

North Deals
None Vul

♠ J 7 3
 ♥ A K Q 2
 ♦ J 9 5 2
 ♣ A K

♠ A Q 6 4
 ♥ 9 7 4
 ♦ K Q 7
 ♣ J 6 4

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

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

N
 S
 E
 W

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

18
 12 3
 7

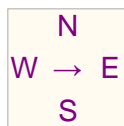
PLAY. 3 NT by South might come home on a passive heart lead, but East will surely lead a spade if North is declarer. In 3 ♦ there is no miracle in the trump suit so ten tricks are the limit. 4 ♥ is the most practical game -- and that might be reachable after North opens 1 ♥ -- reasonable even if playing five-card majors? 4 ♥ takes at least ten tricks thanks to the friendly breaks.

PASSING THOUGHTS. If you play inverted minors it is difficult both to have a preemptive (0-6 HCP) raise and also a mixed raise (say 6-9 HCP). I suggest that when non vulnerable the jump raise does not invite 3NT facing balanced extras, when vulnerable, it does.)





ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

N-S Vul

♠ K 8 4 3
♥ J 6 5
♦ A 8
♣ A 9 3 2



♠ A J 10 7 6
♥ 9 8 4
♦ 3
♣ K J 8 6

					N
N	-	3	1	-	-
S	-	3	1	-	-
E	4	-	-	4	3
W	4	-	-	4	3

♠ 9
♥ A Q 10 3
♦ Q J 9 6 2
♣ 10 5 4

10
12 9
9

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

South Deals
E-W Vul

AUCTION. Playing a 15-17 strong no-trump, North is far too good for that action. Instead they should open 1 ♣ and on hearing their partner respond 1 ♥ they will then have to choose between a jump to game or an invitational sequence. Regardless, the majority of Souths will declare 4 ♥, and now the spotlight switches to West.

PASSING THOUGHTS. That North hand really isn't worth more than an invitation at the second turn facing a 1♥ response. (If partner passes your 3♥ call, I'd bet you were more likely to go down in 3♥ than make an overtrick.)

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

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

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

	♠ N	
W ← E		
	♠ S	

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

	6	
5	11	
	18	

AUCTION. In third seat one could make a case for East opening 1 ♣ not 1 ♠ – but not a very good one, since the objective here is to keep the opponents out. South's positional spade honors make their 18-count good enough in my book to start with a double, planning a rebid at no-trump to show 18-20, rather than starting with a rather heavy 1 NT overcall. Assuming South doubles West will surely pass. North will bid hearts and over partner's 2 NT call I can see a good case for passing. If South bids 1 NT at their first turn it looks possible that the final contract will be played by E/W – and I suspect they may not enjoy it wherever they finish up, though clubs is clearly the least awful strain.

PLAY. 3 NT by South on the lead of the ♥ J, ducked to the king and ace, is still likely to go at least one down, if South follows the simple line of playing East for the ♣ A.

PASSING THOUGHTS. After 1 ♠-(1 NT) some play that West's calls of 2 ♣/2 ♦ would be two-suiters with the other major and that minor. This would be a very unlucky hand for those methods!)

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q J 10 7 6 4
 ♥ Q 3 2
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A K 6

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

♠ 9 8 3 2
 ♥ J 10
 ♦ J 8 3
 ♣ Q 10 3 2

♠ A K 5
 ♥ A 8 7
 ♦ A K 9 4
 ♣ 9 5 4

12
 4 6
 18

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	4	1	2	6	6
E	3	1	2	6	6
S	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

PLAY. Against 6 ♠ the play is trivial on a heart lead and relatively easy on a club lead. In the latter case declarer can cash two clubs and five spades keeping all of dummy's diamonds, and the East hand is immediately forced to release the fourth diamond or the third heart, letting declarer establish a trick in one suit or the other. After a diamond lead declarer does best to win the ace of diamonds, then ruff a diamond. They next run four more spades and the top clubs. Again, in the four-card ending as North leads the last trump East must surrender the third heart or control of diamonds, and either is fatal.

PASSING THOUGHTS. Terence Reese was rightly very scathing about players signposting their hands for declarer. When forcing your side to the three level, as here, East needs better suits or more shape.) If you do not win the auction, all you do is warn declarer of the breaks.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

E-W Vul

AUCTION. When South opens 1 ♦ in second seat West has a reasonable 2 ♣ overcall, despite having only five clubs and being at adverse vulnerability. The action does take away the majors from the opponents – though also from partner, I admit – so I think it is just about worth the risk. If East trustingly raises to 3 ♣, it sets South an almost insoluble problem. Passing seems wet in the extreme, yet acting with a double, a rebid of diamonds or a reverse into hearts seems wildly optimistic. If South does bid, it rates to get N/S uncomfortably high, though no one has a clear double of a red-suit partscore.

PLAY. If West is allowed to play 3 ♣ on three rounds of diamonds, declarer can come home -- so long as they do not draw all the trumps before going after the major suits. Diamonds plays for just eight tricks, because of the unfortunate lie of the heart honors.

PASSING THOUGHTS. I believe two-level overcalls require a six-card suit, unless you have extra values and chunky intermediates. The less space they take up, the more wary you should be of acting. There are rare exceptions; the West hand may or may not be one of them.

West might also consider doubling 1♦, which would be far more attractive with the same shape, but the ♣A the ♠A. The imbalanced honor-structure makes that call unappealing to me.

South Deals
Both Vul

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

♠ Q 6 4 3
 ♥ A Q J 9 5
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ 7 6

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

♠ K 9 7 2
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A K J 7 6 5
 ♣ K J

♠ 6
 ♥ 9 10
 ♦ 15

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

PLAY. The defenders do best to lead and continue hearts, and West might well do this to try to set up the force. If it starts like this, South simply has to handle trumps accurately by starting with the king, then go into finessing mode to register +650. However, a heart sacrifice might be allowed to come to nine tricks on a cross-ruff. Repeated trump leads prevent that - North must lead a trump, or South must shift to one after one or two rounds of diamonds.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

West Deals
None Vul

♠ A K J 10 9
♥ K 8 3
♦ K J 9 8 2
♣ —

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

N
 W ← E
 S

♠ 6 4 3 2
 ♥ Q
 ♦ Q 7 6 4
 ♣ 9 5 4 3

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

♠ Q 8 7
 ♥ 6 5 4
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ A O 10 8 6

15
 9 4
 12

PLAY. Slam can be beaten immediately on the heart ruff, and is likely to go down on any defense but a club lead from West.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

Board 9

North Deals

E-W Vul

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

AUCTION. Fewer and fewer pairs these days play Acol or Benjaminized Acol but it is undeniable that playing standard the South hand is almost impossible to describe. No one except a rank optimist would be happy to open the South hand 2♣, while a 1♠ opener leaves you with far too many problems on rebid for that to be an elegant option. The 2♣ call should allow South to bid spades then hearts and after that start North may drag their partner kicking and screaming to the heart slam. With the major suits behaving that should make comfortably enough. Conversely, a 1♠ opener from South would create huge rebid problems that might well see their side stop at game, or even misjudge to play 3NT.

PLAY. There is not much in the play here. After eg a top diamond lead against 6♥, declarer can probably not do much except play trumps at once and cross their fingers. 6♠ has some extra chances if hearts do not break.

PASSING THOUGHTS. After 2♣-2♦-2♠ responder should use 2NT as temporizing, 3♣ as a second negative, to avoid wrong-siding no-trump unnecessarily.

In passing this deal is an excellent commercial for allowing South to rebid 2♣, Gazzilli, promising 16+ or spades and clubs. If using this convention it does fix a lot of awkward rebid problems while requiring some detailed partnership agreements. If interested maybe check out: <https://bridgewinners.com/article/view/gazzilli-an-introduction/>

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 10 5 3
♥ Q 9 8
♦ A Q 8 4 3
♣ 8 3

♠ 6
♥ K J 6 5 2
♦ K 10 5 2
♣ Q J 10

N
W → E
S

♠ A K 9 8 7 4
♥ 4 3
♦ —
♣ A K 6 5 2

♠ Q J 2
♥ A 10 7
♦ J 9 7 6
♣ 9 7 4

8
10 14
8

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	6	-	3	5	1
W	6	1	3	5	2

AUCTION. If the last hand was tough for N/S, this hand presents significant problems for E/W. If East opens 1 ♠, quite a few Wests may choose to respond 2 ♥, so long as this is not a game force. If so, E/W ought to be able to find their club fit and East will surely be looking for slam.

PLAY. 6♣ is an undesirable spot: it probably needs both black-suits to split and perhaps a heart guess, but it meets the Hamman Rule – it makes. 4♠ is a more sensible game, in that unless the suits break badly you are relatively likely to outscore 5♣. But the club game is perfectly reasonable -- especially when you consider that 3 NT is a very poor contract as the cards lie today. Having said that, after a diamond lead to the jack and king declarer might lead a spade to dummy and a heart towards hand, when South needs to fly up with the ace (correct today, but foolish on some other lies of the cards) and make sure the diamonds do not block. Easier said than done?

PASSING THOUGHTS. I suspect as East after my partner responded 1 NT to my 1 ♠ opener I'd force to game with 3 ♣ and convert 3 NT to 4 ♠. It may not be right, but there again, I might make 4 ♠ facing a spade void.

South Deals
None Vul

♠ J 8 2
 ♥ Q J 5
 ♦ Q 2
 ♣ A J 10 9 2

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

♠ Q 9 7
 ♥ K 10 8 7 4 2
 ♦ K 4 3
 ♣ Q

♠ K 5 3
 ♥ A
 ♦ J 9 8 7 6
 ♣ 8 7 6 4

N 2 1 - -
 S 2 1 - -
 E - - 3 1 1
 W - - 3 2 1

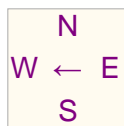
11
 11 10
 8

PLAY. The play in hearts is rather harder to predict. Any declarer who manages to guess both majors to come to nine tricks will surely deserve their excellent matchpoint score.



ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

N-S Vul

♠ Q 7 3
♥ A J 7 6 2
♦ Q 7 4 2
♣ 5



♠ A K 6 2
♥ K Q 8
♦ 9 3
♣ J 6 4 3

					N
N	2	1	-	-	-
S	2	1	-	-	-
E	-	-	3	1	-
W	-	-	3	1	-

♠ J 10 5 4
♥ 5 3
♦ K 10 8
♣ A Q 10 7

8
9 13
10

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

North Deals
Both Vul

AUCTION. With both sides vulnerable it is often more attractive for both sides to pull in a notch. Here after South opens 1 ♣ in third seat it seems clear to me that West should double rather than bid 1 ♦. North will respond 1 ♦ and East can advance with 1 ♠, after which it is not clear for anyone to bid any more...is it? I suppose North might balance – but with what call? South might struggle to take seven tricks in clubs, after a trump lead; but any other strain looks much worse.

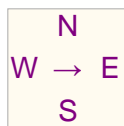
PASSING THOUGHTS. If West overcalls 1 ♦ at their first turn and ends up in a diamond partscore, the defenders might well lead and continue clubs. West ruffs, crosses to a heart and leads a spade to hand, then plays to ruff a heart in dummy. Now a second club ruff should produce nine tricks easily enough. These days expert practice is to overcall a five-card major with 5431 and a singleton in the opponent's suit, then act again if sensible. However, with a five-card minor one doubles first.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.




East Deals
None Vul

♠ J 9 4 2
♥ K J 9
♦ 7 2
♣ 9 8 6 4

♠ 7 5
♥ 10 8 5 4
♦ A K J 9
♣ A 10 2



♠ A K 10 3
♥ A Q 6
♦ Q 6 3
♣ 7 5 3

					N
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	4	4	3	4
W	2	4	4	3	4

♠ Q 8 6
♥ 7 3 2
♦ 10 8 5 4
♣ K O J

5
12 15
8

PLAY. Sometimes Deep Finesse lures you into ignoring the difference between double-dummy and single-dummy bridge. On this deal DF correctly remarks that 10 tricks can be made by East in 3 NT, even after a top club lead. That requires declarer to win the first or second club and drive out the heart honors while the clubs are blocked. That would be a disastrous line against most 4-3 club breaks when South has the length. Instead the normal play is to duck two clubs and win the third, after which nine tricks are the limit unless a major-suit squeeze develops. Of course, at quite a few tables variations in the auction will see the defenders fail to lead and continue clubs, when we are back to 10 tricks without excitement.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q J 8 3
 ♥ Q 8 7 6
 ♦ Q
 ♣ 8 6 5 2

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

♠ A 4
 ♥ 2
 ♦ K 10 9 5 4 3 2
 ♣ A 9 7

♠ 9 7 2
 ♥ A K 10 4 3
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ Q J 3

7
 8 11
 14

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

PLAY. 4 ♦ plays easily for East, 3 ♥ is likely to take nine tricks since West will surely lead a diamond and the defenders' spade ruff gets away.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

E-W Vul

AUCTION. South has a complex hand to evaluate after the unopposed auction 1 ♣-1 ♥-1 ♠. The potential club fit might argue for driving to game via fourth suit forcing. There again, a natural and invitational jump to 3 ♥ does describe the hand very precisely, doesn't it? Whichever action South chooses, I suspect the majority of the field will bid to 3 NT.

PLAY. 3 NT in practice is far better played by South, to attract a low diamond lead. The testing defenses are for East to lead a spade against 3 NT or for West to lead a top diamond and shift to a spade. If declarer relies on the club finesse they will then have to duck one spade and pray. Fortunately, they can still come to nine tricks via two diamonds, four clubs, a heart, and two spades. Meanwhile, 4♥ can be defeated at once on the diamond ruff. If West cannot read the position and shifts to a spade at trick two, then declarer can ruff a spade to hand and drive out the trump king for 10 tricks.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A K 8 6 4
 ♥ J 9
 ♦ Q 5 3
 ♣ J 8 4

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

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

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

11
 12 11
 6

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	1	-	-	3	-
S	1	-	-	3	-
E	-	6	6	-	2
W	-	6	6	-	3

PLAY. In a heart slam you can afford to play trumps before testing diamonds, while in diamonds you probably need to go after that suit at once. If North has opened or shown values some declarers will see the ♥ K with South and draw the right conclusions.

As a side issue: say North opens 2 ♠. Let's assume East makes a Michaels cuebid and West doubles 4 ♠; is it best to play this as penalties or 'Do something intelligent'? Your answer may depend on what cards you are looking at when you double! But perhaps in any event East should remove the double to 5 ♦?

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.





N-S Vul

♣ J 6 3

♣ A 10 2

N
W → E
S

♣ K Q 8 7 5

					N
N	-	1	2	-	-
S	-	1	2	-	-
E	3	-	-	1	3
W	3	-	-	1	3

♣ 9 4

11
14 9
6

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 10 8 4
 ♥ K 5 4 2
 ♦ J 4
 ♣ K 6 5

♠ Q 9 6 3
 ♥ Q 8
 ♦ Q 7 6 5
 ♣ 10 8 4

♠ J 5 2
 ♥ A 10 9 7 3
 ♦ K 3
 ♣ A 9 2

♠ K 7
 ♥ J 6
 ♦ A 10 9 8 2
 ♣ Q J 7 3

6
 11 12
 11

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

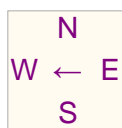
PLAY. The play to 4 ♥ by East is absolutely fascinating. Let's posit a top club lead after South has opened the bidding. Declarer wins in hand and draws trump with the king and ace, preserving ♥ 3, leads a spade to the ten and queen, wins the club return and takes the ♠ A then ♠ J, crosses to the ♥ 4 and ruffs the last spade, then exits in clubs. Whoever wins this trick will be endplayed.

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.

Both Vul

♠ 5 3 2
♥ 9 6 4 3
♦ A J 8 5
♣ J 8

♠ K Q J 8 6 4
♥ Q 7
♦ K 7 6
♣ 10 6



♠ 9 7
♥ J 5 2
♦ Q 3 2
♣ A K 9 7 5

					N
N	-	2	2	-	-
S	-	2	2	-	-
E	1	-	-	2	-
W	1	-	-	2	-

♠ A 10
♥ A K 10 8
♦ 10 9 4
♣ 0 4 3 2

6
11 10
13

ACBL Educational Foundation - July 2025 - Commentary from Barry Rigal and Richard Fleet.