

ACBL-wide International Fund #2 • Thurs. afternoon • 5/13/10

Bd: 1 ♠ Q 7 2
 Dir: North ♥ K
 Vul: None ♦ A J 8 6 2
 ♣ A K 10 6

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

♠ K J 10 9 6
 ♥ Q J 7 3 2
 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ 2

North-South should struggle up to 4♠. After 1♦-1♠, North must rebid 2♣; his hand isn't strong enough to commit to game with a jump to 3♣. Some Souths will be willing to force with a bid of 2♥ next. Then North can jump to 3♠, and South will go on to game. Other Souths will decline to force with only 9 HCP and will take a 2♦ preference. Then 2♠ by North will show a good hand (North would raise directly with ♠QJ2 ♥4 ♦AJ862 ♣AJ63) and should induce South to try for game. If West leads a club

Bd: 5 ♠ K Q J 9 4
 Dir: North ♥ J 10 9
 Vul: N-S ♦ A K 3 2
 ♣ 6

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

♠ A 10 8 3 2
 ♥ Q 8 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ 8 7 4 3

South will often raise North's 1♠ opening straight to 4♠. If North can't take ten tricks, it's all but certain that East-West could have made something had they been allowed easy entry into the auction. At many tables, West will go quietly, and North will lose a club and two hearts, making four. A few Wests will look for a profitable sacrifice by bidding 4NT for takeout – a winning decision. East will pull to 5♣, and North-South will probably double. If the defenders start with three rounds of diamonds, South

can ruff for the third defensive trick, but East can take the rest, escaping for -100. Better defense holds him to nine tricks, but North-South may be stuck with a poor matchpoint result for +300, since many pairs will register +620. A few North-Souths will push on to 5♠, -100 for a zero.

against 4♠, South can win and lose a heart to East's ace. South can ruff a heart in dummy, draw trumps and end with 11 tricks. But the auction may guide West to the best opening lead of a trump, and then the defenders can stop the heart ruff and win two hearts and a trump, conceding only -420 for a good matchpoint result.

Bd: 2 ♠ 9
 Dir: East ♥ A J 9 7 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ 9 2
 ♣ K 10 5 3 2

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

♠ 7
 ♥ 6 4
 ♦ K Q J 10 8 5 4
 ♣ Q J 7

If East opens 2♠, South should pass. A 3♦ overcall would show more high-card strength; a jump to 4♦ would be even stronger. (Most theorists reject the notion of preempts over preempts.) If West lifts hopefully to 4♠, South will lead the ♦K, and we can imagine a series of plays that would let East get home. He ducks the first diamond, and South shifts to the ♣Q, also ducked. East wins the next club, draws trumps, takes the ♣A and ♦A, and ruffs dummy's last club. With the minors stripped, he leads a heart to

Bd: 6 ♠ K 5 3
 Dir: East ♥ A K J 5 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ J 10 9 3
 ♣ 8

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

♠ 10 7
 ♥ 8 6 3
 ♦ A 6 4
 ♣ A 9 7 4 2

A few Wests will open 1♣. North will overcall 1♥, and South's raise to 2♥ will be passed out. North should take ten tricks, off a spade and two diamonds, and that result may look flattish to North-South. But at many tables, West will open 1NT. North could still enter with a 2♥ overcall or with a convention such as "Cappelletti" to show length in hearts and a minor suit. Then North-South might play at a heart partial for +170 again. But if North notes the vulnerability, he might make the good tactical decision

to pass 1NT and try for a worthwhile penalty. If West plays at 1NT, the defenders can pick him clean: North leads a high heart, gets a discouraging signal and shifts to the ♦J, ducked to the king. When South takes the ♣A, he returns a heart, and the defenders get five hearts, two diamonds and one club for the magic +200 and a top.

the queen, and North is endplayed when he wins. In real life, declarer will have little reason to find such a play instead of simply finessing with the ♥10, and the defenders have ample opportunity to break up the endplay anyway. Hence, +50 to North-South will be a common and about average result.

Bd: 3 ♠ 10 5 2
 Dir: South ♥ A J 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ A J 10 8 4
 ♣ 5 2

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

♠ J 9 6 3
 ♥ K Q 9 7 4 3
 ♦ 9
 ♣ 10 7

South's hand is questionable for a first-seat weak 2♥ opening: the hand has poor intermediates and four cards in the other major suit. Some Souths will open 2♥ anyway, West will overcall 3♣, North can bid 3♥ and East can compete with 4♣. West will do well to pass when it's tempting to have a shot at game. At tables where South passes as dealer, a possible auction is 1♣-1♦-2♠-2♥, 3♣-3♥-4♣-Pass ... and again West must be disciplined enough to pass to avoid a minus score. In fact, West

Bd: 7 ♠ A 6 3
 Dir: South ♥ K Q J 2
 Vul: Both ♦ K J 7 6
 ♣ 10 4

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

♠ J 7 2
 ♥ A 5 4 3
 ♦ 9 5 4 3
 ♣ K 7

If North opens 1♦, nobody can say whether East should act; overcalling style is a matter of instinct and temperament. If East passes, South responds 1♥, North raises to 2♥ and all pass. The ♦Q opening lead would always beat 2♥ if North is declarer, but 2♥ is likely to go down one on any lead. If East is willing to overcall 2♣ (perhaps because that action has obstructive value), some Souths will raise to 2♦, West can try 3♣, and if North goes to 3♦ and plays there, he'll go down two – and may

be doubled by West. Other Souths will try a negative double. If West raises to 3♣, North may feel he must compete with 3♥, and again, North-South may suffer a two-trick set. A few East-West pairs will play at a club partial, and East should take ten tricks, but with many North-Souths going -200, East-West may score only average for +130.

can't make even 4♣ against best defense: ♦A, diamond ruff, heart, diamond ruff. In real life, North is likely to lead the ♥A, and then the defenders can take only three tricks. East-West pairs will score well for +130, losing only to pairs who collect +300 against 4♥ doubled.

Bd: 4 ♠ —
 Dir: West ♥ A K 9 8 7 4
 Vul: Both ♦ J 9 7
 ♣ K J 4 2

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

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

When North opens 1♥, South will respond 1♠, and North will rebid 2♥. After two passes most Wests will pass. If East leads the ♣A and another club, West will ruff, but that defense obliges him to ruff with a natural trump trick and concedes a tempo as well. North can ruff the spade return, draw trumps and take two diamond finesses for +170. When 2♥ comes around to West, he might balance with 2♠ (natural). That bold action will have much to gain. If North-South sell out, or if they go to

Bd: 8 ♠ K 4 3
 Dir: West ♥ 9 3
 Vul: None ♦ K 8
 ♣ K 9 8 6 5 2

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

♠ Q J 8 7
 ♥ J 10 8 7 4
 ♦ 2
 ♣ Q 10 7

When West opens 1♦, some Norths will pass, East will respond 1♥, West will rebid 3♦ and East will have a shot at 3NT. If South leads the ♠Q, East must win immediately for fear of a club shift. When he finesses in diamonds, North wins, and the defenders cash three spades to hold East to his contract. At other tables, though, North will overcall a light 2♣, an action that has significant obstructive value over 1♦. East has a good negative double, and South might raise to 3♣. If West takes a chance

and bids 3NT, he'll lose his gamble when North leads a club and the diamond finesse loses. If instead West settles for a 3♦ rebid, East may pass. East-West can reach the makable 5♦ only if East aggressively raises 3♦ to 4♦ or if West jumps to 4♦ at his second turn. East-West may score a 75% board for +400.

3♥ and East competes to 3♠, passed out, West can take nine tricks for +140 with best play. And if East-West defend 3♥, East will lead a spade, and the defenders can lead spades whenever they get in. North can't maintain control and will be held to nine tricks, salvaging some matchpoints for East-West.

Bd: 9 ♠ K J 9 7 6
 Dir: North ♥ A 7 5 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ 8 5 4 3
 ♣ —

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

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

This board may be explosive. After two passes, South can open 2♦, and West will wonder which of his suits to bid. Whether he starts with 3♣, hoping for an economical chance to show the hearts later, or with 2♥, North can leap to 5♦. Then many Easts will fall into the trap of doubling, and if West passes and leads a club, South can make an overtrick. He ruffs in dummy, leads to the ♦K, ruffs a club, takes the ♠AK and leads the ♠J, pitching a heart when East plays low. South ruffs a spade, goes to the ♥A and leads

the good spade, and East can get only his ♦A. East-West will be +650 or +550 at many tables. At the vulnerability, few East-West will go to 6♣. They could be doubled for -500, but in practice North will lead a diamond, and West can ditch a spade on the ♦A and get out for -200, winning plenty of matchpoints.

Bd: 13 ♠ Q J 10 7 3
 Dir: North ♥ K 9 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 8 6
 ♣ K 7 3

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

♠ A 5 4
 ♥ J 10 8 7 4
 ♦ A K 9 2
 ♣ Q

East has too much defense to preempt (plus a tolerance for both majors). If he opens 1♣, South may overcall 1♥. A few Wests will jump to 3♦ (weak) – just what East wants to hear – but if West passes, North can raise to 2♥, and East will compete with 3♣. Then South may try for game with 3♦, but North's ♠K will look wasted to him and he'll sign off at 3♥. Perfect defense will beat 3♥: West leads the ♦Q, and East ruffs and leads the ♣A and a club. West overruffs South and gives East

another diamond ruff, and East's ♥A scores. (At other tables, North-South will go down at a spade partial after South doubles 1♣.) East-West may score well for +100, especially since some Easts will get carried away and compete to 4♣. After South leads the ♥J, East will lose two hearts, two spades and a trump for -200.

Bd: 10 ♠ K Q 8 5
 Dir: East ♥ A Q 10 5
 Vul: Both ♦ K J 7 4
 ♣ 5

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

♠ 10 7 6 4 3 2
 ♥ 9 3 2
 ♦ 5
 ♣ 10 9 7

If the auction starts 1♣-Pass-1♥, North can double. If East redoubles to show extra strength, South can jump enterprisingly to 3♠, preemptive. After two passes, East will be stuck and may try 3NT – down two if West passes. If West's first bid is 1♦, North doubles again. A jump to 3♦ by East would have a preemptive flavor, so East may redouble and support the diamonds later. (True, for some Easts a redouble would conventionally show three cards in West's suit.) Wests who play at diamonds will

struggle to win nine tricks against the bad trump break. Only precise defense beats 4♠ by South. West must lead hearts early, and the defenders must also keep South out of his hand so he can't lead to the ♦J to get a timely discard for his third heart. All in all, North-South will need +200 for a good matchpoint score.

Bd: 14 ♠ Q 8 7 6 2
 Dir: East ♥ 7 2
 Vul: None ♦ K 8 4
 ♣ 9 6 2

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

♠ A K 9 5
 ♥ J 8 3
 ♦ Q 5
 ♣ A Q J 8

When East opens 1♥, most Souths will double and worry later: a good partner will respond in spades, clubs or notrump, not in diamonds. West may toss in a trashy raise to 2♥, but North has a five-card spade suit and two useful honors: he is worth a competitive bid of 2♠. Then South may raise to 4♠, hoping if North doesn't have the ♣K, a finesse through the opening bidder will win. South's visualization in on target: after the defenders start with three rounds of hearts, North can ruff, lead to the

♣J, draw trumps, repeat the club finesse and lose two hearts and a diamond. Would North-South reach game without West's 2♥ bid? North would respond 1♠ and South would raise to 2♠, but whether North would try for game or South would accept a try is uncertain. North-South will score 75% of the matchpoints for +420.

Bd: 11 ♠ Q 2
 Dir: South ♥ 10 8 5
 Vul: None ♦ 10 6 5 2
 ♣ K 5 3 2

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

♠ K 10 8 5 3
 ♥ A 7
 ♦ 9
 ♣ Q 9 7 6 4

East-West should reach 4♥ somehow. West's high-card structure isn't the best, but his black jacks are accompanied by aces, and he has major-suit length. If he opens 1♦, East will respond 1♥. South might double or try 1♠, and West should raise to 2♥ despite his minimum. East will then bid 4♥. At tables where West declines to open, East will start with 1♦. If South overcalls 1♠, West doubles (negative) and can raise East's 2♥ to game since all his honors are working. Few North-Souths

will find the club lead to hold East-West to ten tricks. (If West is declarer after South has bid spades, North will surely lead the ♠Q.) After a diamond lead, East can force out the ♥A and later draw trumps, run the diamonds for a club discard and ruff a club for an 11th trick. East-West may need +450 to avoid a poor matchpoint result.

Bd: 15 ♠ A 10 9 6 3
 Dir: South ♥ 7 3 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ 10 8 4
 ♣ 9 6

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

♠ 7 5 2
 ♥ 10 5
 ♦ J 6 5 2
 ♣ A J 8 2

If West is willing to open 1♣ with his 2 1/2 quick tricks, East can suggest slam with a jump to 2♥. West might slow things down by rebidding 2NT, and East can raise to 3NT, saying that his slam interest was mild. At a few tables, West won't open, and East may open 1♥ since his hand is too heavy for 1NT, even with a range of 16 to 18 points. West might jump to 2NT – natural by a passed hand – and East will raise to 3NT. Suppose North leads the ♠10, and West wins in dummy, gets to his hand with a diamond and

leads a club to the king and ace. When South returns a spade, North must be careful to take his ace; he can tell from the bidding that his side has no more winners. Plus 460 to East-West will score only a little above average. A few pairs will err by playing at 4♥ for +450 and a poor matchpoint result.

Bd: 12 ♠ 9 8 3 2
 Dir: West ♥ A 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ K Q 6 5 4
 ♣ J 10

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

♠ Q 5
 ♥ 8 5 3
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ K Q 9 5 4 3

If East-West use "Standard" methods, East will respond 2♣ to West's 1♠ opening. When West rebids 2♥, East should raise to 4♥ instead of settling for a game invitation. His 11 points are ideal: he has good trumps plus side aces, and even his ♠10 may be an asset. If instead East-West use a "game-forcing-two-over-one" style, East can't force to game with a 2♣ response and must start with 1NT, but when West rebids 2♥, East can raise to game again. North will lead the ♦K, dummy wins and South signals

encouragement. When West starts the trumps, North can win, cash the ♦Q and give South a diamond ruff, holding declarer to his contract. Plus 420 to East-West will be a common and about average result.

Bd: 16 ♠ A K 9 3
 Dir: West ♥ K J 6
 Vul: E-W ♦ K J 6
 ♣ J 10 2

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

♠ 10 8 4
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ 5 3 2
 ♣ K Q 9 8 4

When West opens 1♥, North can overcall 1NT, and East can try 2♥. If all pass, North will lead a high spade and shift to the ♣J. West wins, loses a diamond finesse, ruffs North's club return, takes the ♦A and ruffs a diamond. Then if he guesses to leave the trumps alone and play on crossruff lines, he can take nine tricks. Norths at 1NT should make it: North wins the third heart, leads the ♣J to dummy's king and returns a diamond to his jack. He leads the ♠10 to the queen and returns another diamond to win seven tricks. (North can block the hearts by playing his king on the second heart, but then East can grab his ♣A, cash the ♥Q and lead a diamond for the same result.) East-West will need +110 to avoid a poor matchpoint score.

Bd: 17 ♠ A J 9 5
 Dir: North ♥ K 9 4 3
 Vul: None ♦ A K 7
 ♣ 8 6

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

♠ K Q 8 7 6 2
 ♥ A Q 5
 ♦ 8 6 3
 ♣ J

North-South have a play for slam but not, alas, as the East-West cards lie. Most Norths will open 1NT, and South might respond 2♥, a transfer, and raise North's 2♠ acceptance to 4♠ as a mild try for slam. (If South wanted to play at game, he could transfer at the four level.) North has prime values, but his overall values are minimum and his ♠J is a wasted point. He'll do well to pass. After the ♦Q opening lead, North can run some trumps and test the hearts, but he'll lose a club and a diamond. A few

Bd: 21 ♠ 6 4
 Dir: North ♥ 10 9 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 10 9 3 2
 ♣ J 10 8

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

♠ K 10
 ♥ K Q 4
 ♦ A J 7 6
 ♣ A Q 9 4

We think about half the Easts will open 1♠. The vulnerability is attractive, and if East passed, he'd be nervous if South also passed and West started to think – maybe about whether to open a borderline hand with weak spades. South will double 1♠, West bids 2♠, and after two passes South doubles again. If North takes out to 3♦ and South passes, West may be tempted to compete with 3♠ because he has four trumps. Then North-South could double and defend precisely for +800 but may sell

to 3♠ undoubled for +150 – the same score available at 3♦. At tables where East doesn't open, South will start with 1♣. If North scrapes up 1♦, East will overcall 1♠, but South may jump to 2NT, passed out. With both minor suits coming in, South can make 3NT with an overtrick, and a few bold pairs will be +630 for a lucky top.

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Bd: 18 ♠ A 10
 Dir: East ♥ Q 4 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ 7 6 4 2
 ♣ 9 7 6 5

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

♠ K J 8 7 6
 ♥ A 5 3
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ J 4 3

This board should produce few sparks. East opens 1♦, and South will usually risk a 1♠ overcall even though his side is vulnerable and his long suit is ragged. West lacks the values to bid 2♥ but can try a negative double, and East's 1NT rebid will end the auction. South will lead a spade, and North takes the ace and returns the ten. Whether East covers with the queen or not, South can win to continue spades, setting up two more spade tricks to go with his two red aces. East will have seven tricks

Bd: 22 ♠ –
 Dir: East ♥ J 10 7 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 10 7 5 3
 ♣ 6 5 3 2

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

♠ Q J 10 7 2
 ♥ –
 ♦ K 9 2
 ♣ K J 10 7 4

Here's a taxing deal. When East opens 1♠, some Souths will overcall 2♣, perhaps thinking North won't have many spades and will have club support. West can make a negative double, and North might jump to 4♣, preemptive. East will bid 4♥, but whether North-South will proceed to save at 5♣ is uncertain. At other tables, South will pass over 1♠, and East-West will reach 4♥ again: West may temporize with a 2♦ response or a forcing 1NT. The bad breaks will vex declarers at 4♥, and the play may be

complex. If South leads the ♣J, East can succeed with best play. If instead South leads the ♠Q and dummy plays low, North must take care not to "ruff a loser." Souths at 5♣ doubled should be down one, but a few Souths may be allowed to make. We think any pair who manages a plus score will do well in the matchpoint column.

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Bd: 19 ♠ 8 5 4 2
 Dir: South ♥ A Q
 Vul: E-W ♦ 9 7 6
 ♣ K 10 6 2

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

♠ K Q 10 9
 ♥ J 9 8 5 4
 ♦ 4 3
 ♣ 9 8

West will usually raise East's 1NT to 3NT: West has a fair five-card suit and two tens. If South leads a heart, East may well put up the king since he doesn't want to see North win and shift to spades. After North takes the ♥AQ and leads a high spade, East will take the ace and run five diamonds, but if he next finesses in clubs (South having pitched one club), he'll lose the rest for -300. If instead East plays the dummy's ten on the first heart, North will win and shift to spades, and East should be

Bd: 23 ♠ K 10 3
 Dir: South ♥ A 8 4
 Vul: Both ♦ A 8 7 6
 ♣ J 7 3

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

♠ A 9 6
 ♥ Q 9 2
 ♦ Q J 5 2
 ♣ 10 4 2

It's an oddity of matchpoint scoring that a benign deal such as this one has as many matchpoints at stake as a grand-slam deal. North will probably open 1♦ in third position. A raise to 2♦ by South will be passed out since West is in the wrong position to balance – just as well, it appears, for East-West since they have no fit anywhere. (But they might struggle home with eight tricks at either major suit.) Against 2♦ the defense should inevitably win six tricks – a spade, a heart, a diamond and three clubs – for

down two but can go down only one with inspired guessing. A few Souths may try a spade opening lead – perhaps the ♠Q, asking North to follow with the jack if he has it. If East ducks, South must find a heart shift – not obvious – to have a shot at a two-trick set. We think East-West will score well if they get out for -100.

+100. Other Souths will do better with a 1NT response. They'll also buy the contract and should emerge with seven tricks on any defense, and North-South will pick up a surprisingly good matchpoint result for +90.

Bd: 20 ♠ 5 4 3
 Dir: West ♥ K 10 9
 Vul: Both ♦ Q 10 9 7
 ♣ 9 8 7

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

♠ Q 9 8
 ♥ Q 7 5 3
 ♦ J 3
 ♣ K J 5 2

East-West will go to the well again, bidding another close 3NT as on Board 19. Here, when East opens 1NT, West may settle for an invitation since his long suit is poor, but East will go to game. Say South leads a heart, and North takes the king and returns the ten to dummy's ace. A spade finesse loses, and South exits with the ♦J. Then declarer can take the ♦AK and three spades, and exit either with the ♥J, forcing South to lead from the ♣K, or in clubs, forcing South to concede a trick to the ♥J at

Bd: 24 ♠ A 7 6
 Dir: West ♥ Q 10 5
 Vul: None ♦ K J 8 2
 ♣ K Q 6

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

♠ Q J 9 8 5 3
 ♥ 9 3
 ♦ Q 4 3
 ♣ A 8

If North opens 1NT to show 15 to 17 points, South may transfer with a 4♥ response. (Many pairs treat a two-level transfer followed by a jump to game as a mild try for slam.) When North accepts with 4♠, few Easts will lead a red ace; to lead the ♣10 is normal. North will take three clubs to ditch a heart from dummy and lead a heart. If the defense forces dummy to ruff a heart, North loses a trump finesse but loses only to the ♦A besides, making game. North-South may feel entitled to grumble if they

stop low after North downgrades his hand and opens 1♦. South responds 1♠, North bids 1NT and South may take a conservative view and rebid 2♠. We think North-South will score about a 70% board for +420. As it happens, 4♠ may be easier to beat at tables where North-South don't use transfers and South becomes declarer.

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Bd: 25 ♠ A 10 4 3
 Dir: North ♥ 7 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ 7 2
 ♣ AK 10 8 3
 ♠ 9 8 5 ♠ J 7 2
 ♥ K Q J 8 4 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ AK 9 6 4 ♦ Q J 3
 ♣ — ♣ Q J 9 7 2
 ♠ K Q 6
 ♥ A 10 5 2
 ♦ 10 8 5
 ♣ 6 5 4

It's not clear what West should do after 1♣ by North, 1♥ response by South. Some Wests will overcall 2♦; others will pass, planning to bid diamonds later, thus implying length in both red suits; a few will double. If West overcalls 2♦, he may hear three passes since none of the other players has a clear bid. If West passes over 1♥, North will bid 1♠. Then if South tries 1NT or takes a 2♣ preference, West can bid 2♦; if South raises to 2♠, West must choose between a 3♦ bid and a pass. In fact,

West can make 3♦. He ruffs North's club opening lead and sets up the hearts with a ruff in dummy while keeping control. East-West should get a good result for +110 since North-Souths who play at a low partial may be -50 or -100. East-West can get a top if North-South compete to 3♣, doubled for -300.

Bd: 29 ♠ 7 6 4
 Dir: North ♥ K 9 7 2
 Vul: Both ♦ 9 6 5
 ♣ 7 3 2
 ♠ K 10 8 3 ♠ A Q 9 2
 ♥ Q 5 ♥ J 10 4 3
 ♦ A 10 8 4 2 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ 10 5 ♣ 9 8 6
 ♠ J 5
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ K J 3
 ♣ A K Q J 4

We suspect that the current epidemic of light 2NT openings may infect this deal: some Souths will start with 2NT. After everyone passes, West will lead a diamond, and South will take eight tricks for +120 and most of the matchpoints. At other tables, South will open 1♣. (We admit we're never eager to open 2NT – nor was the great theorist Edgar Kaplan – since it is a space-consuming call.) If two passes follow, East may double, an action that may be shaded in the balancing position, and the auction will turn

competitive. South can redouble or try 1NT, and West will bid his spades. We expect that at most tables, West will play at 2♠, making two for +110. South can't bid 2NT over that, but he can save a few matchpoints by competing to 3♣, down only one for -100.

Bd: 26 ♠ K 7 5 4 3
 Dir: East ♥ Q 9 8 7
 Vul: Both ♦ 7 5
 ♣ 9 7
 ♠ Q 10 9 8 2 ♠ —
 ♥ 3 2 ♥ 6 4
 ♦ J 6 ♦ A Q 10 9 4 3
 ♣ A J 6 3 ♣ K Q 10 8 2
 ♠ A J 6
 ♥ A K J 10 5
 ♦ K 8 2
 ♣ 5 4

After 1♦-1♥-1♠ ... some Norths will raise to 2♥. East can rebid 3♣, South will compete with 3♥ and West will try 4♣. If two passes follow, South may attempt a penalty double, but East will rack up +710. At other tables, North may effectively jump to 3♥, preemptive, at his first turn. Then East may not bid freely at the four level with two heart losers plus a void in West's suit, and South may be left to play. Best defense would beat 3♥ (spade lead ruffed, two clubs, spade ruff, ♦A), but we can imagine South taking ten

tricks. West leads the ♦J, and East wins and returns a diamond instead of shifting to clubs. South draws trumps, ruffs his last diamond in dummy, takes the ♠A and exits with a club for an endplay. For a good matchpoint result, North-South may need to double East at 5♣ or 5♦ for +200.

Bd: 30 ♠ K J 10 3
 Dir: East ♥ A K 10 5
 Vul: None ♦ Q J 7 3
 ♣ J
 ♠ 6 5 ♠ A Q 8 7 2
 ♥ Q 8 6 4 3 ♥ 9 2
 ♦ K 8 2 ♦ 9 4
 ♣ 7 5 4 ♣ A 10 8 3
 ♠ 9 4
 ♥ J 7
 ♦ A 10 6 5
 ♣ K Q 9 6 2

To get a good matchpoint result, North-South must find a route to 3NT when no clear route exists. After three passes, North will open 1♦, and East can overcall 1♠. Then South may try a 2♣ cuebid to suggest a limit raise in diamonds, a jump to 3♦ as a limit raise, or a 2♣ response. North has a few extra values. Over 2♠ by South, North may try 2NT, but whether that will be enough encouragement for South to bid 3NT is uncertain. Over a jump to 3♦, North might risk 3NT. Over 2♣ by South, North will try 2NT,

and if South continues with 3♦, North might convert to 3NT. East will lead a spade, and North can attack the minor suits and should manage to set up nine winners and hold himself to four losers: two spades, a diamond and a club. North-South should score at least 70% of the matchpoints for +400.

Bd: 27 ♠ A 10 9 6 4 2
 Dir: South ♥ J 7 2
 Vul: None ♦ 7 2
 ♣ Q 10
 ♠ Q 5 3 ♠ K J 7
 ♥ K 5 4 ♥ 10 8 3
 ♦ A J 6 ♦ K 10 5 3
 ♣ 8 7 5 4 ♣ A 6 3
 ♠ 8
 ♥ A Q 9 6
 ♦ Q 9 8 4
 ♣ K J 9 2

We can make a case for not opening the bidding as South. He has borderline high-card values, no spade length and possible rebid problems. If South opens 1♦ and North responds 1♠, South is asking for trouble if he bid 2♣ next – an action that not only distorts his distribution but fails to limit his strength quickly. We suppose that South's action won't matter. Over any sequence of bids by him, North will rebid 2♠, passed out; and if South passes as dealer, North is likely to open 2♠ in third seat, passed out.

East will often lead a heart, and the defense will take its six tricks: a heart, two trumps, two diamonds and a club. (But if declarer forces out the ♣A early, East will need to shift to diamonds before declarer can pitch a diamond loser.) We predict +50 to East-West at most tables.

Bd: 31 ♠ A J 6 5 2
 Dir: South ♥ 8 7 5 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ A 10 9
 ♣ 4
 ♠ K ♠ Q 10 3
 ♥ J 9 4 ♥ K Q 10 3
 ♦ 5 ♦ K 8 7 6
 ♣ A K Q J 9 7 5 3 ♣ 8 2
 ♠ 9 8 7 4
 ♥ A 6
 ♦ Q J 4 3 2
 ♣ 10 6

Some Wests will open a "Gambling" 3NT, showing a long, solid minor suit, and most Norths will lead a spade. (The lead of an ace to see dummy is often best here; a diamond would hold West to his contract.) West will take the king and must judge whether to try for an overtrick. As the cards lie, he can be +430 by forcing out the ♥A. If instead West runs the clubs, dummy may be squeezed at the end; but North will have been squeezed first, and West can still take ten tricks with a good guess. At other tables, West

will open 1♣ because 3NT would deny an eighth club or the ♠K. If North risks a 1♠ overcall, East can make a negative double, but North-South may compete in spades and make it hard for East-West to reach 3NT. Moreover, if East is declarer, a diamond lead will hold him to nine tricks, saving North-South some matchpoints.

Bd: 28 ♠ 10 6
 Dir: West ♥ K Q 6 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 9 8
 ♣ A 5 4 3
 ♠ J 9 7 3 2 ♠ A 5 4
 ♥ 4 ♥ A J 9 7
 ♦ J 7 3 ♦ A 4 2
 ♣ K 9 8 2 ♣ J 10 7
 ♠ K Q 8
 ♥ 10 8 3 2
 ♦ Q 10 6 5
 ♣ Q 6

North has adequate defense and will often open 1♣. Then we'd recommend a pass by East: his hand is good for defense but might make a poor dummy if he doubled and obliged West to be declarer. The ♣J107 argue for staying out of the auction. If South responds 1♥, North will raise to 2♥. East should pass again, and if West also passes, South will manage eight tricks for +110. At a few tables, however, West may balance boldly with 2♠, hoping to push the opponents a level higher. Then

North-South have a choice of losing actions. If they sell to 2♠, West will lose two trumps, two diamonds and a club for +110. (East must not punish his partner's enterprise by raising.) If North goes to 3♥, the result will be down one, and East might even chance a penalty double that will give his side +200 and a matchpoint top.

Bd: 32 ♠ 2
 Dir: West ♥ A 7 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ A Q J 8
 ♣ A K 8 7 6
 ♠ 10 9 5 ♠ A K 8 7 4 3
 ♥ K Q 9 8 6 ♥ J 2
 ♦ K 5 3 ♦ 9 7 4
 ♣ Q 2 ♣ 5 4
 ♠ Q J 6
 ♥ 10 5 4
 ♦ 10 6 2
 ♣ J 10 9 3

If North opens 1♣, the adverse vulnerability may deter East from a preemptive 2♠. Many Easts will overcall 1♠, and West will raise to 2♠ or try 2♥. Then North will compete with a double, and when South goes to 3♣, North will usually pass. East will have to sell out since he could be -200 at 3♠ even if North-South didn't double. A few Easts will pass over 1♣, South will pass and West will reopen with 1♥. North will bid 2♦, and North-South will probably play a club partial again. The lie of the cards

so favors North-South that North can take 11 tricks, losing only a heart and a spade. We expect +150 to North-South at be a common result; but if we sat East-West, North-South would invent a way to get to 3NT, where the same friendly lie of the cards would allow ten tricks for +430 and a North-South top.

Bd: 33 ♠ 9 6 4 3
 Dir: North ♥ 8 7 2
 Vul: None ♦ J 10 5
 ♣ A J 7

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

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

This deal may leave many North-Souths shrugging. After a routine auction of 1NT-3NT, North has no reason to find the killing club lead and will start with a spade or maybe the ♦J. After a spade lead, West might win in dummy and take a heart finesse immediately. If either defender won, he might not find the club shift. Alternatively, West could cash some diamond and spade winners, and if he placed North with four spades plus length in diamonds, West might play South for heart length and guess the

♥Q. East-West will earn a top for +460 but may get a decent matchpoint score for making game: at a few tables, the contract will be 3NT by East, perhaps after a strong 1♣ opening by West, and South will lead the ♣K for down one, saddling East-West with a zero.

Bd: 34 ♠ 9 5 4
 Dir: East ♥ A K 6 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 10 6 4 2
 ♣ 10

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

♠ 10 8 3 2
 ♥ J 2
 ♦ K Q 3
 ♣ J 9 8 4

More shrugs, this time for many East-West pairs. We expect a prosaic auction: 1♣, 1♥-2♣, 3NT. Since West has balanced pattern, scattered values, poor hearts and help in clubs, he will see little reason to look for a 5-3 heart fit. But North will lead a diamond, forcing out the ace (West should win the first diamond since he can count ten tricks if the clubs break), and when clubs split 4-1, seven tricks is the best declarer can do. We expect +100 to North-South at many tables, but at a few tables,

West will probe with a bid of 2♦ at his second turn. Then East will bid 2NT and West will raise, and unless South happens to lead the ♦K instead of the normal ♠2, East can take five clubs, three spades and a diamond for +400 and most of the matchpoints.

Bd: 35 ♠ 10 8 6 2
 Dir: South ♥ Q 10 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ J 4
 ♣ 8 6 4 3

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

♠ 5
 ♥ K J 4
 ♦ A Q 9 5 2
 ♣ 10 9 7 5

When West opens 1NT, some Easts will raise to 3NT, and North will unsuspectingly lead a spade. If West wins in dummy and ducks a heart to North's queen, North must find a diamond shift, else declarer can concede another heart and end with ten tricks when hearts break 3-3 and the ♦A is onside. At other tables, West will use Stayman and find the spade fit. (Although East's hand is flat, West's may not be, especially if he has four spades.) A few Souths will have tossed in a 2♦ bid, and North

will lead the ♦J, ducked to the king. West cashes three clubs for a diamond discard and concedes a diamond. He can ruff the third diamond high, pick up the trumps and take ten tricks. With a passive club opening lead, West should still make his contract but may have a few anxious moments. We think East-West will score above average for +620.

Bd: 36 ♠ A K
 Dir: West ♥ Q 8 6 3
 Vul: Both ♦ K Q
 ♣ A Q J 9 5

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

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

Most Norths will open 2NT. The distribution isn't balanced, but most of the high-card points lie in the doubletons. South will raise to 3NT, leaving East with a treacherous lead problem. Many Easts will start with a low heart, which would often be best. But as it is, North will win cheaply and lead the ♦K. Dummy's ♣K and ♣10 are entries to set up and cash the diamonds, and North will end with 12 tricks while East munches on his ♥AK. The opening lead of a high heart might save the defense a lot of

matchpoints. Some Norths will open 1♣, leading to 1♣-1♦, 2♥-3♣, 3NT. Now East may avoid a heart lead altogether and try the ♠9. North may be still be +660 when West slips by returning a spade when he takes the ♦A, but East-West have a chance to hold him to +630 for a good matchpoint result.

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Frank Stewart, who commented on this set of deals, is one of the world's most prolific bridge journalists. He is the author of 20 books and hundreds of magazine articles, and his syndicated column "Daily Bridge Club" appears worldwide. Frank co-edited the ACBL's Bridge Bulletin from 1984 to 1989. He has been an analyst for ACBL-wide events since 1980.

