

**Board 1** ♠ 5

North Deals ♥ A K 5

None Vul ♦ 10 9 8 2

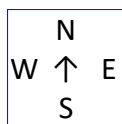
♣ Q J 9 4 3

♠ 8 7 4 3

♥ 10 8

♦ A Q J 5 4 3

♣ 7



♠ A 10 9 6 2

♥ Q 7 6

♦ K 6

♣ A 10 5

10

7 13

10

♠ K Q J

♥ J 9 4 3 2

♦ 7

♣ K 8 6 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	3	-	1	-	-
S	3	-	1	-	-
E	-	3	-	3	2
W	-	3	-	3	2

Par -100: NS 4♣x-1

**AUCTION**

When East opens 1 ♠ West has a raft of plausible choices. They could raise to 2 ♠, 3 ♠, or even 4 ♠. Alternatively if playing Bergen Raises West could treat the hand as a mixed raise. All we can predict for sure is that this hand is NOT a preemptive raise! Everything else makes sense. East will surely reject any invitation; but one way or another, I suspect more pairs will play at the three-level or higher than stop safely in 2 ♠.

**PLAY**

South will surely lead a top spade against - say - 3 ♠. The trump lead suggests the 3-1 break, so East rates to win and play on diamonds at once.

When South ruffs and shifts to a heart

the defenders will surely take their four tricks. Given how many chances South has to get this right, I'd expect N/S to take their four tricks at almost every table.

**PASSING THOUGHTS**

Bergen raises are a method of showing limit, mixed and preemptive raises after a major-suit opener. Most efficiently used in non-competitive auctions, one can use the jump as preemptive with call of 3 ♣ and 3 ♦ for limit (10-11 HCP) and Mixed (6-9 HCP) each with 4+ trumps. I could tell you why 3 ♣ should be the weaker hand and 3 ♦ the stronger...but then I'd have to kill you.

**Board 2** ♠ 4

East Deals ♥ A K 8 6 5

N-S Vul ♦ 6 5 4

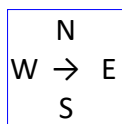
♣ K J 5 2

♠ K 10 9 7 3

♥ Q 10 7 2

♦ Q 10 2

♣ 6



♠ A J 6

♥ J 4 3

♦ A 9 8

♣ A Q 9 8

11  
7 16  
6

♠ Q 8 5 2

♥ 9

♦ K J 7 3

♣ 10 7 4 3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	1	2	3	3
W	1	1	2	3	3

Par -400: EW 3N=

## AUCTION

West's hand is worth no more than an invitation facing a strong no-trump, though one might drive the hand to game via Smolen in an attempt to describe it precisely, accepting an overbid by about a jack to reach the best game. As to an invitational sequence, Stayman then 2 ♠ is played by some as an unbalanced invitation with five spades. If you do not have that in your toolkit it isn't a bad idea at Pairs to use this sequence to settle in 2 ♠ when no major-suit fit comes to life.

## PLAY

I never claimed to be a good predictor, even with the sight of all four hands.

Here East's club spots mean that 3 NT plays like a dream, while spades loses out to heart ruffs. Of course if East is declarer South might not lead a heart, and if so, ten tricks come home in 4 ♠.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

The best use for Stayman then two of a major is the subject of considerable discussion. A simple (and I say sensible) option is to use Stayman then 2 ♥ as non-invitational with both majors -- opener corrects to 2 ♠ if 3=2 in the majors. Stayman then 2 ♠ over 2 ♥ or 2 ♦ can be played as an unbalanced invitation with five spades and a second suit.

### Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A K 8 5 4

♥ J 10 9 7 3

♦ J 10

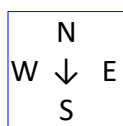
♣ J

♠ J 7

♥ A 5

♦ A Q

♣ K 10 9 8 7 6 3



♠ Q 2

♥ K Q 6 4 2

♦ K 7 6 5 3

♣ 4

10  
14 10  
6

♠ 10 9 6 3

♥ 8

♦ 9 8 4 2

♣ A Q 5 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	3	-
S	-	-	-	3	1
E	2	1	1	-	-
W	2	1	1	-	-

Par +140: NS 2 ♠ +1

### AUCTION

When West opens 1 ♣ a sizeable percentage of the Norths in this field will make a Michaels Cuebid. That sets East an unusual problem since they no longer want to bid hearts -- and in any event that call should be used as artificial here. East might bid 2 ♦, whereupon South could and should jump to 3 ♠, meaning it as shape not high-cards. With more there are various cuebids at their disposal. Now can E/W work out to let South play there? I suspect not; with the balance of high-cards you'd expect West to compete further -- and even if they do not, East may act again.

### PLAY

If the defenders lead trumps against 3 ♠ declarer will duck a heart to West, win the trump return and ruff out hearts, coming to no fewer than 10 tricks. The defenders need to cash their red-suit winners and lead a third diamond to promote a trump trick -- in theory. However, I predict many declarers will find a way to hold themselves to fewer than nine tricks after a club lead.

### PASSING THOUGHTS

Since you asked, I suggest after the opponents use either a Michaels Cuebid or an Unusual No-trump, the higher of the cuebids (if below three of your partner's suit) should show a limit raise or better, while the other cuebid shows invitational or better values in the fourth suit. A bid of the fourth suit is natural and non-forcing; approximately a good weak two in strength.

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**Board 4** ♠ Q J 7 5

West Deals ♥ 10 7 5

Both Vul ♦ 9 8 5

♣ A Q 6

♠ K 8 6 2

♥ 6 3 2

♦ 7 6

♣ K J 3 2

	N	
W	←	E
	S	

♠ A 10 9 4

♥ A K J 8 4

♦ K Q

♣ 9 5

♠ 3

♥ Q 9

♦ A J 10 4 3 2

♣ 10 8 7 4

9  
7 17  
7

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	2	-	-	-
S	-	2	-	-	-
E	1	-	3	3	2
W	1	-	3	3	2

Par -140: EW 2♥+1;

EW 2♠+1

## AUCTION

In third seat I hope no East will open a strong no-trump. Were they to do so, it might end the auction, and on a diamond lead declarer would need to find the ♥ Q or go down like a stone. Conversely, after a 1♥ opener and a 3♦ overcall East might find himself in 4♥, not a hopeless contract but apparently doomed today on the rocks of some unlucky placement of cards..

## PLAY

In 4♥ on a singleton spade lead declarer will surely lead a club up, and eventually lose three+ tricks in the black suits -- not to mention having to find the ♥ Q... and why would they? This seems a very hard hand for E/W to construct

an auction to stay sensibly low.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

5-4-2-2 is a distribution that tends to play better at suits. Try to avoid opening 1 NT with a decent five-card major and this shape. And in my books when you hold a five-card minor and four spades you rate to be able to show the hand by bidding the suits. At worst, you will surely postpone any awkward decision to the third round.

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**Board 5** ♠ K 9 2

North Deals ♥ A 3

N-S Vul ♦ K Q J 9 8

♣ J 6 5

♠ Q J 7

♥ J 10 7 6

♦ 10

♣ A 9 7 4 3

	N	
W	↑	E
	S	

♠ 6 5 4

♥ K 9 5

♦ 6 3 2

♣ K 10 8 2

14

8 6

12

♠ A 10 8 3

♥ Q 8 4 2

♦ A 7 5 4

♣ Q

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	5	1	4	2
S	-	5	1	4	2
E	2	-	-	-	-
W	2	-	-	-	-

Par +600: NS 5 ♦ =

## AUCTION

If North upgrades their hand into a strong no-trump (it is only about a ten short per the Kaplan-Rubens evaluator) a Stayman auction to 3 NT will see East on lead. This isn't the world's silliest contract but you'd far rather be in 5 ♦, which is unbreakable as the cards lie. After a more normal 1 ♦ opener it is far from easy to get to the suit game (or even 3 NT by South, which has considerably more practical chances).

## PLAY

On a blind auction to 3 NT by North I freely admit I'd lead the spade six not a club. Is that disastrous? Not necessarily. Declarer may fail to appreciate the position and take two spade finesses for down two not one!

## PASSING THOUGHTS

If you are interested in an objective hand-valuation tool try: <https://www.jeff-goldsmith.com/cgi-bin/knr.cgi?hand=>. The late Jeff Goldsmith specifically designed this as a free tool for anyone interested in improving their own (and their partner's) evaluating skills.

# Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A 7 5 3

♥ 4 3

♦ A K J 7

♣ K 10 6

6  
15 7  
12

♠ J 6 4 2

♥ 6

♦ 9 8 5 4 3

♣ A J 5

N  
W → E  
S

♠ K 8

♥ A Q J 8 7 2

♦ 10 2

♣ Q 7 3

♠ Q 10 9

♥ K 10 9 5

♦ Q 6

♣ 9 8 4 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	1	-	1	2
W	1	1	-	1	2

Par -120: EW 2N=

## AUCTION

When West doubles South's 1 ♥ opener, some Norths will pass, others will bid 1 ♠. East should in either case bid 1 NT, and I'd expect to see many if not most Souths competing to 2 ♥. What now? If East has bid 1 NT freely, West might double 2 ♥ to show extras, otherwise South might well buy the hand in 2 ♥.

## PLAY

Against 1 NT the lead of the ♥ Q will travel round to the king, and declarer might well broach spades by leading the queen, generating at least eight tricks for their side. By contrast 2 ♥ will be a more challenging spot. If West leads a trump, East will put in the nine, and declarer may well exit in diamonds. If

they lead the 10, the defenders may have to avoid error to set the contract at all.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

As a general rule a hand that makes a takeout double can NOT make a low-level penalty double of that suit at their next turn. Such a double is either pure takeout or it is extras, suggesting three cards in partner's suit (if there is one).

**Board 7** ♠ K J 10 9 2

South Deals ♥ A

Both Vul ♦ A 7 2

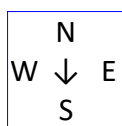
♣ Q 9 3 2

♠ A 4 3

♥ K 9 5 3 2

♦ K Q 10

♣ 5 4



♠ Q 8

♥ Q 7 4

♦ 9 4 3

♣ A K J 10 6

♠ 7 6 5

♥ J 10 8 6

♦ J 8 6 5

♣ 8 7

14  
12 12  
2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	2	3	1	3
W	5	2	4	1	3

Par -620: W 4 ♥ =

## AUCTION

When the bidding starts with West opening 1 ♥ and North overcalling 1 ♠ you can see a very good case for East driving to 4 ♥. An indirect approach of bidding 2 ♣ then cuebidding spades might get West to 3 NT, an excellent spot by comparison. East might consider only inviting game if facing a light opener or playing a strong club, I suppose?

## PLAY

In 4 ♥ North might guess to lead a club. If they do and declarer misguesses by putting up the ace, they will need to cross to hand with a diamond to lead a heart up. When North scores the ♦ A and plays a second club, declarer can survive by

finessing, coming to hand cheaply in diamonds, taking a third diamond, then leading a heart up. When North wins they are endplayed to lead a black suit. Declarer's spade loser goes away either on the clubs or the ♠ Q.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

The fancy have decided to use the call of 2 NT in response to a major-suit opener or overcall to show a limit raise or better in competition. If East plays this style, the idea of cue-bidding at the first turn to show a limit raise or better with three trumps, planning to respect a sign-off but to go to game facing any sign of life, might work well here.

**Board 8** ♠ Q 10 7 3

West Deals ♥ J 5 4

None Vul ♦ Q 8 7 3

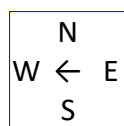
♣ 7 3

♠ K 6 5

♥ K Q 6

♦ J 4

♣ K Q 9 8 6



♠ J 9 8

♥ A 8 7 3

♦ 10 6

♣ 10 5 4 2

♠ A 4 2

♥ 10 9 2

♦ A K 9 5 2

♣ A J

5  
14 5  
16

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	2	-	2	1
S	-	2	-	2	1
E	2	-	2	-	-
W	2	-	2	-	-

Par +100: EW 3♣x-1;

EW 3♥x-1

## AUCTION

When South hears 1♣ to their left and 1♥ to their right, they must come in, of course, but the field will be split between those who make a simple overcall in diamonds, and those who risk a 1 NT call (perhaps planning a retreat if doubled?). The 2♦ call will see most Wests able to make a support double to show three hearts, and North must raise directly to 3♦. South might be tempted to look for 3 NT but today discretion is the better part of valor.

## PLAY

Against 3♦ whether the defenders lead a top club or top heart declarer will draw trumps and exit in either clubs or hearts, meaning that the defenders will

eventually have to broach spades, facilitating holding their losers in that suit to one, for down one. 1 NT appears to have seven tricks and no more; it looks hard to endplay the defense -- but after four rounds of hearts West might fall victim to a squeeze-endplay.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

Support doubles are part of what the well-dressed bridge-player has at their disposal. In the hypothetical auction where South bids diamonds, a heart raise shows four, double shows three.

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**Board 9** ♠ 10 9 5

North Deals ♥ 10 6 4

E-W Vul ♦ 6 5 4

♣ Q J 9 6

♠ A J 4

♥ Q J 9 5 3

♦ K 10 2

♣ 8 7

	N	
W	↑	E
	S	

♠ Q 8 7 6

♥ K 8

♦ J 9 3

♣ K 10 4 3

3  
11 9  
17

♠ K 3 2

♥ A 7 2

♦ A Q 8 7

♣ A 5 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	2	3	2	2
W	2	2	2	2	2

Par -140: E 1♥+2

## AUCTION

The vast majority of Souths who play a strong no-trump will open one. There is almost never a reason to upgrade a 4-3-3-3 pattern, I believe. At most tables that will end the auction (neither West nor East really has enough shape to act unless 'on tilt').

## PLAY

You can imagine West leading a top heart ducked, then a second heart ducked to East's king. It looks natural for East to shift to diamonds, and if declarer finesses then West will win and clear hearts, giving suit preference to East for spades. Now if declarer innocently plays ♣ A and another club, East can win and play spades. If declarer misguesses and plays the king, they will be held to three tricks.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

While one might consider balancing on 5-3-3-2 pattern, I strongly recommend not doing so in direct seat. Balanced hands tend to do better defending, except perhaps with nobody vulnerable. Also note that the heart West plays at trick two may carry suit preference implications.

**Board 10** ♠ 9 8 6 3  
 East Deals ♥ 10 8  
 Both Vul ♦ A K Q J 5 4  
 ♣ A

♠ 4		♠ A J 5 2
♥ A K Q 4 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">             N              W → E              S           </div>	♥ 9 6 5
♦ 7 6 3		♦ 2
♣ K J 8 3		♣ 10 9 7 6 4

14	♠ K Q 10 7
13 5	♥ J 7 2
8	♦ 10 9 8
	♣ Q 5 2

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	3	-	2	1
S	-	3	-	2	1
E	5	-	4	-	-
W	5	-	4	-	-

Par -500: NS 5 ♦ x-2

## AUCTION

Some Norths will double a 1 ♥ opener to their right, but this looks like a 2 ♦ overcall to me. I plan to come back in again at any sensible level available to me but I need to emphasize diamonds first. If my partner gets the chance to raise diamonds I might bid spades next (planning to play 3 NT or 4 ♠ if that is what partner proposes). As it is, I might well get to 4 ♠ here.

## PLAY

E/W make a lot of tricks in clubs or hearts with a combined 18-count, N/S far fewer with their 22 HCP (but only on very accurate defense to 4 ♠. Against that game the defenders rate to lead and continue hearts -- not best. North ruffs the third heart and runs the

♠ 9, East ducks twice and wins the third to play a club, but declarer is in control, thanks to the diamond entry to dummy. Either East must lead or West must shift to diamonds to disrupt declarer's entry to dummy to draw the last trump. This also requires East to duck ♠ A twice then tap declarer in hearts.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

When weighing up whether to double or overcall, bear in mind that these days two-level overcalls are meant to be taken seriously. They show decent hands and decent long suits. Random five-card suits can be bid at the one-level, but not the two-level.

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**Board 11** ♠ 3

South Deals ♥ K 8 7 5 3 2

None Vul ♦ A J 8 3

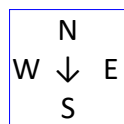
♣ A 3

♠ 9 8 6 5 2

♥ Q 10 6

♦ 7 6

♣ J 6 2



♠ A K Q 10

♥ A 9

♦ Q 10 9 5

♣ 10 7 4

♠ J 7 4

♥ J 4

♦ K 4 2

♣ K Q 9 8 5

12  
3 15  
10

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	2	2	3	-	2
S	2	1	3	-	2
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Par +140: NS 3 ♥ =

## AUCTION

When South hears East double partner's 1 ♥ opener they should redouble, and now West can either bid 1 ♠ -- or perhaps 2 ♠ if they have had their Wheaties this morning? In either case, you'd imagine North will compete in diamonds, and I'd expect South to give false preference to hearts. If East competes in spades too high, their side can be doubled.

## PLAY

After two rounds of spades against a heart contract, North will ruff and lead a heart towards the jack. Assuming West wins and continues spades, declarer can duck a heart and come to ten tricks.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

After North hears their partner redouble, it is often difficult for them to differentiate shapely hands. Direct actions tend to show shape rather than high cards, but that doesn't always help you to tell partner which of 5-4, 5-5 or 6-4 shape you started with. My partial solution to the problem? Use pass as forcing and direct actions or jumps as shape not high cards.

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**Board 12** ♠ J 9 6

West Deals ♥ K J 8

N-S Vul ♦ 5

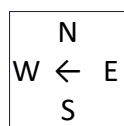
♣ K J 10 8 5 4

♠ 10 7 5 2

♥ 9 6 3

♦ J 10 3

♣ A Q 7



♠ K Q 4 3

♥ A Q 4 2

♦ 9 7 4 2

♣ 9

♠ A 8

♥ 10 7 5

♦ A K Q 8 6

♣ 6 3 2

9  
7 11  
13

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	2	1	-	1
S	4	2	1	-	1
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Par +130: NS 3 ♣ +1

## AUCTION

In third seat East will have to choose at most tables between opening one of the three four-card suits. Opening 1 ♦ may silence South, but South doesn't have a clear action after either major-suit opener. One way or another, E/W rate to find some kind of fit in one major or the other (spades plays painlessly for seven tricks) but North may back in with their clubs, where they figure to come to nine or ten tricks.

## PLAY

Against 2 ♠ by West a diamond lead will see the defenders lead four rounds of diamonds, which should allow the defenders to take six tricks. In clubs by North the best lead is a spade. Declarer

can take 10 tricks at double dummy, but if they win and pitch spades on the top diamonds they are likely to lose two trumps and two hearts.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

Even if you play five-card majors, I am not brave enough to pass the East hand in third seat. I'd open 1 ♥ for the lead and hope we can find spades if we belong there. Opening 1 ♠ may well lose the hearts.

**Board 13** ♠ 4

North Deals ♥ K J 8 5 4 3 2

Both Vul ♦ A 10 7

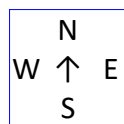
♣ 6 4

♠ 9 8 3

♥ 10 7

♦ K 5 3

♣ K Q 10 7 2



♠ K J 7 6 5 2

♥ A Q

♦ Q J 8 6

♣ 9

8 ♠ A Q 10

8 13 ♥ 9 6

11 ♦ 9 4 2

♣ A J 8 5 3

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	3	-	-
S	-	-	3	-	-
E	1	2	-	2	2
W	1	2	-	2	2

Par +140: NS 3 ♥ =

## AUCTION

The North hand looks like a normal vulnerable 3 ♥ preempt. If you wait for the perfect hand to act, you will remain silent forever. East can overcall 3 ♠, leaving South with a tough call. A penalty double looks premature (and indeed you might get to defend 4 ♠x if you pass!). Raising to 4 ♥ looks equally optimistic, so passing looks in order. Now West might raise to 4 ♠ or pass. I can see both sides of this, but the club values are potentially valueless if either my partner or my LHO have a singleton so I think pass is right.

## PLAY

Declaring 3 ♠ on a heart lead East will win and play a club. South might as well win and return a club -- the diamond ace surely isn't going away. In due course declarer will come to eight tricks by playing a trump himself. Even if doubled in 3 ♠ (and tipped off about the trump break) East cannot quite arrange a trump reduction to endplay South in trumps.

## PASSING THOUGHT

I assume when partner acts over a preempt they place me with 8 HCP and two trumps. The West hand is on the cusp for a raise -- change the club king to the ace and bidding on seems right.

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**Board 14** ♠ A 9 6

East Deals ♥ J 8 3

None Vul ♦ K 8

♣ J 6 5 4 3

♠ Q 8 5

♥ A K 9 7 6

♦ Q 5 2

♣ 9 2

	N	
W	→	E
	S	

♠ J 7

♥ 10 5 4 2

♦ 6 4 3

♣ A K 10 8

♠ K 10 4 3 2

♥ Q

♦ A J 10 9 7

♣ Q 7

9  
11 8  
12

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	2	3	-	3	1
S	2	3	-	3	1
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

Par +140: NS 2 ♠ +1

## AUCTION

There are perfectly nice and otherwise respectable people who would overcall 2 ♥ over 1 ♠. I urge you not to show your contempt for them out loud; a quiet inward smile and a pitying shake of the head should suffice. Assuming West passes over 1 ♠ they should end up defending 2 ♠ rather than risking -300 in a high-level heart contract when partner takes them seriously.

## PLAY

Against 2 ♠ when West leads a top heart East should discourage, but whatever side-suit West tries next other than try and cash a second heart, the defenders seem highly likely to score three side-suit winners and a trump. The

second overtrick will be worth a bushel of matchpoints.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

All partnerships should have firm agreements as to how East follows at trick one when partner leads an ace-king and dummy has honor-third or fourth. I suggest reserving encouragement for a doubleton, and if playing standard signals use lowest from three, second lowest from four.

Spark! 2024. Commentary by Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet

### Board 15

South Deals

N-S Vul

♠ Q J 6

♥ Q J 9 5

♦ 7

♣ K J 6 3 2

♠ A K 10 8 5 4 3

♥ 8

♦ 5

♣ Q 8 7 4

10  
9 11  
10

N  
W ↓ E  
S

♠ 9 7 2

♥ 6 2

♦ A K 10 9 6 2

♣ A 9

♠ —

♥ A K 10 7 4 3

♦ Q J 8 4 3

♣ 10 5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	-	4	-	1
S	1	-	4	-	1
E	-	1	-	4	-
W	-	1	-	4	-

Par -200: NS 5♥x-1

### AUCTION

Most Souths will open 1 ♥ rather than experimenting with high levels of preemption. Whatever South chooses, West will bid 4 ♠, and North may well bid one more for the road. That sets East a vicious problem. Yes, Terence Reese's dictum of the five-level belongs to the opponents is a sound one, but...is this the exception?

### PLAY

As usual Reese was right -- in a sense. 5 ♠ goes down after a heart lead on the bad trump break, (and would not be cold even if the suit split) while after a diamond lead

West will probably cash one trump to find the bad news, then go to the club ace to pitch the heart on the diamond winner. North can ruff and play a trump, after which the contract will come down to guessing how to play clubs. The ruffing finesse against the jack succeeds today.

### PASSING THOUGHTS

Some tables will be allowed to make 5 ♥, if declarer successfully runs the club 10, and West forgets to cover....and yet covering the ten is a play that would be absurd in that it solves declarer's club guess were the club nine and ten switched. Bridge is a difficult game.

Spark! 2024. Commentary by Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet

**Board 16**      ♠ 10 9 2  
 West Deals      ♥ 10  
 E-W Vul      ♦ Q J 5 2  
                  ♣ Q J 10 7 3

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

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

6  
 11 18  
 5

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	-	7	7	7
W	1	-	7	7	7

Par -2220: EW 7N=

## AUCTION

After an auction starting 1 ♥-1 ♠-2 ♥ East will want to take charge via Blackwood. If West denies the ♥ Q, then 6 ♥ is the likely final contract, if West thinks the seventh heart constitutes possession of the queen, they may end up in seven.

## PLAY

Today North has an alternative to a passive trump lead (luckily enough). Declarer will have no reason to guess trumps that I can see. Curiously while 7 ♠ looks decent, you are likely to go down, I believe. You would win the minor suit lead and cash two trumps, after which it looks best to play the ♥ AK. This works when hearts

break or the same hand has two spades and one heart. Not tonight, Josephine.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

The safety play in 6 ♥, which you might follow at teams, is to win the club lead, cash the diamond winners to pitch the club loser, then ruff a club to hand and lead a heart towards the A-9, intending to inset the nine if North follows small. When the ♥ 10 appears, it is fractionally better in abstract to win the ♥ A then play for the drop -- unless you believe North has long clubs, when the needle shifts.

**Board 17** ♠ Q J 5

North Deals ♥ Q 9 7

None Vul ♦ Q 9 4 2

♣ 6 5 3

♠ A 7 2

♥ A J 10 5 4

♦ K J

♣ K J 4

	N	
W	↑	E
	S	

♠ 9 4 3

♥ 6

♦ 7 6 5

♣ A Q 10 8 7 2

♠ K 10 8 6

♥ K 8 3 2

♦ A 10 8 3

♣ 9

7  
17 6  
10

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	4	-	1	-	3
W	4	-	1	-	3

Par -400: EW 3N=

## AUCTION

Some will open the East hand 3 ♣, making it easy for West to convert to 3 NT. At other tables South may deem their hand worthy of an opening bid (I'd guess with no confidence that more will open 1 ♦ rather than a major) but if West overcalls 1 NT, or doubles and hears their partner bid clubs, EW may still be able to get to 3 NT. It will not be easy, since when North raises the opener East may bid clubs, but won't be able to get their playing strength across below 3 NT.

## PLAY

Depending on South's choice of opening bid, North's opening lead

against 3 NT may make West's task trivial or very hard. On a diamond lead West has nine tricks, on a heart lead at least that number. But after the lead of ♠ Q West will have to guess diamonds. I suspect more will do so than will fail.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

Imagine North leading the ♠ Q, ducked, then the ♠ J, overtaken. If West ducks again (they shouldn't) a shift to the ♥ 8 -- to discourage a continuation -- followed by a reversion to spades, sets the game.

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**Board 18**

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 9 8

♥ A 7 6

♦ A J

♣ K Q 10 8 4 2

♠ Q J 6 5 4 3 2

♥ Q 9 8

♦ Q

♣ 5 3

N  
W → E  
S

♠ A K

♥ 10 4 3 2

♦ K 9 8 7 2

♣ 9 7

14  
7 10  
9

♠ 10 7

♥ K J 5

♦ 10 6 5 4 3

♣ A J 6

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	2	1	-	4
S	4	2	1	-	4
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

Par +500: EW 5♠x-3

## AUCTION

In third seat any West who opens less than 3 ♠ will be presented with a white feather and have their epaulettes ceremonially removed. Should North risk overcalling? I don't think so, but Your Opinion May Vary. If North passes then that will end the auction.

## PLAY

The defense have five winners against 3 ♠ and will surely take them at pretty much every table. Note that 4 ♣ is cold but who will be able to stop there?

## PASSING THOUGHTS

An increasingly popular convention is to give up on bidding four of a minor over a three-level preempt as a natural call. Non-Leaping Michaels means that the bid shows a major-minor two-suiter, typically at least 5-5. That would make bidding this hand even harder!

**Board 19** ♠ 7 4

South Deals ♥ K 4 3

E-W Vul ♦ A J 8 6 4 2

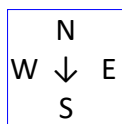
♣ K 3

♠ K 10 2

♥ 9 6 5

♦ 9 7

♣ 8 7 6 5 4



♠ A 9 6 5 3

♥ A J 10 2

♦ K 10

♣ J 10

♠ Q J 8

♥ Q 8 7

♦ Q 5 3

♣ A Q 9 2

11

3 13

13

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	3	-	-	1
S	1	3	-	-	1
E	-	-	1	1	-
W	-	-	1	1	-

Par +110: NS 2 ♦ +1

## AUCTION

After South opens 1 ♣ you could make a case for North responding with an invitational 2 NT -- but since that could easily lead to 2 NT down with 6 ♦ playable, maybe not such a good case. Assuming a 1 ♦ response from North, East will double or bid spades, and now N/S may be steered towards a partscore in diamonds. E/W may compete to 3 ♠, though, after which no one has much of a double.

## PLAY

Against a diamond partscore the defenders must cash their three side-suit winners early or declarer may guess to cash ♦ A and run the clubs, pitching spades. After that, the fall of

the club honors will allow declarer to make ten tricks.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

If East plans to compete a second time I can see why they might begin with a 1 ♠ call. But since I would not be sure I will get a second chance, and do not want my partner to lead a spade from two small rather than a heart from ♥ Qxxxx, I think doubling 1 ♦ is sensible.

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**Board 20** ♠ K 9 8 5 4 3

West Deals ♥ —

Both Vul ♦ J 8 7 4 2

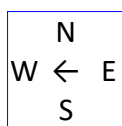
♣ Q 10

♠ 7 2

♥ 10 8 7 6 5

♦ 10

♣ A K 9 6 4



♠ A Q J 10 6

♥ A Q 2

♦ Q 5

♣ J 8 2

♠ —

♥ K J 9 4 3

♦ A K 9 6 3

♣ 7 5 3

6  
7 16  
11

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	4	-	-	-
S	-	4	-	-	-
E	2	-	3	2	2
W	2	-	2	1	2

Par +130: NS 4 ♦ =

## AUCTION

Have you ever seen a commentator give up and say he has no idea what rates to be the final contract on a board? Cometh the board cometh the man...this is a deal where both sides might find themselves in spades, or hearts. Somewhat surprisingly in that context, both hearts and spades play acceptably for E/W; however the N/S diamond fit makes ten tricks because the heart honors in East ruff down. I expect to see big penalties and few undoubled making contracts on this deal.

## PLAY

If N/S get to diamonds after North has passed and South has shown a two suiter, the defenders do best to cash

two clubs and play a spade. Declarer ruffs, then ruffs hearts to dummy and uses the top trumps as re-entries to hand to ruff out hearts.

## PASSING THOUGHTS

We've all seen worse (though not much) and unluckier actions than North preempting in second seat vulnerable. If they do, then West may let them off the hook by doubling. East will pass for penalties happily, but South can redouble and find diamonds.