

ACBL Charity Game

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

15th March, 2011

Set 78431

1

♠ Q 10 9 6
♥ J 8 7 4
♦ 6
♣ 10 8 7 6

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

♠ 3
♥ K Q 3 2
♦ K Q 8 7
♣ A J 5 3

Dlr North
None Vul

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

West transfers to Spades, then what? A craven Pass? 3♠ (game-forcing)? Or a game-invitation of 3♣ or 2NT? Nothing is ideal, and our own guess is 3♠ (supposedly showing 6 Spades), which East would surely pass. As it happens, 4♠ is not a bad contract, even with East's square minimum. But 9 tricks are the max (the 4-1 trump break creates problems), which

is rotten luck for those E-W optimists who charged into game.
Back to the Bidding: Did any Souths double 1NT? A bit aggressive, we think, especially as South does not have an attractive lead. But South might well have doubled 2♠. That won't be a great success if 3♣ or 3♥ is doubled (down two), but that's unlikely, E-W will no doubt push on to 3♠.

2

♠ A Q
♥ A Q J
♦ A 10 8 7 5
♣ A Q 2

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

♠ K 10 7 2
♥ K 10 6 2
♦ J 4 2
♣ K 10

Dlr East
N-S Vul

North declares 6NT and East leads a passive Heart. Declarer counts 11 top tricks and the 12th must come from Diamond luck or from the ♠J coming down in three rounds.
Line A: Declarer stakes all on the Diamonds, the percentage play being to run ♠J and if that is covered by West then to finesse the Eight next. That's about 51%, and fails on the actual lie of the cards.
Line B: Declarer finessees the ♦10 this time, later unblocks the Spades, and cashes the Clubs before running the

Hearts, hoping that a Spade-Diamond squeeze will augment her chances. But on the third Club Dummy must pitch a Diamond thereby eliminating other chances. It's an inferior line but it works, East is indeed squeezed.
Line C: Best play is to lose a Diamond by finessing the Ten, unblock Spades, cash the Hearts and the ♠K. The ♠J does not drop, but the slam comes home when the ♦Q pops up. Playing Diamonds by finessing the Ten (and not cashing Clubs early) combines chances in Spades and Diamonds, and is around 68%. And it works on the actual deal!

3

♠ J 9 8 6 5
♥ J 5
♦ A 9
♣ 10 8 7 5

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

♠ Q 4 2
♥ A K 9 8 6 2
♦ K J 8
♣ J

Dlr South
E-W Vul

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

We can safely predict numerous different auctions on this board. In the one above, East will be unhappy that he never mentioned Diamonds, South will wonder if she should have tried 3♥, and North will feel guilty about having passed throughout.
Who Makes What? N-S can be held to 8 tricks in Hearts or Spades (but 9 tricks are more likely in both cases), and E-W can make 9 tricks in Diamonds, and probably 9 in Clubs. Seems that N-S needed to bid more.

4

♠ K 10 7
♥ K Q 5 2
♦ J 3 2
♣ Q 8 3

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

♠ 8 3
♥ J 8 3
♦ A 8 6 5 4
♣ K 7 5

Dlr West
Both Vul

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

We don't foresee many E-W pairs getting to the Spade game here, but 10 tricks are possible with careful play: South leads a Club to North's Queen, ♥K to Dummy's Ace, after which Declarer runs the ♦T if North fails to cover. If North does cover, then Declarer will have a slow Diamond loser, which can be taken care of either by ruffing on the board or by pitching on the long Club.

5

♠ A J 10 8 4
♥ A 9 7 5
♦ K 9
♣ Q 6

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

♠ K 9 6 2
♥ 4 2
♦ Q 8 5 2
♣ A K 7

Dlr North
N-S Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♠	Pass	??

South has enough for a Spade game but nothing extra. A 4♠ bid here is generally played as preemptive with 5 Spades, so South's choices are to bid that crummy Diamond suit or use the Jacoby 2NT. Either way, the final contract will be 4♠, and as there is no reason for Declarer to guess the trump situation it looks like 10 tricks.
A Morton's Fork! But maybe there are 11 tricks even without guessing the trumps! Let's say that East leads

a Club, won in hand. Now a low Diamond is led and East is caught in a Morton's Fork dilemma: (a) if he plays low then Dummy's ♦Q wins and Declarer's Diamond loser disappears on the Clubs; (b) if he hops up with the Ace, then Dummy provides three pitches for Declarer's Heart losers (look at West's obliging ♦J10x!). Note that it is necessary for that Diamond to be played early (before trumps), firstly to facilitate communications, secondly to ensure that Dummy can ruff two Hearts if required. East must find an opening Heart lead to avoid the Fork.

6

♠ J 10
♥ A 10 9 8 6
♦ 8 6
♣ K 10 7 3

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

♠ A Q 7 4 3
♥ 3 2
♦ Q 10 9
♣ Q 9 8

Dlr East
E-W Vul

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

West has no good bid at this point.
- Pass? This could result in a missed game (East's 2♦ is wide-ranging, could be up to 17 HCP). Also, in a 2/1 system, it might be a 3-3 fit.
- 2NT? A definite overbid, all the more so with that absence of intermediates.
- 2♥? Seems like the best of a bad bunch, at least it keeps the auction open in case East has extras.

The winner turns out to be Pass (East can scramble 8 tricks in Diamonds), the other choices will result in an assortment of -200 and -300 scores.
Playing "Standard": If E-W do not play 2/1, then East's 2♦ shows 4+, making it easier for West to pass. A triumph for traditional methods!

7

♠
♥ K J 8
♦ Q J 10 6 4 2
♣ K 9 8 2

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

♠ 4 2
♥ Q 9 6 5 2
♦ 8
♣ Q J 10 6 4

Dlr South
Both Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♦	Pass
	2♠	Pass	3♦
	3♥	Pass	4♦
	5♠	Pass	6♠
			All Pass

East might have overcalled 1♠ or (considering that West is a passed hand) might have tried 4♠. Instead he doubled first, planning to bid Spades later, showing a strong hand. West's jump to 2♠ was game-invitational, then a bit of cue-bidding got E-W to slam. But it's a difficult slam to reach,

we don't expect many pairs to get there, and, yes, we do admit that East's bidding was highly optimistic! Some Wests might reprehensibly open the bidding, and that gives E-W a better chance at finding the slam.

8

♠ K 4
♥ 10 6 4
♦ A K 10 9 5 4 3
♣ 7

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

♠ Q J 3 2
♥ J 9 2
♦ Q J 6
♣ A 6 4

Dlr West
None Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♥	2♦	Dbl	3♦
4♣	4♦	All Pass	

The play in 4♦ is routine, down one. Not a bad result for N-S considering that E-W have 10 tricks in Clubs and in real life will probably make more than that. It takes the unlikely lead of the ♠K to hold West to 10 tricks. More likely, North will lead the ♠A which gets ruffed, then the ♠A is conceded, but now the Spade shift is too late. The ♠A wins that, trumps are drawn and the Hearts cashed (pitching Spades) and allowing a Spade ruff in Dummy to provide the 11th trick.

9 ♠654
♥A874
♦Q54
♣Q74

♠A982 ♠KQJ103
♥K106 ♥J9532
♦73 ♦J2
♣AK85 ♣6

♠7
♥Q
♦AK10986
♣J10932

Dlr North
E-W Vul

Anyone for 4♥? This contract actually makes, though it's hard to imagine many pairs playing there. There is no ruff for the defense, but there is a trap for the unwary Declarer. On the first round of trumps he must lead a low one towards Dummy's K106. If he makes the mistake of leading the Jack or Nine then North will score a second trump trick.

West *North* *East* *South*
 Pass **Pass** ??

How many Diamonds will South be bidding here? At this vulnerability, opposite a passed Partner, we'd say the answer to this question is "A lot!" 2♦ would be unspeakably feeble, 3♦ might be mainstream, even 4♦ is tempting! But, whatever the choice, West will double and E-W will declare 4♠. The defense will cash two Diamonds and now, to beat the contract, South must shift to a Heart and get her ruff. Will she? Did you?

13 ♠KJ
♥Q63
♦A102
♣K9765

♠A853 ♠Q42
♥985 ♥10
♦K74 ♦QJ863
♣1032 ♣AQJ8

♠10976
♥AKJ742
♦95
♣4

Dlr North
Both Vul

when the ♠J is led from Dummy, East can cover (exposing West to a ruffing finesse), or duck (allowing the Queen to be ruffed out). Either way it's 10 tricks, but in real life it seems likely that Declarer will misguess the first round of Spades and make only 9 tricks.

West *North* *East* *South*
 1♣ **1♦** **1♥**
2♦ **Dbl** **3♦** **3♥**

All Pass

A fairly routine auction (North made a Support Double showing three of South's Hearts). Playing 3♥, how many tricks can South make? If she guesses the Spades correctly there are 10 tricks available: Diamond ducked to West's Jack; Diamond to Dummy's Ace; Diamond ruff; Club to the King and Ace; Club ruff; Spade to Dummy's King (nice guess!). Now,

10 ♠K10983
♥65
♦A987
♣A9

♠72 ♠Q65
♥AK3 ♥J1097
♦Q5432 ♦KJ
♣642 ♣QJ75

♠AJ4
♥Q842
♦106
♣K1083

Dlr East
Both Vul

drawing trumps ... and no need even to guess the trump Queen, that card gets swallowed up in the cross-ruff. East does better to start with a trump lead (not easy to do when holding Qxx), and to lead another trump when he gets in with a Diamond. That inspired defense holds Declarer to 9 tricks (five trumps, plus only one ruff on the board, the ♦A and ♣AK).

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

South's 2♠ was Reverse Drury, a passed-hand convention showing values and Spade support. North's 2♠ rebid denied any interest in game.

The Play in Spades: East leads ♥J; second Heart won by West; Diamond shift won by Declarer; exit a Diamond to East; Heart ruffed by Declarer; ♠A; ♣K; then cross-ruff. This well-timed play brings Declarer 10 tricks without

14 ♠A107642
♥
♦A8
♣AKQ75

♠QJ9 ♠K5
♥Q9875 ♥K10432
♦K75 ♦Q1043
♣84 ♣106

♠83
♥AJ6
♦J962
♣J932

Dlr East
None Vul

that did not happen she settled for 6♣, making 12 easy tricks.

West *North* *East* *South*
 Pass **2♣** **Pass** **Pass**
Pass **2♠** **Pass** **2NT**
Pass **3♣** **Pass** **4♣**
Pass **4♥** **Pass** **5♣**
Pass **6♣** **All Pass**

Quite a long-winded auction! 2NT showed some values (3♣ instead is generally played as a "double negative"). After South raised Clubs North was looking for seven, and her 4♥ was designed to give South a chance to cue-bid Spades. When

11 ♠Q7
♥A52
♦AQ102
♣J1087

♠J9 ♠5432
♥QJ ♥98643
♦K98765 ♦J3
♣A52 ♣K9

♠AK1086
♥K107
♦4
♣Q643

Dlr South
None Vul

the magic +500 (otherwise Dummy scores a Club ruff and it's only +300). **The Play in 3NT:** 11 tricks are available, but experts manage only 10! The bidding indicates that East is likely to have longer Spades than West, persuading some to finesse against East's hoped-for ♠J.

West *North* *East* *South*
 2♦ ??

As North, do you pass, and then also pass Partner's reopening Double, looking for a big, juicy penalty? Or do you boot out 3NT and rely upon your superior Declarer play to get you a good board? The winning choice is to go for the penalty, but only if Partner can be relied upon to defend well.

The Play in 2♦ Doubled: North leads the ♠Q and continues the suit. Now South must shift to a trump to score

15 ♠643
♥K9832
♦Q3
♣874

♠K1085 ♠QJ
♥AQ7 ♥J105
♦K62 ♦A85
♣K92 ♣AQJT6

♠A972
♥64
♦J10974
♣53

Dlr South
N-S Vul

What Do You Lead? You are North, on lead against some number of NT. Do you attack with a Heart (giving Declarer 12 easy tricks)? Or do you go passive? Our opening lead guru, Dr Goodlead, says "A black card", which is excellent advice on the actual hand, it holds Declarer to 11 tricks.

West *North* *East* *South*
 1NT **Pass** **3NT?** **All Pass**

West has the barest of minimums for his 15-17 1NT opening, he's bottom of the range with a square hand. So, when you look at both hands and see that 6NT is on a Heart finesse, you have to wonder whether East might have made a slam try. We'd say it's pretty close, E-W have 30-32 HCP and a good 5-card suit. But it's academic, even if East invites slam, West will politely decline.

12 ♠K743
♥8
♦Q532
♣J1093

♠A6 ♠Q102
♥J10 ♥AK7432
♦AKJ9874 ♦
♣A2 ♣8765

♠J985
♥Q965
♦106
♣KQ4

Dlr West
N-S Vul

the contract (the first round must be ducked regardless) and that's 68% ... and 3-3 Diamonds or doubleton Ten or Queen is 64% apparently. As it happens, Diamonds work, but playing on Hearts is down one. But, if North leads a Spade then Declarer combines chances by playing low from Dummy and winning the ♠A, then testing Diamonds. If an honor does not appear on the first two rounds then Declarer reverts to Hearts.

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

West had an awkward rebid ... 3♦ is an underbid, 2NT seems odd with a 7-card suit, and 3NT usually shows a running minor suit. 3♦ and 2NT turn out to be the winners, both allowing East to bid a forcing 3♥, getting to the superior 4♥ contract, making 10 tricks.

The Play in 3NT: After a Club lead Declarer must decide which red suit to play. 3-2 Hearts would bring home

16 ♠AQ10
♥742
♦105
♣AKJ104

♠84 ♠9752
♥AQ108 ♥J63
♦AJ94 ♦763
♣972 ♣Q53

♠KJ63
♥K95
♦KQ82
♣86

Dlr West
E-W Vul

value, they'll think twice before jumping into the auction on dubious values; (c) Auctions such as 1NT-3NT are delightfully uninformative. **The Play:** The N-S auction goes 1NT 2♣, 2♦ 3NT, and East has a blind lead. He might lead a Club, much to the merriment of Declarer, but suppose he leads a Spade (some lead second-highest from that four-small holding). Declarer wins and could cash the Spades and hope for Club luck. Trouble is that, once Spades are gone, Declarer is short of entries. As ♣Qxx inside is a long-shot, Declarer might play Clubs from the top (now when East gets in he must shift to the ♥J!). Or Declarer might try a gigantic swindle at Trick 2, leading the ♠J (which East might well duck!). Either way, it'll take good defense to beat this contract.

West *North* *East* *South*
 Pass ??

Playing a 15-17 1NT, how do you like a 1NT opening here?

Minus Points: We can only think of one. Opening 1NT could wrong-side the contract by exposing Partner's hand to a red suit opening lead.

Plus Points: (a) Although North has only 14 HCP, that 5-card suit and the three Tens make this hand better than West's dismal specimen on Board 15; (b) Bidding 1NT against vulnerable opponents has some preemptive

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

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

Dlr North ♠ K 8 5
None Vul ♥ 9 7 5 3
♦ A J 8 2
♣ 8 2

♦J. That's a pretty slender inference but on this occasion it's a winner!

18 ♠ Q 10 8 7 2
♥ Q 7
♦ K J 6
♣ A 8 7

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

Dlr East ♠ J 4
N-S Vul ♥ A 10 9 8 5 4
♦ 9
♣ J 10 9 4

otherwise). However, if South tamely passes, then E-W will have an easy route to a cozy Diamond part-score, perhaps via this auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♦	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	All Pass

E-W have 9 tricks in Diamonds. Sure, having passed originally, South might compete in Hearts, but nothing good will happen. Either E-W will get their +110 in 3♦ or else N-S will go for at least 200 in some number of Hearts. Better to get that Heart bid in early, don't you think?

19 ♠ J 9 5 3 2
♥ A K 7 2
♦ K Q 10
♣ 2

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

Dlr South ♠ K 10
E-W Vul ♥ J 5
♦ A 9 2
♣ A J 9 8 6 3

entries to set up and enjoy the Clubs. So she'll have to rely on Spades and the play might go: win the Diamond in hand; finesse the ♠10, losing to the Ace; win the Diamond continuation in Dummy; cash ♠K; cross to the ♥A; knock out the ♠Q; win the Diamond return and cash out for 9 tricks.

20 ♠ J 6 2
♥ 5 4 3
♦ J 10 7 6 2
♣ K 7

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

Dlr West ♠ 4
Both Vul ♥ Q J 10 8
♦ A 9 5 4 3
♣ Q 9 3

produces three tricks 42% of the time (but not on this deal). However, as North has longer trumps, a reasonable alternative would be to play her for shorter Clubs, in which case Declarer leads low from hand, giving North no good option. This well-reasoned line of play brings in 11 tricks.

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

North leads a Heart, won in Dummy. Declarer can see six top tricks and needs two Diamond tricks if he is to reach eight. That requires a correct guess for the ♦J. Some clues might emerge if Declarer cashes ♣A and ♣Q, and then leads the ♣J. When North shows up with a third Club, Declarer might play South for longer Diamonds, so he overtakes with Dummy's ♠K and finesses against the

West *North* *East* *South*
3♦ **Pass** **3NT** **All Pass**

Some will frown upon South's Weak Two, citing the vulnerability and the moderate suit, but the hand does have that lovely "six-four, bid more" shape, lots of useful fillers, and good playing potential. The 2♥ opening works like a charm on the actual deal, bouncing E-W into a poor 3NT contract (which is down one if the defense errs by giving Declarer a second Heart trick, and down two

West *North* *East* *South*
Pass **1♠** **Pass** **2♣**
Pass **2♥** **Pass** **2♠**
Pass **3NT** **All Pass**

A sensible auction gets N-S to the obvious game. South's 2♣ looks like a better choice than 2NT, that ♠K10 is almost as good as three-small, and the Diamond holding is not one that cries out for a No Trump bid.

The Play in 3NT: East will probably lead a Diamond, and Declarer will realize that she does not have the

entries to set up and enjoy the Clubs. So she'll have to rely on Spades and the play might go: win the Diamond in hand; finesse the ♠10, losing to the Ace; win the Diamond continuation in Dummy; cash ♠K; cross to the ♥A; knock out the ♠Q; win the Diamond return and cash out for 9 tricks.

West *North* *East* *South*
1♠ **Pass** **3♠** **Pass**
4♠ **All Pass**

The bidding's routine, the play's not. The ♦J lead is won by South, who shifts to the ♥Q, won by the Ace.

How to Play the Trumps? That's easy, Declarer cashes Dummy's ♠K first, that way he is protected from a 4-0 trump split, either way.

How to Play the Clubs? That's not so easy! Looking at the suit in isolation, the percentage play is to finesse the Jack, which apparently

21 ♠ 10 9
♥ A K 9 4
♦ 9 8 5 3
♣ 8 5 2

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

Dlr North ♠ A K Q J
N-S Vul ♥ Q J 10
♦ 10 8 4 2
♣ K 3

1NT overcall, conveying the general nature and strength of the hand, while only lying slightly about the supposed Diamond stopper. East will compete to 2♣, which will be passed around to North. She knows that her side has the balance of points and will not want to sell out. Perhaps she should double, the general meaning of which is "Do something intelligent, Partner!" The most intelligent choice for South is to bid those Spades which look just as much like a 5-card suit as East's Diamonds.

The Bottom Line: 2♣ makes 8 tricks ... 2♠ is down one with good defense (on the run of East's Diamonds, West must pitch Clubs, getting a Club ruff for the setting trick) ... and 2♥ (by N-S) is also down one.

22 ♠ K 8 7 3 2
♥ J 7 6
♦ J 10 8
♣ A Q

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

Dlr East ♠ A 10 9 4
E-W Vul ♥ K 5 4
♦ K 2
♣ 10 9 8 7

The Play in Spades: East does not have an obvious lead, and might as well start with the ♥A, hoping to find Partner short. That holds Declarer to 9 tricks. A brilliant East will find an opening lead of a low Diamond, won by West's Queen. Now the Heart ruffs hold Declarer to 8 tricks!

23 ♠ 9 6 4 2
♥ 7 2
♦ K J 8 6
♣ A Q 3

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

Dlr South ♠ K 5 3
Both Vul ♥ 9 8 4
♦ 9 5 4 3
♣ J 9 4

contract some Souths may lead a trump and that (or a Club lead) holds Declarer to 10 tricks.

24 ♠ K 9
♥ K 10 9 7 2
♦ A 2
♣ 10 7 5 3

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

Dlr West ♠ 8 6 4 2
None Vul ♥ A 6
♦ Q 10 9 6 5
♣ 9 2

a 2♣ opening). If you open 1♠, you'll rebid 3NT, showing a source of tricks rather than a specific number of HCP (see also Board 12). In 3NT, Declarer scores 9 tricks (11 after a Spade lead).

West *North* *East* *South*
Pass **Pass** **1♦** **1NT?**
Pass **Pass** **2♣** **Pass**
Pass **Dbl** **Pass** **2♠**

All Pass

Even if you hate opening 1♦ with those 4-5 minor suit hands, you probably won't object too much this time, East's Diamonds are strong enough to masquerade as a 5-card suit. After that 1♦ opening, what is your choice as South? Sure, you could double, and most players probably would. But we rather like a

1NT overcall, conveying the general nature and strength of the hand, while only lying slightly about the supposed Diamond stopper. East will compete to 2♣, which will be passed around to North. She knows that her side has the balance of points and will not want to sell out. Perhaps she should double, the general meaning of which is "Do something intelligent, Partner!" The most intelligent choice for South is to bid those Spades which look just as much like a 5-card suit as East's Diamonds.

West *North* *East* *South*
1NT **Pass** **1♥** **Pass**
Pass **2♠** **Pass** **Pass!**
Pass

North's balance of 2♠ strikes gold. Should South now make a game try? Probably not, North could have almost anything for her balance, all the more so being non-vulnerable. Game is unlikely, and even 3♠ may be too high. As the saying goes "Don't punish Partner for balancing", in other words give her some leeway.

The Play in Spades: East does not have an obvious lead, and might as well start with the ♥A, hoping to find Partner short. That holds Declarer to 9 tricks. A brilliant East will find an opening lead of a low Diamond, won by West's Queen. Now the Heart ruffs hold Declarer to 8 tricks!

West *North* *East* *South*
Pass **Pass** **2NT** **Pass**
3♦ **Pass** **3♥** **Pass**
3NT **All Pass**

After this transfer sequence, East might reasonably have chosen 3NT or 4♥ as the place to play.

The Play in 3NT: With a Spade or Diamond lead Declarer can eke out 11 tricks. But with a Club lead the defense gets two Clubs and a Spade.

The Play in 4♥: Again, 11 tricks with a Spade or Diamond lead, but in this

contract some Souths may lead a trump and that (or a Club lead) holds Declarer to 10 tricks.

West **North** **East** **South**
Pass **Pass** **??**

What are your criteria for opening 2♣ with a one-suiter? How about this?

- Count the losers (East has 3).
- Count the "very quick" tricks (VQ). An Ace counts as one, AK as two, and KQ as none. East has 3 VQ.
- If the long suit is a minor then open 2♣ with more VQ than losers ... if the long suit is a major then open 2♣ with as many (or more) VQ as losers. By that logic, East opens 1♣ (but switch the Clubs with a major and it would be a 2♣ opening). If you open 1♠, you'll rebid 3NT, showing a source of tricks rather than a specific number of HCP (see also Board 12). In 3NT, Declarer scores 9 tricks (11 after a Spade lead).

25

♠ 7 6 2
♥ 9 3
♦ 8 5 4 3
♣ 9 8 7 4

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

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

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT

All Pass

It's never much fun playing a No Trump contract opposite a barren Dummy. Then again, it's not much fun being on lead with the strong hand on your right and nothing in the auction to guide you. We suppose that West will lead the ♦K, and Declarer will hold up. Declarer might have AJx and be luring West into the so-called Bath Coup, so West will be

nervous about continuing the suit, and may shift to a Spade. But it doesn't matter much, either way Declarer is down one.

26

♠ 10 9 3
♥ 10 6 2
♦ A K Q 6 3 2
♣ 6

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

♠ K Q 7 5
Dlr East ♥ A 8 5
Both Vul ♦ 9
 ♣ A K J 8 5

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

All Pass

After this routine auction West has no particularly appetizing opening lead. But the unbid suit seems reasonable enough, so let's say that West starts out with the ♥Q. Declarer holds up until the third round, then cashes three Diamonds (pitching Clubs). When that suit does not break, Declarer tries the Spades, running the

♠10 around. With Spades 3-3 and with the Jack outside, there are 9 tricks. **Reading the Lead:** In the line above, Declarer made her contract, but she would have been better off (on some other layouts) if she had won the second round of Hearts. Was there any way to read West's lead accurately? Remember, the ♥Q won Trick 1, then the Three, Six, Nine were the first three cards of Trick 2. West didn't start with QJx, with that holding he would have continued the Jack ... with QJxx the opening lead would normally be a low one ... so everything points to Qx. Declarer could have clarified matters further by playing the Ten at Trick 2, smoking out the Jack! But two can play at that game and East can drop the King on Trick 2! Now Declarer has no way of reading the Heart situation!

27

♠ 10 4 2
♥ J 4
♦ K Q 10 9 8 3 2
♣ Q

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

♠ K 7 5
Dlr South ♥ Q 9 7 3
None Vul ♦ J 7 5
 ♣ 10 7 4

West	North	East	South
1♠	3♦	Dbl	Pass
??			

East's Double doesn't guarantee both majors, he might have one major with a back-up plan of bidding 3NT or supporting Clubs if West happens to bid the wrong major. So, what should West bid here? 3♠ does not seem enough, but 4♠ could find West's wrong major. We suggest 4♦ saying "Pick a major". This implies 4-4 in the majors, but ♥AKx is close enough, added to which there will be a Diamond ruff in the short hand.

The Play in 4♥: South leads a Diamond won by Declarer. The two top Hearts are played, and Declarer does well to guess that trumps are 4-2, leaving two enemy trumps at large. Next, Declarer cashes ♠A, ♠K, and ♠J, ruffs a Diamond and finesses the ♠J, losing to South's King. This well-timed line of play brings home 10 tricks.

28

♠ Q 7 4 2
♥ Q 10 8 6 4
♦ Q J 6
♣ 5

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

♠ A K J 9 8 6 5
Dlr West ♥ 7
N-S Vul ♦ 10 8 2
 ♣ A K

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
Dbl	2♠	Pass	4♠

All Pass

South has a lovely hand and might have considered bidding 4♠ directly (as Partner is a passed hand and slam unlikely), or doubling and then bidding Spades. But no matter, all roads seem to lead to 4♠. N-S will be disappointed to find that 4♠ goes down one when the defense scores a Diamond ruff. But N-S need not be overly distressed when they realize that 3NT is cold. With an 11-card Spade fit *nobody* plays in 3NT!

29

♠ 10 6 4 2
♥ 10 8 6 3 2
♦ A J 5
♣ 5

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

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

West	North	East	South
1♠	2♦	??	1♦

E-W will do well if they bid their Club slam, it's a hard one to reach. The challenge starts with East's second bid, what would be your choice? Not 3♠, that hand is way too good ... nor 4♠, which would zoom past 3NT ... a strength-showing reverse of 3♥ is slightly tempting but risks a raise to 4♥ ... so, when in doubt, cue-bid! 3♦ here shows a really good hand and could be slammish in Spades, or looking for 3NT, or a powerful Club hand. Is it forcing to game? We would say "almost", the exception being that perhaps E-W should be permitted to play in 4♣. Is that your partnership agreement?

West's Second Bid: East has shown a big hand, and West has a fine hand himself, enough for slam, wouldn't you say? If E-W are on sure ground then West could try (a hopefully forcing) 3♠, but that won't be necessary if E-W are playing Support Doubles, as East will be known at this point to have fewer than three Spades. West could just bid 6♣, hoping that there are not two Diamond losers, but that might risk missing seven if East holds as little as: ♠97, ♥A32, ♦A10, ♣AQ8763. Our real preference is for a forcing 4♣ but, as we said, that may not be the partnership agreement, or Partner may not be on the same page. Maybe the practical bid is a fingers-crossed leap to 6♣.

30

♠ K Q J 6 4
♥ 10 4
♦ 7 6 5 3
♣ Q 9

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

♠ A 8 7 5
Dlr East ♥ Q 9 7
None Vul ♦ K 9
 ♣ K J 8 6

West	North	East	South
2♥	2♠	2♦	Dbl
Pass	3♠	3♦	Pass

All Pass

An unusual auction! After the Double, West's 2♥ is commonly played as a run-out, but in this case West has a decent hand, and would like a Heart lead against a Spade or NT contract. As for East, she felt she could afford to compete (non-vulnerable) to the three-level, given that fine suit. **The Play:** It's unlikely that East will be allowed to play in 3♦ but if he is then he's down one (N-S must shift to Clubs after cashing their Spades). But North will presumably bid on to 3♠ (down one on a Diamond ruff).

31

♠ A 7 4 2
♥ K Q 7
♦ Q J 2
♣ Q J 8

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

♠ 10 8
Dlr South ♥ 9 2
N-S Vul ♦ K 8 6 3
 ♣ A 10 7 6 4

West	North	East	South
Pass	1NT	All Pass	Pass

South is not quite strong enough to invite game, but 9 (or even 10) tricks are possible if East disastrously leads the ♦10, thereby blowing a trick and also losing a tempo. Declarer wins that, plays just two Clubs, then the ♦J to East's Ace. There's a later Diamond finesse in the works, and that will be 9 tricks ... and 10 tricks if East shifts to a Heart instead of a Spade. Playing only two Clubs was good timing, if all the Clubs are cashed before reverting to Diamonds then East ducks his Ace to deprive Dummy of a trick. Yes, an opening Spade lead holds Declarer to 8 tricks.

32

♠ Q 10 9 3
♥ J 10 9 3
♦ A Q 10 8 6
♣

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

♠ J 7
Dlr West ♥ K Q 6 2
E-W Vul ♦ 7 5 2
 ♣ Q J 6 5

What is your plan as West?

- **Open 2♠ and rebid 2♠?** Despite the remarks on Board 24 we would treat this as a NT hand, there's not enough playing strength to bid 2♠ then 2♠.
- **Open 2♠ and rebid 2NT?** This is usually played as showing 22-23 or 22-24, West has only 21. Should he upgrade, based on the 5-card suit and the controls? Not unreasonable.
- **Open 2NT?** Also reasonable.

If West makes the mistake of opening 2♣ and rebidding 2♠, the auction will careen out of control, probably to 3NT, down a few. Those who bid 2NT (one way or the other) will play it there, down one less than the aforementioned Spade bidders.