

ACBL Charity Game

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

1

♠ A K Q 7 6 2	West	North	East	South
♥ K 7 5 3		1♠	3♣	3♠
♦ A 2		5♣	5♠	All Pass
♣ 8				

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

Dlr N
None Vul

♠ J 10 9 4
♥ 10 4 2
♦ K Q 9 4
♣ K 5

5♣ ... and one by N-S (managing to scrounge up 11 tricks in 5♣).

2

♠ A J 8	West	North	East	South
♥ K Q 9			1NT	All Pass
♦ J 8 6 4				
♣ 6 5 3				

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

Dlr East
N-S Vul

♠ Q 4
♥ A J 2
♦ K 7 5
♣ 10 9 8 7 4

finesse loses and Declarer is now down two! Nice technique, rotten luck!
Back to the Bidding: (a) East has a quite atrocious 15-17 1NT (square, no Tens, all the HCP in 3-card suits) but, with vulnerable opponents, let's not be too fastidious, opening 1NT here has preemptive value. (b) Assuming that East does indeed open 1NT, some Wests may embark on a Garbage Stayman expedition. That gets E-W to 2♠, down one.

3

♠ 6 4	South	West	North	East
♥ A Q 8 6 5	1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
♦ Q 10 5	3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass
♣ Q J 6				

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

Dlr South
E-W Vul

♠ A K J 10 8
♥ 4
♦ A 7 6
♣ K 9 8 5

the ♠J, cashes the ♥Q (West unblocking the Jack!), the second Spade finesse loses, and the defense cashes two Hearts, holding Declarer to just 9 tricks! Hands up, please, all the E-W pairs who found *that* defense!
Post Script 1: If Declarer finesses the Spade at Trick 2 she is down one!
Post Script 2: Yes, the best way to shut out the Diamonds is for Declarer to *duck* at Trick 1, but in that case a Heart shift at Trick 2 would be most unpleasant if East happens to hold the ♥K.

4

♠ Q J 7 3 2	West	North	East	South
♥ K J 9 2	Pass	1♠	3♣	3♠
♦ A Q J 2	Pass	4♠	All Pass	
♣				

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

Dlr West
Both Vul

♠ 10 8 6 5 4
♥ A 5 4
♦ 8 3
♣ Q 7 6

West declines to get involved, which is just as well because 5♣ doubled goes for 1400 after a Diamond lead and North's fiendish shift to the ♥J (a "surrounding play"). It's a mere 800 on a Spade opening lead. Playing in 4♠ North has 10 tricks, and 11 if she corrals the ♥Q by leading the Jack from hand (but when Declarer makes this play, it is the highly anti-percentage "backward finesse").

March 17, 2010

5

♠ K 10 6 3			
♥ Q 10 7 6 3			
♦ K J 6			
♣ K			

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

Dlr North
N-S Vul

♠ A 9 5
♥ A J 9
♦ 10 4 3
♣ A J 9 7

Club return; cash the last Heart; cross to the ♠A. In the 4-card ending Declarer has already scored 8 tricks and holds ♠106 ♦K6, while Dummy has ♠9 ♦10 ♠AJ. What's West got left? He must hold on to ♠87 ♠QT so the Diamonds will have been pitched away by now. But to no avail! The ♠9 is overtaken by the Ten, and West is thrown in with a Spade. Very nice, the forced Club return results in a whopping 11 tricks!
The Play in 4♥: No helpful Diamond lead here, so it will be 9 or 10 or 11 tricks depending on how well Declarer guesses Spade and Diamonds.

6

♠ 10	West	North	East	South
♥ J 9 3			1♥	Dbl
♦ 9 8 6 5 4 3	Pass	2♦	Pass	2♠
♣ 9 6 2	Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

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

Dlr East
E-W Vul

♠ A K Q 9 8
♥ K 8 4
♦ J
♣ A Q 8 4

trump, Declarer can come to no more than 6 tricks.

7

♠ Q 4 3 2	West	North	East	South
♥ A 5				Pass
♦ Q 5 2	Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
♣ K 10 7 6	2♥	Pass	2♥	Pass

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

Dlr South
Both Vul

♠ J 9 7
♥ J 10 9 7
♦ J 8 6
♣ 8 5 2

Spade, creating transportation problems for Declarer. It would be risky to cash the second Spade next, and the winning line (which always works when the ♥A is with North and sometimes when it isn't) is to overtake the ♠Q with the Ace, cash the Diamonds, and lead a Heart to the King. Now the ♠K is cashed (Declarer pitches a Heart), North gets thrown in with a Heart, and is end-played in Clubs! 10 tricks!

8

♠ K 7 4	West	North	East	South
♥ 8 7	1♦	Pass	1♥	1♠
♦ Q 9 4	2♥	2♠	4♥	4♠
♣ K 10 8 5 2	Pass	Pass	5♥	All Pass

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

Dlr West
None Vul

♠ Q 10 9 8 6 3
♥ A J 4
♦
♣ Q J 4 3

There will be lots of bidding on this wild deal, and we hesitate to predict when it will stop. **If East plays in Hearts:** 10 tricks on a Spade lead, and 11 on a Club lead if Declarer guesses Hearts (he may well not). **If West plays in Diamonds:** 10 or 11 tricks, depending on the Heart guess. **If South plays in Spades:** Only 9 tricks in theory (♠A opening lead followed by a ruff), but probably 10 tricks in practice (♦A opening lead).

9	♠ 8 5 4 ♥ A J 2 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ Q 9 8 2	West 1NT 2♥	North Pass Pass All Pass	East 1♠ 2♣	South Pass Pass
♠ 3 ♥ K Q 9 8 4 3 ♦ Q 9 8 7 ♣ J 7	♠ K Q J 9 2 ♥ 7 ♦ K 10 5 ♣ A K 4 3	Cautious (but sensible) bidding by East! Yes, the 16 HCP constitute extras (<i>substantial</i> extras, nowadays!) but game seems unlikely and surely it's better to hope for a plus score in 2♥ rather than to invite game in NT.			
<i>Dlr North</i> <i>E-W Vul</i>	♠ A 10 7 6 ♥ 10 6 5 ♦ J 6 2 ♣ 10 6 5	The Play in 2♥: We have absolutely no idea what North is supposed to lead after that auction, but we can say that a Club is the most testing.			

Declarer will want to avoid a Diamond guess, so he wins the ♠A and plays on Spades immediately, setting up two Diamond pitches while there is still access to Dummy. Making 9 tricks, with no Diamond guess required.

The Play in 3NT: If East optimistically invites game, West will declare 3NT. Even if North leads a helpful Diamond (what else?) there are just not enough tricks, Declarer needed the onside ♠10 to have a chance.

10	♠ A 9 8 2 ♥ A K J 8 ♦ A Q 9 ♣ 7 2	Choose your own auction, but we predict that the contract will be 3NT throughout ACBL-land, although it could be played from either side.
♠ Q J T 4 3 ♥ 7 5 4 ♦ J 4 ♣ 9 8 4	♠ 6 ♥ 10 9 3 2 ♦ K 8 5 3 2 ♣ A J 6	3NT Played by South: West leads the ♠Q and that presents Declarer with an immediate dilemma ... either win the trick in hand, securing a 3 rd Spade trick but using up a valuable entry ... or win on the board, giving up on the 3 rd Spade and hoping for luck in Clubs. We like the first approach, which brings in 10 anxiety-free tricks, requiring no Club luck. But the
<i>Dlr East</i> <i>Both Vul</i>	♠ K 7 5 ♥ Q 6 ♦ 10 7 6 ♣ K Q 10 5 3	second choice turns out to be the winner, bringing in 11 tricks when Clubs are worth 4 tricks (that's only about a 20% chance, by the way).

3NT Played by North: Declarer will presumably have opened 1♠, prompting a Heart lead from East. The play might go: Heart won by the Queen; ♥A; ♠K; finesse ♠9 losing to the King; ♥K; lose to the ♠A, etc. As before, setting up the lucky Club suit brings in 11 tricks.

11	♠ A Q J 10 ♥ Q J 5 3 ♦ 8 4 3 2 ♣ 8	South Pass Pass All Pass	West 1♠ 2NT	North Pass Pass	East 2♣ 3NT
♠ K 8 7 5 3 ♥ K 9 6 ♦ A Q 7 ♣ J 9	♠ 6 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K J 6 ♣ A K 6 5 3 2	3NT is an abominable contract, due largely to the Diamond wastage and the appalling absence of Tens. North leads a low Heart to South's Ace, Declarer wins the ♥K on the 2 nd or 3 rd round, and amuses the assembled throng of kibitzers by running the ♠J (just in case North has Qxx and forgets to cover!). But South wins that trick and, holding another Club			
<i>Dlr South</i> <i>None Vul</i>	♠ 9 4 ♥ A 10 7 4 ♦ 10 9 5 ♣ Q 10 7 4	stopper in her hand, she can safely shift to a Spade (nice play, there is no rush to cash the Hearts). Declarer refrains from playing the ♠K on this trick (that would be a fast down four), North wins, and cashes the Hearts. North does best to exit with a Diamond (now it's a slow down four), but she may fear that the Clubs are running and might bang down the ♠A, allowing Declarer to escape for down "only" three.			

12	♠ Q 6 5 3 ♥ K 4 ♦ J 6 4 ♣ A 7 5 3	West Pass?	North Pass	East Pass?	South Pass
♠ A K 10 7 4 ♥ 10 9 8 2 ♦ Q 9 8 ♣ 10	♠ J 9 ♥ A 7 5 3 ♦ K 7 5 3 ♣ K 8 2	At this vulnerability, with a good suit, West might try a 5-card Weak Two (not a great success, it's down one). Assuming that West passes, some Easts will be overcome by an illogical but irresistible urge to open a light 1♦ in 3 rd seat. Alas, there's unlikely to be a grisly fate for this bid. Either East will guess to pass the 1♠ response (+80 if they are allowed to play there), or else E-W will stumble into their Heart fit for +140 (but Declarer must			
<i>Dlr West</i> <i>N-S Vul</i>	♠ 8 2 ♥ Q J 6 ♦ A 10 2 ♣ Q J 9 6 4	take a third round ruffing finesse in Spades if he is to score 9 tricks). We can only hope that E-W get pushed to 3♥ and then misguess the Spades.			

13	♠ 8 5 3 ♥ K 6 4 ♦ K J 7 ♣ A J 8 6	West Pass All Pass	North Pass? 2♣	East Pass Pass	South 1♠? 2♣
♠ 9 6 4 ♥ Q J 9 ♦ A 10 9 4 2 ♣ 5 3	♠ A J 7 ♥ A 10 2 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ 10 9 7 4	Not every 12-count is worth opening, and we offer the North hand as a case in point. That square and Ten-less collection looks like a Pass to us (and for those who like the Rule of 20 we'll also mention that North's hand flubs the test). How about South? This 12-count we <i>would</i> open, and being in 3 rd seat there's much to be said for bidding the chunky 4-card			
<i>Dlr North</i> <i>Both Vul</i>	♠ K Q 10 2 ♥ 8 7 5 3 ♦ Q 3 ♣ K Q 2	major as a lead-director. 2♣ was Drury (Spade support and a good passed hand), and 2♠ said "minimum opener". There's little to the play in 2♠, it's 8 tricks. Unfortunately for our N-S, there are also 8 tricks in No Trump, but at least North's original Pass kept N-S from getting too high.			

14	♠ K Q 4 3 ♥ 10 6 ♦ A K Q 7 6 4 ♣ 9	West 1♠ 2♠?	North 2♦ 3♦	East 1♠ Pass All Pass	South Pass Pass
♠ A J 10 7 5 2 ♥ J 5 ♦ 8 ♣ J 10 7 4	♠ 9 ♥ A K 8 4 ♦ 10 9 5 3 ♣ A Q 6 3	At his second turn, West could bid 3♣ or 2♠ (3♠ would be a bit much). He chose the higher-scoring Spades and faced another problem next time around. While making his disciplined Pass, West no doubt felt a little guilty about never showing Club support.			
<i>Dlr East</i> <i>None Vul</i>	♠ 8 6 ♥ Q 9 7 3 2 ♦ J 2 ♣ K 8 5 2	The Play in 3♦: The defense scores ♠A, ♥AK and ♠K, and the setting trick can come in one of two ways ... either			

from a mundane Spade ruff ... or from the more exotic uppercut (♥A, ♥K, then a Heart ruff and overruff, promoting a trump trick for East).

If East plays in Clubs: South leads ♠J, overtaken by North who shoots back a trump to stop the cross-ruff. Declarer wins the Ace, then: Diamond ruff; ♠A; Spade ruff; Diamond ruff; ♥A; ♥K; Diamond ruff. Next comes a Spade exit, and when South is forced to ruff in at Trick 11, she is end-played in trumps, thereby conceding the 9th trick. Nicely played!

If West plays in Spades: ♠A (low by South); low Diamond ruffed; ♠A; ♠J to North's Queen; Diamond ruff. Now, if Declarer plays another trump he loses control and has only 6 tricks. Safer (after the second Diamond ruff) is to play on Clubs, leaving two trumps out. Making 8 tricks.

15	♠ A K 9 3 ♥ K J 10 7 4 2 ♦ 5 ♣ 8 5	South Pass Pass Pass	West 1♠? 1NT 3NT	North 1♥ 2♥ All Pass	East 1♠ 2NT
♠ 7 ♥ A 9 5 ♦ Q 10 9 2 ♣ A Q J 7 2	♠ J 10 8 6 5 ♥ 8 3 ♦ A K 7 ♣ K 10 3	Here, when West opens, he expects East to respond 1♠, creating a rebid problem. There are differing opinions on how West should cope with this:			
<i>Dlr South</i> <i>N-S Vul</i>	♠ Q 4 2 ♥ Q 6 ♦ J 8 6 4 3 ♣ 9 6 4	A: <i>Open 1♦ and rebid 2♣:</i> A popular style, but not our own favorite, especially here where the Clubs are so much stronger than the Diamonds.			

B: *Open 1♠ and rebid 2♣:* That rebid is usually a 6-card suit, but OK here, we think, given the suit strength. C: *Open 1♠ and rebid 1NT:* Those who dislike rebidding 1NT with a singleton will, of course, prefer Plan A or B. We expect all three plans to arrive in 3NT with West as Declarer. That's 10 easy tricks when North shows out on the second round of Diamonds.

16	♠ Q 10 9 7 5 ♥ Q J 2 ♦ ♣ K J 10 4 3	West Pass 3♦?	North Pass? 4♥	East 1♦ All Pass	South 1♥
♠ 6 2 ♥ 9 8 7 ♦ Q J 10 8 7 ♣ 8 6 2	♠ A 8 4 3 ♥ K 6 ♦ A 6 5 4 ♣ Q 9 7	We'd be tempted to open North's 9-count. It's only 19 on the Rule of 20 scale, but look at those lovely fillers and that luscious void! How about that 3♦ preempt by West? Yes, suicidal is the word with that shape at this vulnerability (and 800 is the number if doubled). But West avoids that fate and South declares 4♥. West's opening lead is the ♠Q, ruffed in Dummy. The Heart finesse works,			
<i>Dlr West</i> <i>E-W Vul</i>	♠ K J ♥ A 10 5 4 3 ♦ K 9 3 2 ♣ A 5	but the defense cashes ♠A when in with ♠A. Making 11 tricks.			

17

♠ A K J 7 3
♥ A J 9 7
♦ 6
♣ K 6 2

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

Dlr North ♥ K Q 6 4 3 2
None Vul ♦ 10 9 8 5 2
♣ A 10

That splinter improves the South hand, and as there is little point in Blackwooding with a void, she simply blasts into slam. 12 easy tricks.

18

♠ K 10 9 2
♥ J 8 3
♦ A 10 3
♣ J 5 4

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

Dlr East ♠ A J 7 6 5 4
N-S Vul ♥ 2
♦ 8 6 5 2
♣ A 10

useless), so bidding 4♥ over 3♠ is something of a stretch (but not completely nuts). And West? He has not much more than your basic minimum Takeout Double and it's not obvious that he should bid again. Yes, there's a definite downside to doubling when holding a 5-card major (we might lose a 5-3 fit) and if West had dredged up 3♥ over 2♠ then E-W would certainly reach 4♥. We rather like a 3♥ overcall, but we also realize that we may be in a minority and we urge you to seek a second opinion.

19

♠ 4
♥ A K 5 2
♦ K 8 6 4
♣ K 8 5 2

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

Dlr South ♠ A Q 8 3
E-W Vul ♥ 8 7
♦ 10 7 5
♣ A Q 9 4

recap sheet to be littered with N-S scores of -100.

20

♠ K 8 7 6
♥ Q 10 8 5
♦ J 7
♣ 10 8 5

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

Dlr West ♠ Q J 2
Both Vul ♥ K 6 4 3
♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ A J

Declarer's Ace. At Trick 2 a Club is led to the King, but unfortunately it is South who has the Ace. Then, when the ♥10 also turns out to be in the wrong place, it's all over. The Hearts are cashed and, although that is still only four tricks for the defense, there is no way that Declarer can take more than eight tricks.

The Play in Clubs: North leads a Heart and Declarer can make 11 tricks by crossing to the ♠A, leading a Club to his Queen, then ducking a Club to South's Ace. But there's no reason to play Clubs that way, it's more likely that Declarer will lead a Club to the King at Trick 2, making just 10 tricks.

Did anyone reach the excellent Heart slam? It's a tall order, and this is the best auction that we could come with:

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	6♥

All Pass

Even in a "Two Over One" style of bidding we would respond 2♥, though it could work out badly if a fit is not found. But here a fit is found, and North announces that fact with a joyous leap to 4♦, a splinter bid showing shortness and Heart support.

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

In this auction N-S had an easy ride to 3♠, making 9 tricks. This will not be a good E-W result, they belong in 4♥ for two reasons: (a) 4♥ would make given a little luck in the Club suit, and (b) even when 4♥ is down one it is a good save against 3♠.

What Went Wrong? Maybe not much went wrong at all, it's easy to see that auction repeated at a few tables.

East has a working 7-count (that ♠Q is

21

♠ J 5 3
♥ J 5 4 2
♦ J 9 6 3
♣ 10 8

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

Dlr North ♠ K 4
N-S Vul ♥ Q 10 9 8 3
♦ Q 10 7
♣ 6 5 2

Yes, indeed, intermediates in key suits certainly matter (see also North's hands on Boards 16 and 24). Having said that, East could well have held the ♠K instead of one of those less useful red Kings, so an auction such as 1♠ 1♠, 4♠ 5♠, 6♠ would be quite reasonable. The bad news for West is no ♠K with East ... the good news is the great Spade fillers!

22

♠ A 10 7 2
♥ Q J
♦ 10 9 8 7
♣ J 3 2

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

Dlr East ♠ K
E-W Vul ♥ 8 7 6 2
♦ A Q J 6 2
♣ K 10 6

N-S had a big Diamond fit and were able to squeak home in 3♦.

23

♠ A 9 2
♥ 8 7 6
♦ K Q J 3 2
♣ 9 7

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

Dlr South ♠ Q 8 7 3
Both Vul ♥ 9 5 2
♦ 9 5
♣ K 10 8 4

Declarer. Now North fiendishly shifts to a low Spade and Declarer guesses to play low from Dummy. South's Queen wins the trick, the ♠9 return is covered by the Ten, and North's Jack takes that one. North cannot profitably continue Diamonds, and Declarer has 9 tricks.

24

♠ Q J 10 9 8 4 3
♥ A Q 9 7
♦ 6 5
♣

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

Dlr West ♠ A 6
None Vul ♥ 10
♦ A K 8
♣ A Q 8 7 6 4 3

opening and 2♠ rebid it's but a matter of moments before 6♠ is reached.

The Play in 6♠: If East leads anything but a Spade then Declarer can ruff two Hearts on the board and, if necessary, would have got rid of a Heart on the ♠A. 12 easy tricks! We cannot imagine that any Easts would find the diabolical opening lead of a low Spade, but here's Declarer's equally diabolical retort: Win ♠Q; ♠A; Club ruff; ♠A; Club ruff; cash the three remaining Spades. By now, East has come down to ♥ KJ2 ♠ KJ and his hand is reduced to ruins when a Diamond is led to Dummy's King. It's a Throw-In Squeeze! 12 not-so-easy tricks!

Slam in Spades (or, even better, in NT) is a good proposition (thanks to those solid Spade intermediates), it's around 75%. Did you get there? If so then "Well done!" Now, without meaning to rain on the slam bidders' parade, here's an impertinent question. "Would your auction have been the same if East's Spade holding had been 8xxx instead of 1098x?" We suspect that it might have been but the fact of the matter is that now the odds of making slam have just plummeted to a paltry 34%!

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

We would refrain from opening 2♠ with that East hand, all the more so considering that the vulnerability is alarmingly unfavorable. But, in the ensuing auction, East certainly made up for that initial Pass by boldly competing to 2♠, even after North had shown 4 Spades. Luckily for East, West had two Spades ... less luckily,

25

♠ K 4	
♥ A K	
♦ Q J 10 7	
♣ Q J 8 6 5	
♠ J 10 9 3	♠ Q 8 6 5 2
♥ J 8 3	♥ Q 9 6 2
♦ A K 8 4 3 2	♦ 9 5
♣	♣ 9 2
	♠ A 7
Dlr North	♥ 10 7 5 4
E-W Vul	♦ 6
	♣ A K 10 7 4 3

with one less Club and one more Heart, in which case 6♣ has almost no play. We expect the field to be in 3NT, making 10 tricks on a Spade lead.

Afterthought: Did any hyper-active Wests throw in a lead-directing 2♦ over 2♠? That's extremely dangerous at this vulnerability and could easily go for 500 (more than the N-S game). On the actual layout it has another way to lose, provoking East into leading a Diamond against 3NT, and giving Declarer the timing to set up an 11th trick in Diamonds.

26

♠ 8 7 3 2		West	North	East	South
♥ A 5				Pass	Pass
♦ A K Q 7		Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
♣ J 10 3		Pass	2♠	Pass	3♠
		Pass	4♠	All Pass	
♠ K	♠ A J 10	After N-S have completed their			
♥ 10 9 8 6	♥ Q 7 3 2	leisurely stroll to 4♠, West will lead the			
♦ J 10 6 3	♦ 8 5 4 2	♥10, we imagine. Two of Declarer's			
♣ K Q 5 4	♣ 7 2	Clubs can go on the Diamonds but			
	♠ Q 9 6 5 4	there is still one inescapable Club			
Dlr East	♥ K J 4	loser. The rest of the hand is good			
Both Vul	♦ 9	except for the small matter of trumps.			
	♣ A 9 8 6	What's the best play to avoid three			

defense these two lines are theoretically equal ... *either* play low from both hands, then a Spade towards the Queen (only two losers when West has singleton Ace or King) ... *or* lead a Spade from Dummy, planning to cover the Jack or Ten with the Queen (only two losers when East has AK10 or AKJ). The first line is the winner on the actual layout. It also offers better practical chances, as some Easts holding AKJ or AK10 may see no reason to duck the first round. So, we'd lead the first trump from the board and give East a chance to go wrong, and if East plays low then so would we. Making 10 tricks with the right trump guess.

27

♠ Q J 9 8		South	West	North	East
♥ 10 2		Pass	2♠	Pass	3♥
♦ K 8 7 3 2		Pass	4♥	All Pass	
♣ A 2		No doubt East would have preferred a			
♠ A K 10 7 5 4	♠ 3	longer and/or more robust suit for his			
♥ J 7 4	♥ A K 8 6 3	3♥ bid, but he strikes gold on this			
♦ 5	♦ A Q 10 9 4	occasion. Against 4♥ South will lead			
♣ 10 5 4	♣ K Q	a minor suit, and Declarer will start			
	♠ 6 2	ruffing Diamonds on the board. As			
Dlr South	♥ Q 9 5	soon as the ♦J appears, there are 10			
None Vul	♦ J 6	tricks (when trumps are 3-2). Of			
	♣ J 9 8 7 6 3	course, Declarer will take a second			

opening home 11 tricks). But making just four should be a fine E-W result.

28

♠ K 7 5		South's 4 th seat 15-17 1NT buys the			
♥ J 9 5 4		contract, and good defense holds her			
♦ Q		to 7 tricks. West sensibly chooses			
♣ 9 8 7 4 3		the safe-looking ♠10 lead which is			
♠ 10 9 8	♠ J 3 2	won by Declarer; ♥Q to West's Ace;			
♥ A 6	♥ K 7 3 2	the ♦K shift is ducked; West reverts to			
♦ K J 8 4	♦ 9 5 3 2	Spades, won by Declarer; Heart is			
♣ Q 6 5 2	♣ A J	ducked by East; another Heart is won			
	♠ A Q 6 4	by East; Diamond to West's Eight;			
Dlr West	♥ Q 10 8	Club to the Ace; Club to the King.			
N-S Vul	♦ A 10 7 6	Now Declarer has 8 tricks but can			
	♣ K 10	only untangle 7 of them. That was			

fine E-W defense, and West did especially well with his passive opening lead (this is often a good idea against 1NT when the strength is on the leader's right). Note that the aggressive opening lead of a low Diamond results in 8 tricks for Declarer.

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

then the hand is worth a Takeout Double. By this reckoning East falls short by a point but that won't stop the more red-blooded Easts, who will also say "Phooey!" to the vulnerability and to the lack of fillers as they issue their direct Double. Other Easts will pass originally and double back in on the next round of bidding. Either way, West is likely to declare 3♦.

The Play in 3♦: Looking at all four hands there only three obvious losers (two trumps and the ♥A), but Declarer cannot quite handle the 3-1 trump break and 9 tricks is the limit. After North leads the ♠Q, Declarer could take two early Spade ruffs in Dummy, but he would shorten his own trumps in the process and risk losing control. It seems better to lead a Heart at Trick 2, and let's say that South craftily ducks. Now a Diamond to the King and Ace, after which North gets a Heart ruff and 9 tricks it is.

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♠ Q J 10 6 5		West	North	East	South
♥ 10 9 5 4				Pass	Pass
♦ Q 10 3		2♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
♣ 5		2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
		3♥	Pass	3NT	All Pass
♠ A K 8	♠ 3	3NT is a poor contract and it gets			
♥ K 6	♥ A J 8 7 3	progressively worse as events			
♦ K J 6 4	♦ 9 7 2	tragically unfold. Declarer wins the			
♠ A K J 8	♠ 9 7 4 3	opening Spade lead, and, due to the			
	♠ 9 7 4 2	acute shortage of Dummy entries,			
Dlr East	♥ Q 2	plays ♣A and ♠K, hoping that there is			
None Vul	♦ A 8 5	a doubleton ♣Q, or, failing that, at			
	♣ Q 10 6 2	least a third Club trick and an entry to			

the board. Alas for Declarer, North shows out on the second round, so Declarer now plays the ♥K followed by the losing ♥J finesse. We'll spare you the gory details and simply say that with normal play Declarer will end up down three.

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♠ 5 4 3		South	West	North	East
♥ Q 10 8 3		1♠	Pass	Pass	??
♦ J 8 7 6		What does a balancing 2NT mean?			
♣ 3 2		The "standard" treatment is that it is			
♠ 10 9 8 7	♠ Q J 6	<i>natural</i> and the exact range depends			
♥ A 9 2	♥ K 4	to some degree on the range for a			
♦ 9 4 3	♦ A Q 10	balancing 1NT. One scheme is:			
♠ J 10 6	♠ A K 8 7 4	1NT: 11-15			
	♠ A K 2	Double then 1NT: 16-18			
Dlr South	♥ J 7 6 5	2NT: 19-20.			
N-S Vul	♦ K 5 2	By all means tinker with the exact			
	♣ Q 9 5	ranges but that's the general idea.			

Having said all that, we wouldn't be bidding with this hand! As N-S are vulnerable there is a good chance of scoring at least +200 by defending 1♠, so our guess would be to pass and hope that we cannot make game. Passing does indeed turn out to be the winner on the actual board. Declarer will struggle to take four tricks, and that's +300 for E-W on a deal where they can make only 7 or 8 tricks in No Trump.

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♠ A 10 7 3		West	North	East	South
♥ 4 2		Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
♦ 10 9 2		Pass	2♠	3♦	4♠
♣ Q J 9 6		All Pass			
♠ 9 5 4	♠ 6	Some pairs use 16 HCP as the upper			
♥ J 9 8 7 6	♥ Q 10 5 3	limit for their overcalls, but the			
♦ 7 5	♦ K Q J 8 4 3	modern style for a higher threshold,			
♣ 5 4 3	♣ A K	let's say 18 or thereabouts. If that's			
	♠ K Q J 8 2	the case then South is not too good			
Dlr West	♥ A K	for a 1♠ overcall. But, whichever			
E-W Vul	♦ A 6	route South takes, N-S are destined			
	♠ 10 8 7 2	to play in 4♠, making 10 tricks on all			

of those lines of play which do not include an established revoke.