

# ACBL Charity Game #1 – April 2, 2015 – Set 113480

Bd: 1     ♠ K 8 5  
 Dlr: North ♥ 9 5 4 2  
 Vul: None     ♦ Q 8 7 5  
                  ♣ A 4

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

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

You would expect to see East declare notrump at almost every table, but the level may depend on whether East describes his hand as 16-18 or 18-19. In the former case, E-W will stay low. In the latter case, they rate to reach game. Either way, South appears to have been dealt a natural club lead, and the sight of the ace from North should gladden declarer's heart. He can build his ninth trick by going after either red suit (diamonds looks to be the best play), and virtually whatever line he chooses will lead to nine tricks.

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

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

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

In response to East's strong notrump, West will use Stayman (planning a Smolen follow-up), and East will finish in 4♥. If South leads a club, East wins in hand and plays a trump to the king and a second trump, after which the defenders just score their three trump tricks. After a diamond lead, East may use spade entries back to hand to take diamond ruffs then try a trump to the king. If it holds, declarer must resist playing a second trump and instead go after spades. East can follow a parallel line should South hop up with ♥A and give a ruff-sluff with a fourth diamond.

Bd: 2     ♠ 9 7  
 Dlr: East ♥ K Q J 10 9 5  
 Vul: N-S     ♦ 9 6 3 2  
                  ♣ J

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

♠ 10 5 4 3  
 ♥ A 7 3  
 ♦ A 8  
 ♣ 10 7 5 3

E-W have game-going values but may find it hard to go plus here. The obvious flaw in a notrump game doesn't need emphasizing, while 5♣ has three inevitable top losers and still has work to do. Equally, 4♠ runs into severe control problems, not to mention a bad club break (with a club blockage to boot). You'd imagine after West shows his clubs that some Easts will raise at their second turn, some will show their spades and maybe the partnership can stop somewhere sensible. I'm guessing -50 won't score too badly for E-W.

Bd: 6     ♠ 9 7  
 Dlr: East ♥ 8 3  
 Vul: E-W     ♦ Q 10 7 6 3  
                  ♣ A 5 3 2

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

♠ A 5  
 ♥ A 5 4  
 ♦ A K 5  
 ♣ K Q 10 9 8

Some deals are too difficult for real-world players. Conceivably, pairs using a relay club might be able to work out how to get to a minor-suit slam here (or even to reach the nirvana of 6NT on a combined 26 HCP!). But most of us will mundanely bid 2NT-3NT and join the throngs of +490 on the traveler. I'd expect at most venues that this board is favorite to be flat across the field and that any pair who manages to bid slam will hand their opponents a round zero.

Bd: 3     ♠ J 10 5  
 Dlr: South ♥ 10 9 8 5 3 2  
 Vul: E-W     ♦ K  
                  ♣ A 7 6

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

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

The unopposed N-S auction will surely be: 1♣ - 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♥ - Pass. The rebid in hearts is unattractive but somehow forced, since North can't introduce notrump or raise spades with three — though either action might work on a good day. The four top losers in 2♥ are unlikely to go away unless the defenders lose their presence of mind. (Maybe a few smart aces as East will underlead their ♦A?) If East competes in diamonds, E-W run the risk of losing 200 if the defenders get it just right — it is too late after the lead of ♥A.

Bd: 7     ♠ 10 6 4 3 2  
 Dlr: South ♥ A 10 8  
 Vul: Both     ♦ 6 4 2  
                  ♣ Q 8

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

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

Here comes another strong notrump, to be followed by Stayman and a jump to 4♥ when East admits to his four-card major. After a diamond lead, it looks natural to try a heart to the king and a club to the king early on, but the optimal approach isn't clear to me. Even so, with trumps 3-2 and both missing aces plus the ♥10 onside, it is hard to see a line of play that will not generate 10 tricks. Having said that, I'm sure someone will produce an unsuccessful line.

Bd: 4     ♠ K J  
 Dlr: West ♥ A Q 9 7 6 4  
 Vul: Both     ♦ K 4  
                  ♣ 7 5 4

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

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

When West opens 1♦, East will be stuck for a bid after North's 1♥ overcall. He might pass, double, bid notrump or even raise to 2♦. Regardless, if South raises hearts, then E-W ought to compete in a minor to the three level, while North will surely follow "The LAW" and bid on to 3♥ in the known nine-card trump fit. The fate of 3♥ depends on the spade guess. Will the defenders disclose the location of the club honors before declarer has to tackle spades? Conversely, nine tricks for E-W in the 5-3 diamond fit are much easier than in the 4-4 club fit. Who knew?

Bd: 8     ♠ A J 7 3  
 Dlr: West ♥ K 10 9 6 4  
 Vul: None     ♦ Q 7 6 2  
                  ♣ —

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

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

Very few pairs will pass out a deal on which N-S can make game in two strains. A typical auction will see North stretch to open 1♥ and raise spades, whether or not West overcalls. If South now makes a long-suit try of 3♣ or 3♦, North might feel he has too much shape to sign off. When West leads a top club against 4♠, declarer does best to play a cross-ruff after scoring his three red-suit tricks. Should the defenders lead trumps at every turn, South may need to set up both hearts and diamonds to come to 10 tricks.

Bd: 9 ♠ A Q 9  
 Dlr: North ♥ Q J 8 3  
 Vul: E-W ♦ K Q 9  
 ♣ J 9 8

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

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

The recurring theme in this set is for one pair or the other to use Stayman after a strong notrump to play 4♥. On East's normal top club lead, declarer draws trump and knocks out the ♦A with a spade finesse for the overtrick. On this occasion, though, +420 is the limit. For the record just because 10 tricks are available in notrump doesn't mean you should play there. Switch the ♣7 and ♣Q to see why that would not be a good idea. But the notrump hogs will win out today.

Bd: 13 ♠ 10 8 7 6 5  
 Dlr: North ♥ A 2  
 Vul: Both ♦ 7 6  
 ♣ J 7 3 2

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

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

Since Standard American incorporates Smolen, a typical auction after East's strong notrump will see West use Stayman then force to game, showing 5-4 in the majors. East will settle in 3NT of course, not worrying unduly about his club stoppers, and be delighted to receive a diamond lead from all but the most imaginative of Souths. That gives declarer one cheap trick, but what next? The winning (but hardly obvious) line is to try a club toward the queen and play on hearts. This ought to produce nine tricks for a giant result.

Bd: 10 ♠ 6  
 Dlr: East ♥ A 9 8 5 4  
 Vul: Both ♦ A J 4 3  
 ♣ A 7 5

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

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

In third seat, a 4♠ opening has something to recommend it, although it often acts as a transfer to double (as it would today). If the defenders panic and cash out, they may hold themselves to +200. Still, passive defense will ensure +500 against the game. I prefer a 1♠ opening, over which North might either double or overcall 2♥ planning to double at his next turn. The defense to a heart contract is not so easy after two rounds of spades. East should not overruff declarer but pitch a club, after which North rates to take no more than eight tricks.

Bd: 14 ♠ A 10 7 6  
 Dlr: East ♥ 9 5  
 Vul: None ♦ 7 6 2  
 ♣ A J 8 3

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

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

When South opens 1♥, many Wests will risk an overcall of 2♣ — though both pass and double are perfectly sensible alternatives. Without the ♣10, the overcall would seem unduly macho, especially facing a passed partner. If West does overcall, then North must pass smoothly and play for penalties. South will oblige with a re-opening double, and after a heart lead and continuation, the defenders have a painless nine tricks. (Might East comment that he "only" gave his partner an ace and three trumps?) Perhaps that proves just how dangerous the overcall is.

Bd: 11 ♠ Q 10 7 5  
 Dlr: South ♥ A 7  
 Vul: None ♦ 9 8 2  
 ♣ 9 7 6 5

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

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

South has a 1♥ (NOT a 1NT) opening, after which West will overcall in spades. As North, it is tempting to stretch to respond 1NT now. If North acts, he will probably see his partner declare 2♥, against which the defenders can take five tricks painlessly enough. That said, the three-three trump split suggests that 2♥ should eventually come home, one way or another. There seems to be no good reason for either pair to do more bidding than that...but that won't stop a few E-W desperados going too far in a black suit.

Bd: 15 ♠ 7  
 Dlr: South ♥ J 9 6  
 Vul: N-S ♦ 10 8 7 5 2  
 ♣ A J 7 6

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

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

Facing South's 1♦ opening, should North preempt to 3♦ (assuming he has no way to show a mixed raise)? I think so. East could certainly be forgiven for jumping to 4♠ now. The problem is that when South bids 5♦, West will not know whose hand it is. With 5♦ a -100 save against 4♠, maybe West does best to cross his fingers and bid on. Sadly, this time the five level DOES belong to the opponents. It is hard to see how 5♠ can make more than 10 tricks without a serious error by a defender.

Bd: 12 ♠ Q 10 6 3  
 Dlr: West ♥ Q J 9 7 5 4  
 Vul: N-S ♦ 2  
 ♣ K 2

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

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

Should North open a weak two in second seat? It depends on whom you ask, but I believe in getting your blow in first, and a side four-card major won't stop me. Whatever North does, East will either open or overcall in notrump, and if he plays 2NT on a heart lead, he can come to eight tricks by setting up a winner in each of the four suits. The best results here will come from one side or the other bidding too much. That is why North's acting directly is safer; it forces the opponents to commit themselves early rather than late.

Bd: 16 ♠ A 9 7 5 3  
 Dlr: West ♥ 7  
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q 9 8 3  
 ♣ A Q 7

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

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

How N-S bid their two hands toward slam is a matter of partnership style, but many tables may be able to stay low by bidding: 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♦ - 2NT - 3♣ - 4NT - Pass. After a heart lead to the jack and king, declarer can run the diamonds (East pitching hearts) and take a spade finesse. The remaining top hearts catch East in a black-suit squeeze. Alternatively, early club discards by East set up the long clubs for South. In real life though, South might simply play the ♠K and ♠J out of his hand at once. Anyone bringing home 12 tricks here (especially without defensive error) will deserve an excellent score.

Bd: 17 ♠ K Q 4 2  
 Dlr: North ♥ A 8 5 2  
 Vul: None ♦ Q 9 6 4  
 ♣ 10  
 ♠ 10 6 5 ♠ A J 9 8  
 ♥ Q 7 ♥ K 10 9 6 4  
 ♦ K J 7 3 ♦ A 10 8 2  
 ♣ J 9 8 3 ♣ —  
 ♠ 7 3  
 ♥ J 3  
 ♦ 5  
 ♣ A K Q 7 6 5 4 2

If you look at the N-S hands, you'd figure 3NT is a reasonable contract. In fact 2NT is the limit...for E-W! Despite North and South having respectable opening bids, it is E-W who can make game in either of their seven-card major-suit fits. I'd expect more pairs to try for game with the other cards and doubled club games to be relatively common. Any N-S pair who find a way to go plus may scoop the pool (though if North passes initially, you could see South declaring a club partscore successfully).

Bd: 21 ♠ A Q 9  
 Dlr: North ♥ Q 10 4 2  
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 10  
 ♣ A 9 5 4  
 ♠ J ♠ 10 8 7 5  
 ♥ A 8 3 ♥ J  
 ♦ A K Q 7 3 2 ♦ 6 5 4  
 ♣ J 10 3 ♣ K Q 8 7 6  
 ♠ K 6 4 3 2  
 ♥ K 9 7 6 5  
 ♦ 9 8  
 ♣ 2

Though E-W have the majority of high cards, N-S can bring home 10 tricks in hearts despite the bad spade break. You'd expect E-W to get to 3♦ before South has had a chance to bid a second time. If so, South may be reluctant to bid his hearts, suggesting at least invitational values, as opposed to competing to 3♠ in the known fit (assuming a support double from North). The defenders can take heart ruffs to beat a spade partscore. Similarly, E-W fare quite nicely in diamonds, though in theory club ruffs hold them to nine tricks.

Bd: 18 ♠ K Q 10 9 7  
 Dlr: East ♥ Q 9 6  
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 7  
 ♣ 9 8 4  
 ♠ 5 2 ♠ A J 8 6  
 ♥ A K J 4 2 ♥ 10 8 5  
 ♦ 9 8 6 ♦ 10 5  
 ♣ 6 5 2 ♣ A K J 10  
 ♠ 4 3  
 ♥ 7 3  
 ♦ A K J 4 3 2  
 ♣ Q 7 3

This is a challenging competitive pairs decision for everyone. If South treats his hand as a simple overcall of 1♦ (rather than a weak jump), everyone will bid their suit at the one level. Now a support double by East of North's 1♠ call should get E-W to 2♥, while N-S may well compete to 3♦ — which West probably ought to double "on spec" — protecting his position in case 2♥ is making. The defenders' five winners stand up, and +200 ought to matchpoint splendidly for E-W. By contrast, +100 for E-W would lose out to all the pairs registering a partscore in hearts.

Bd: 22 ♠ A Q 7  
 Dlr: East ♥ 7 4 3  
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 5  
 ♣ K J 8 7 2  
 ♠ J 10 8 5 3 ♠ 4  
 ♥ A K 8 5 2 ♥ 10 9  
 ♦ J 9 6 ♦ K Q 7 4 3 2  
 ♣ — ♣ Q 9 5 4  
 ♠ K 9 6 2  
 ♥ Q J 6  
 ♦ 10 8  
 ♣ A 10 6 3

East is at the lower end of a vulnerable weak-two, but his minor-suit pattern is likely to encourage him to open 2♦. West rates to raise the ante to 3♦ and put it to North as to whether he should balance or risk being shut out for the duration. You really could not blame N-S for selling out to 3♦, where East can make at least +110 — either by a cross-ruff or by setting up hearts. Meanwhile, N-S can bring home 3NT at double-dummy by an improbable play in clubs. However, many N-S pairs will end up in a suit and will not enjoy the experience at all.

Bd: 19 ♠ 7 6 5 4  
 Dlr: South ♥ J 7  
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 10  
 ♣ A K 10 7 5  
 ♠ K Q ♠ A 10 3 2  
 ♥ Q 6 4 2 ♥ A K 10 8 5 3  
 ♦ J 9 4 3 ♦ Q 7  
 ♣ Q 9 2 ♣ 4  
 ♠ J 9 8  
 ♥ 9  
 ♦ A 8 6 5 2  
 ♣ J 8 6 3

Few Norths will resist the temptation to open 1♣ in third chair (it is a sensible opening bid in any seat in my book), over which East has a simple 1♥ overcall, while South can do no better than raise to 2♣. West's values look too soft for a 3♣ cuebid, especially with a wasted club honor, but one way or another E-W should find a way to game at many tables. With 10 tricks a pianola in hearts, but no chance of an overtrick, this deal will be won or lost in the bidding.

Bd: 23 ♠ A 9 8  
 Dlr: South ♥ A 4 3  
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 9 7  
 ♣ J 9 6 5  
 ♠ 6 5 4 ♠ K Q 7 3 2  
 ♥ K 7 6 ♥ Q J 10 8 2  
 ♦ A K 4 ♦ 2  
 ♣ A Q 10 7 ♣ 8 4  
 ♠ J 10  
 ♥ 9 5  
 ♦ Q J 8 6 5 3  
 ♣ K 3 2

E-W have the values for game and two eight-card fits, with the hearts being internally solid, the spades rather feeble. It doesn't matter today, since technically the limit on the hand is 10 tricks in either major. The defenders can take a ruff in whichever major is not trumps. In practice though, you might expect much of the field to come home with 11 tricks in whichever major they choose to settle in. Even so, the entry position is sufficiently awkward that +620 will be a relatively common result.

Bd: 20 ♠ J 6 2  
 Dlr: West ♥ 7 5 2  
 Vul: Both ♦ K 3  
 ♣ Q J 9 8 3  
 ♠ K 8 ♠ Q 10 9 4  
 ♥ A K 6 3 ♥ Q J 10 8  
 ♦ J 10 9 8 4 ♦ 7  
 ♣ A 4 ♣ K 10 7 5  
 ♠ A 7 5 3  
 ♥ 9 4  
 ♦ A Q 6 5 2  
 ♣ 6 2

I'm not a fan of off-shape strong notrumps, but if ever there was a hand crying out to be opened 1NT, West's cards would constitute it. Yet again in this set, Stayman will see East find the fit and drive to 4♥. This is an easy contract on any defense but repeated trump leads. Frankly, I'm not sure how to play 4♥ after a heart lead, though if declarer ruffs two clubs high in hand and finds the ♠J, he can still emerge with +650. Nonetheless, I would certainly prefer it if you led the ♣Q against me!

Bd: 24 ♠ J 6 5 3  
 Dlr: West ♥ J 6  
 Vul: None ♦ Q 9 4 2  
 ♣ K Q 10  
 ♠ K Q ♠ A 10 8 4 2  
 ♥ A Q 9 7 2 ♥ K 10  
 ♦ K J 10 8 ♦ 6 5  
 ♣ 9 4 ♣ A 7 6 2  
 ♠ 9 7  
 ♥ 8 5 4 3  
 ♦ A 7 3  
 ♣ J 8 5 3

E-W have two seven-card major fits, both of which are sensible alternative final strains to notrump. But after an auction 1♥ - 1♠ - 2♦, most Easts will rebid 2NT, won't they, leading to +400 in 3NT? One can imagine East opting to improvise with a 3♥ call — yes it is a slight distortion, but it does not rule out a final contract of 3NT, and you could argue that ♥K-10 is almost as good as three trumps. After a club lead against 4♥, declarer may simply win the ♣A and play on diamonds for +420. The trump weakness in 4♠ means 10 tricks would be far harder to bring home there.

Bd: 25 ♠ K10 8 7  
 Dlr: North ♥ 7 6  
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q 5 3  
 ♣ K10 8 5  
 ♠ J 9 4 ♠ A 6 5  
 ♥ Q 10 8 4 ♥ A K 3 2  
 ♦ K J 9 6 ♦ 10 7  
 ♣ A 6 ♣ 9 7 3 2  
 ♠ Q 3 2  
 ♥ J 9 5  
 ♦ A 8 4 2  
 ♣ Q J 4

Most Easts will pass, but some Easts will upvalue their controls into an opening bid, after which West may drive to game on finding the heart fit. If West opens 1♦ in fourth seat and then raises hearts, East can make a game-try and stop in 3♥. Achieving even nine tricks in hearts is far from simple (declarer is likely to misguess diamonds and lose two spades, two diamonds and one club trick). So bringing home +140 in hearts should tie E-W for a top board. Indeed, any plus score for E-W ought to earn a decent matchpoint result.

Bd: 29 ♠ J10 9 7 5 3  
 Dlr: North ♥ 3  
 Vul: Both ♦ A10 9 8 7  
 ♣ 2  
 ♠ 6 ♠ 8 4 2  
 ♥ K 9 6 4 ♥ Q10 8 5 2  
 ♦ Q 6 5 ♦ K 3  
 ♣ 10 7 6 5 4 ♣ A Q 3  
 ♠ A K Q  
 ♥ A J 7  
 ♦ J 4 2  
 ♣ K J 9 8

North has the sort of shape and values that suggest a weak two-bid to me (if not to the rest of the world). When he opens 2♠, then South should simply raise to 4♠ without getting into further complexities. If South investigates higher things, North will reject his efforts. Against 4♠ the defenders should take a diamond and a club trick (it would be quite a challenge to find a route to let either of these winners get away). For the record, 3NT by South on a heart lead or early heart shift will fare disastrously and deservedly so.

Bd: 26 ♠ A J10 8 5  
 Dlr: East ♥ K10 8  
 Vul: Both ♦ Q 8 5 4  
 ♣ 7  
 ♠ 9 7 4 2 ♠ K Q  
 ♥ Q 5 3 ♥ A J 9 6 4  
 ♦ J 6 ♦ K 2  
 ♣ Q 9 8 4 ♣ A J 6 3  
 ♠ 6 3  
 ♥ 7 2  
 ♦ A 10 9 7 3  
 ♣ K 10 5 2

East has a normal 1♥ opening bid, planning to drive to game with the slightest excuse. When West responds 1NT, it feels right to rebid 2♣ then bid 2NT over partner's discouraging 2♥ call. West should retreat to 3♥ to end the auction when East regretfully lets his partner off the hook. South rates to lead spades to let North win and shift to clubs. Now, no matter what declarer does, the defenders will obtain the setting trick via a club ruff. Curiously, -100 may not be a disaster for E-W, since some pairs will surely climb far too high here.

Bd: 30 ♠ 10 9 5 2  
 Dlr: East ♥ J10 7 6 2  
 Vul: None ♦ K 7 2  
 ♣ Q  
 ♠ 8 ♠ Q 7 6 4 3  
 ♥ A Q 9 5 3 ♥ K 8  
 ♦ A 8 5 3 ♦ Q 10 6 4  
 ♣ J 9 4 ♣ 7 2  
 ♠ A K J  
 ♥ 4  
 ♦ J 9  
 ♣ A K 10 8 6 5 3

When South opens 1♣ and West overcalls 1♥, North has a choice of pass, double or 1NT, none of which are exactly appealing. If North takes any positive action, then South will probably drive to 3NT by North, one way or another. The defenders can test declarer by cashing three hearts then underleading the ♦A. This gives North a tough decision since if he puts up the ♦K and is wrong he will surely end up losing at least seven tricks. 5♣ cannot be made on a spade lead, because there is no safe re-entry to the South hand to draw trumps.

Bd: 27 ♠ 5 4 2  
 Dlr: South ♥ Q 5  
 Vul: None ♦ K J 9 8 5 3  
 ♣ Q 6  
 ♠ K 8 3 ♠ J10 9  
 ♥ A 7 2 ♥ 9 8 6 3  
 ♦ Q 10 ♦ A 4 2  
 ♣ K 10 9 5 2 ♣ 8 4 3  
 ♠ A Q 7 6  
 ♥ K J 10 4  
 ♦ 7 6  
 ♣ A J 7

South's small doubleton is not a serious flaw to opening 1NT, though I can absolutely understand electing to open 1♣ and making a simple raise of the major, which might result in the final contract being a diamond partscore. Following a strong notrump, North will produce a simple raise to 3NT (yes, pessimists might invite in diamonds). After a club lead against 3NT, declarer does best to put up ♣Q then take a losing spade finesse. It is not clear what West will do now. So long as West does not play back a club, even eight tricks might prove a struggle for South.

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

South should open 1♦ rather than 2♦ since he has too many controls and his suit is too weak for a preempt. Now it looks easy for N-S to reach slam, the optimal one being 6♦ (or perhaps 6NT) by North because you have many routes to 12 tricks, so long as diamonds break. Even today, declarer might just find his way home in 6NT with 12 tricks. He needs to guess both majors then squeeze East in the minors — far easier said than done. Note, though, that East is truly endplayed on opening lead. I expect 6♦ to be a popular contract, down on the bad trump break.

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

Almost everyone playing a 15-17 notrump will open 1♣ with the West cards because 4-3-3-3 14-counts are rarely worth an upgrade, and this hand is no exception. A 1♣ opener results in a 2♠ partscore by East, which should handle for eight tricks with the minimum of inconvenience. By contrast, a 14-16 notrump from West is likely to result in his scoring +120, no matter what North leads, with the defenders having no five-card suit to establish and the spade honors very favorably located. Of course, a club lead by North will give declarer a ninth trick.

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

West will open a minor at almost every table (and anyone whose partner opens 1♣ "for the lead" has my profound sympathy). East has a hand both with no clear direction between spades and notrump plus some real slam interest if he can find a fit or extra values opposite. East figures to finish up in 4♠, where after a heart lead his best line is to win, then use dummy's entries to play on trumps to maximum advantage. Paradoxically, it is rather easier to declare 6NT. After a heart lead, you really have no option but the double finesse in spades.