763
♥ K52
♦ K932
♣ 4

♠ K52
♥ JT84
♦ 85
♣ K865

Dlr North
N-S Vul

opening Diamond, wins the second, and ruffs a Diamond. If the bidding persuades Declarer that East is short in Clubs, then trumps will be picked up successfully. How about Spades? The best hope is that one defender or the other holds singleton or doubleton Ace. Again the bidding will guide Declarer to the right decision. *Note:* For entry reasons, Declarer finessees the first round of Clubs (risking losing to East's singleton Queen).

22

♠ J75
♥ A76
♦ A54
♣ 9865

♠ KQT93
♥ 84
♦ 7632
♣ K4

♠ 642
♥ J52
♦ KQJ98
♣ A2

♠ A8
♥ KQT93
♦ T
♣ QJT73

Dlr East
E-W Vul

East's Spades are as bad as can be, his hand is as weak as can be, and E-W are as vulnerable as can be. Moving on to the South hand and her 3♥ bid. It's purely preemptive, if South wanted to try for game (which she's close to doing) then she would bid something else (perhaps 3♠). Playing in Hearts, South makes 10 tricks, thanks to the 3-2 Heart break and the absence of a defensive Club ruff. How about a Spade contract by East? It's possible for the defense to score six tricks (♦A, Diamond ruff, ♥A, Diamond ruff, after which the defense still has a Heart and the ♠J to come), but that may not happen.

23

♠ J43
♥ Q4
♦ AQ98
♣ Q752

♠ Q8
♥ T9753
♦ J6
♣ J964

♠ T97652
♥ 8
♦ K732
♣ KT

♠ AK
♥ AKJ62
♦ T54
♣ A83

Dlr South
Both Vul

N-S to 3NT from the other side, West leads a Club, and it's still 11 tricks.

24

♠ KQJ985
♥ 76
♦ A83
♣ 94

♠ 762
♥ QJ84
♦ K6
♣ AK86

♠ T4
♥ 92
♦ J962
♣ QJ732

♠ A3
♥ AKT53
♦ QT74
♣ T5

Dlr West
None Vul

West is known to be 3=4=2=4 (or conceivably 3=4=3=3), and has to date shown up with only 10 HCP (♥QJ and ♠AK), so he needs the ♦K to complete his opening bid. Accordingly, Declarer cashes the ♦A and finessees the Ten for 10 tricks.

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl!	Pass
2♥	3♠	All Pass	

Nowadays just about everyone opens North's hand, after which the auction is on auto-pilot until East's third bid. Nice Double! This is primarily for take-out, even though there is only one unbid suit. West bids 2♦ or 2♥ (9 tricks in both) but North pushes on to 3♠ (based on the extra Club).

The Play in 3♠: Declarer ducks the opening Diamond, wins the second, and ruffs a Diamond. If the bidding persuades Declarer that East is short in Clubs, then trumps will be picked up successfully. How about Spades? The best hope is that one defender or the other holds singleton or doubleton Ace. Again the bidding will guide Declarer to the right decision. *Note:* For entry reasons, Declarer finessees the first round of Clubs (risking losing to East's singleton Queen).

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♥	Pass?	3♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

We suggest that East's Diamond suit comes under the category of "Too good not to bid!" (see also Boards 3, 6, 19). That being so, East can choose between an opening bid of 1♦ and 2♦. Let's assume that East goes with 1♦, and let's further assume that E-W are playing Support Doubles. Should East double 2♥ to show 3-card Spade support? We don't think so!

East's Spades are as bad as can be, his hand is as weak as can be, and E-W are as vulnerable as can be. Moving on to the South hand and her 3♥ bid. It's purely preemptive, if South wanted to try for game (which she's close to doing) then she would bid something else (perhaps 3♠). Playing in Hearts, South makes 10 tricks, thanks to the 3-2 Heart break and the absence of a defensive Club ruff. How about a Spade contract by East? It's possible for the defense to score six tricks (♦A, Diamond ruff, ♥A, Diamond ruff, after which the defense still has a Heart and the ♠J to come), but that may not happen.

South	West	North	East
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

North bids a Forcing NT and declares 3NT. East leads a Spade won in Dummy. The ♦T is covered by Jack and Queen, and regardless of whether or not East craftily ducks, Declarer has 11 tricks (three Diamonds, a Club, only four Hearts, but a surprising three Spades).

Alternative Auction: If N-S are not playing a 2/1 style then North will respond 2♦ instead of 1NT. That gets

West	North	East	South
1♠	1♠	3♠	3♥
Pass	4♠!	All Pass	

East's 3♠ was preemptive and North's Spades were good enough to be trumps even opposite possible shortness. Against 4♠, let's say that the defense cashes two Clubs, followed by a trump shift. Trumps are drawn, the ♥A and ♥K are cashed (just in case there is a doubleton QJ lurking out there), a Heart is ruffed and now Declarer must guess the Diamonds. Not much of a guess!

25

♠ 98543
♥ KJ9
♦ AT3
♣ J6

♠ T6 ♠ 7
♥ A85 ♥ QT743
♦ J87654 ♦ K
♣ A9 ♣ Q85432
♠ AKQJ2
♥ 62
♦ Q92
♣ KT7

Dlr North
E-W Vul

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

All Pass

North's 2♣ is Drury, the popular passed-hand convention, asking if South's third-seat opening is sound. It is and South has just about enough to zip straight to 4♠, but that turns out to be a poor contract.

If West leads a Diamond then 4♠ can still be made but it probably won't be. An unsuspecting Declarer plays low from Dummy, East wins the King,

gets back to West's ♠A and scores a ruff for down one.

If West leads a trump Declarer needs some luck and/or good guessing in all three side-suits if she is to make her contract. Trumps are drawn and the ♦Q is run around to East's King. East shifts to a Club, and now Declarer is but a Heart guess away from 10 tricks.

26

♠ KJ6
♥ 85
♦ Q9642
♣ QT2

♠ A9 ♠ 85
♥ QT962 ♥ A73
♦ 7 ♦ AJ853
♣ AJ854 ♣ K96
♠ QT7432
♥ KJ4
♦ KT
♣ 73

Dlr East
Both Vul

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

North leads a Spade against 4♥, and the success of the contract depends on playing trumps for one loser. What's *your* choice?

Method A: Run the Ten and if North plays low then run the Nine on the second round (60%)

Method B: Cash the ♥A, planning later to finesse the Ten (67%).

Are there any good reasons from the bidding to buck these odds? Well, South has longer Spades (they are probably 6-3), but then again South probably has more HCP. So, when the hand-wringing is over, Declarer tries Method B, and racks up 10 tricks.

27

♠ A865
♥ QJ8
♦ AJ942
♣ 8

♠ 974 ♠ J
♥ 964 ♥ AKT532
♦ 873 ♦ QT
♣ Q654 ♣ KT92
♠ KQT32
♥ 7
♦ K65
♣ AJ73

Dlr South
None Vul

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

North's 4♠ was a splinter, showing shortness and Spade support. Opposite shortness, South had a semi-suitable Club holding and so cue-bid 4♠, after which the N-S auction fizzled out in game. West might well lead a Heart after this auction, should it be a low Heart (showing 3 or 4) or a high Heart (denying an honor)? Either runs the risk of putting East to a guess at Trick

1, and on the actual layout the lead of the ♥9 could be most unfortunate. East might hope that West has a doubleton Heart and ♠Txx, in which case it's right to play three rounds of Hearts, seeking a trump promotion. Alas for the defense, this only serves to set up a Diamond pitch for Declarer, and that's 12 tricks. But only 11 tricks at the other tables, as there's no compelling reason for Declarer to guess the Diamonds correctly.

28

♠ J
♥ QJT94
♦ AK96
♣ K84

♠ AT9762 ♠ Q83
♥ 7 ♥ AK82
♦ J4 ♦ 2
♣ 9763 ♣ AQT52
♠ K54
♥ 653
♦ QT8753
♣ J

Dlr West
N-S Vul

West	North	East	South
2♠	Dbl	4♠	All Pass

At this vulnerability N-S will have no idea whether East's 4♠ is serious or not, but neither has an excuse to bid at the 5-level (5♦ doubled is -800).

The Play in 4♠: North cashes the ♠A and shifts to the ♥Q. As on Board 26, Declarer must decide how to play trumps when missing KJ. This time, though, there are 9 combined trumps, and there's not much to choose between cashing the Ace or running the Queen. The latter works like a

charm on the actual deal, picking up the whole suit, and if Declarer can further guess right by finessing the ♠Q and not the ♠T then he'll score a huge 12 tricks. We confess that we would misguess the Clubs, we'd play North for KJx or KJxx based on the bidding. Anyway, it's 10, 11, or 12 tricks depending upon Declarer's black suit guesses.

29

♠ 754
♥ 2
♦ Q98643
♣ KJ2

♠ 863 ♠ KQT9
♥ 853 ♥ JT764
♦ A7 ♦ K
♣ 98643 ♣ QT7

♠ AJ2
♥ AKQ9
♦ JT52
♣ A5

Dlr North
Both Vul

West	North	East	South
	Pass	??	1♦

North's Diamonds are too flimsy for a vulnerable Weak Two, and South bids the suit first. Now what? North is not good enough to invite game, but too good for a preempt. Nowadays, many pairs have methods which allow them to show this in-between type of hand, here is one of them:

- 2♦ is "inverted", which (as North is a passed hand) in this case shows game-invitational values.

- 3♦ is preemptive (5 Diamonds, 0-5 HCP or thereabouts)

- 2♠ is the in-between "constructive" raise.

But, whatever the methods in use, we'd expect N-S to get to 5♦ or 3NT, played from the South side. 5♦ is far and away the superior contract, it's 11 routine tricks. By contrast, 3NT will go down on many layouts, but on this particular layout it hits the matchpoint jackpot, making 10 tricks thanks to the fortunate Spade situation.

30

♠ 65
♥ KJT7652
♦ Q7
♣ A8

♠ Q9432 ♠ JT87
♥ A98 ♥ 3
♦ 5 ♦ KJT93
♣ J763 ♣ KT5

♠ AK
♥ Q4
♦ A8642
♣ Q942

Dlr East
None Vul

West	North	East	South
	Pass	4♦	1NT
	Pass	4♥	Dbl? Pass!
			All Pass

North's 4♦ was a Texas Transfer, and now South is on course to declare 4♥, making just 10 tricks when West leads a Diamond (or a Club). But in the auction above, our over-active East intervenes with a lead-directing Double, allowing North to be Declarer after South cleverly passes the Double. On lead against 4♥, East cannot profitably attack the minor

suits and will no doubt start out with the ♠J. Dummy wins that and, before tackling trumps, Declarer takes his Club Ace and leads towards the ♠Q. This sets up a pitch for the Diamond loser and Declarer has 11 tricks!

31

♠ AQJT6
♥ KQ87
♦ 4
♣ J65

♠ 932 ♠ 74
♥ JT9543 ♥ A
♦ 2 ♦ AJT65
♣ Q43 ♣ AKT82

♠ K85
♥ 62
♦ KQ9873
♣ 97

Dlr South
N-S Vul

South	West	North	East
2♦	Pass	??	

How do you play 2♦ in this situation? The two most common treatments:

- *Forcing for one round*

- *Non-forcing but constructive*

In the latter case, when Opener has a below-average Weak Two, she can pass 2♠ or retreat to 3♦ ... or with a better hand she can raise to 3♠ or 4♠, or make some other forward-going bid (such as bidding No Trump or showing a feature).

So, if N-S play 2♠ here as forcing, then North will probably guess to pass 2♦, for fear that things may get out of hand. That won't be a great success (probably down two). However, if N-S are playing that 2♠ is constructive, then North may well try that, after which East bids 3♠ and South 3♠ (she's not good enough to bid game). But nobody can make much of anything and 8 tricks is the maximum in Clubs and in Spades. But down one in 3♠ beats down two in 2♦!

32

♠ 876543
♥ K93
♦ 3
♣ JT2

♠ AQJ2 ♠ 9
♥ 86 ♥ AJT5
♦ Q96 ♦ J752
♣ AQ97 ♣ K653

♠ KT
♥ Q742
♦ AKT84
♣ 84

Dlr West
E-W Vul

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	??	

OK, all you Easts out there! Did you invite game with 2NT or did you boot out 3NT? Opposite a 15-17 1NT those 9-counts are on the cusp and general practice is to go to game with the good nines, invite with the lesser nines. This one rates somewhere in the middle, that ♥T looks useful, but that's it in terms of plusses. Anyway, the pessimists who invited game will languish in 2NT and the optimists will

make a somewhat fortunate game (onside and doubleton ♠K, split Heart honors, onside ♦T, 3-2 Clubs). In fact, if South throws in a 2♦ bid and North dutifully leads the suit, it's easy to see 10 tricks materializing.