

Board 1
 North Deals
 None Vul

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-------------|-------|---|--|
| ♠ A Q 6 4 | ♠ J 7 3 | ♠ K 9 8 5 2 | | | |
| ♥ 9 7 4 | ♥ A K Q 2 | ♥ 10 8 3 | | | |
| ♦ K Q 7 | ♦ J 9 5 2 | ♦ 10 3 | | | |
| ♣ J 6 4 | ♣ A K | ♣ 7 3 2 | | | |
| | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W ↑ E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W ↑ E | S | |
| N | | | | | |
| W ↑ E | | | | | |
| S | | | | | |
| | ♠ 10 | | | | |
| | ♥ J 6 5 | 18 | | | |
| | ♦ A 8 6 4 | 12 3 | | | |
| | ♣ Q 10 9 8 5 | 7 | | | |

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

AUCTION. On this apparently mundane deal N/S must avoid declaring 3 NT, which may not be so easy if the opponents stay silent. They must aim for a partscore, and diamonds is the obvious strain. (Perhaps South will treat their hand as a preemptive diamond raise to slow North down.)

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.

Equally, there is a miracle on the deal, and that comes if N/S declare clubs. The combination of the trump break and the location of the spade honors means that after the defenders cash a spade honor (which they need to do or the spade goes on the fourth heart) they cannot prevent declarer either from squeezing or endplaying West. The full analysis of this deal would not however fit into the margin on my paper...

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 3 NT facing balanced extras, when vulnerable, it does.)

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Board 2
 East Deals
 N-S Vul

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

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|--------|
| ♠ 9 | ♠ 9 | ♠ 10 |
| ♥ A Q 10 3 | ♥ A Q 10 3 | ♥ 12 9 |
| ♦ Q J 9 6 2 | ♦ Q J 9 6 2 | ♦ 9 |
| ♣ 10 5 4 | ♣ 10 5 4 | |

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

| |
|-------|
| N |
| W → E |
| S |

AUCTION. Some Easts will be able to open 2♠ to show a limited two-suiter, after which there is some danger E/W will play 4♠ on an unopposed auction, where they are likely to go down. However, I believe most Easts will pass and allow their side to have a controlled auction to a spade partscore. A complicating factor is that if West opens 1♣ then South may compete to the four level in diamonds after north finds an inelegant overcall of 1♦. In turn, though, that might increase the chances that E/W will guess the ♠Q if they end up declaring 4♠.

PLAY. A diamond sacrifice is far too costly at this vulnerability, especially since few N/S pairs will bid game, and even fewer will make it.

PASSING THOUGHTS. If the auction proceeds (1♣)-1♦-(1♠) to South, they may contemplate making a fit jump to 3♥. You'd like five hearts for this auction but the call does describe the basic features of the South hand pretty well.

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Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

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

| | | |
|--------------|-------|---------------|
| ♠ J 8 7 5 | N | ♠ K 4 |
| ♥ K J 10 9 8 | W ↓ E | ♥ 7 3 2 |
| ♦ 9 4 2 | S | ♦ J 3 |
| ♣ Q | | ♣ K J 9 8 5 3 |

| | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----|
| ♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N | ♠ J 8 7 5 | 18 |
| N - 1 5 3 1 | ♥ K J 10 9 8 | 7 8 |
| S - 1 5 3 1 | ♦ 9 4 2 | 7 |
| E 2 - - - | ♣ Q | |
| W 2 - - - | | |

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.

PLAY. Against 4♥ West would do well to lead a diamond, after which declarer is likely to be held to 10 tricks on accurate defense, unless they take an inspired view in the spade suit. By contrast, after the lead of the ♠10, South is in excellent shape to emerge with 11 tricks. Roughly half a top may ride on the overtrick here.

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.)

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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 |

| |
|-------|
| N |
| W ← E |
| S |

| | | | |
|---|------------|---|------|
| ♠ | K J 8 | ♠ | 6 |
| ♥ | A 8 | ♥ | 5 11 |
| ♦ | A K 10 9 5 | ♦ | 18 |
| ♣ | K 7 2 | ♣ | |

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

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 1NT overcall. Assuming South doubles West will surely pass. North will bid hearts and over partner’s 2NT call I can see a good case for passing. If South bids 1NT 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. 3NT 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♠-(1NT) 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!)

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Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ Q J 10 7 6 4

♥ Q 3 2

♦ 6

♣ A K 6

♠ 9 8 3 2

♥ J 10

♦ J 8 3

♣ Q 10 3 2



♠ —

♥ K 9 6 5 4

♦ Q 10 7 5 2

♣ J 8 7

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

♠ A K 5

♥ A 8 7

♦ A K 9 4

♣ 9 5 4

| |
|-----|
| 12 |
| 4 6 |
| 18 |

AUCTION. Our second excellent play hand of the set – this one a little less double-dummy than the first. At many tables when North opens 1♠ South will drive to slam; but at quite a few of those tables a foolhardy East may paint a picture of the defenders’ hands by overcalling a Michaels 2♠ bid – for which the hand is at least an ace short of the appropriate values!

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.

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Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 10 8 7 3

♥ 10 8 5

♦ Q 7 2

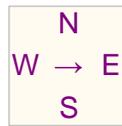
♣ 9 8 6

♠ 5 4 2

♥ K J 3

♦ 5 4

♣ A K Q 3 2



♠ K Q J 6

♥ 7 4 2

♦ J 10 3

♣ 10 7 5

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

♠ A 9

♥ A Q 9 6

♦ A K 9 8 6

♣ J 4

2
13 7
18

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.

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Board 7
 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 | | | |
| | N W ↓ E S | | |
| ♠ J | | | |
| ♥ K 10 7 4 | | | |
| ♦ Q 10 2 | | | |
| ♣ A 9 4 3 2 | | | |
| ♠ K 9 7 2 | | | |
| ♥ 3 | | 6 | |
| ♦ A K J 7 6 5 | | 9 10 | |
| ♣ K J | | 15 | |

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

AUCTION. The first three bids on this deal should be routine; however, after North’s negative double of 1♥, some Easts will raise hearts, (typically via a cue-bid raise or an artificial 2NT bid) while a few may produce a fit-jump to 3♣, though this suit hardly qualifies for that action. Either way, South is full value for a jump to 4♠, which is likely to end the auction.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. The Young Turks believe that there is no need for a natural 2NT call in competition, when facing a major-suit opener or raise. Thus 2NT can be subverted to promise at least four trumps and limit-raise values, whereas the cuebid suggests three trump. Today’s deal is an example of where that information might be critical to West in deciding whether to compete or save.

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Board 9
 North Deals
 E-W Vul

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

| |
|-------|
| N |
| W ↑ E |
| S |

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| ♠ A K J 9 7 4 2 | 9 |
| ♥ K 9 6 3 | 6 8 |
| ♦ — | 17 |
| ♣ A Q | |

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

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/>

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Board 10

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



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

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

♠ Q J 2
 ♥ A 10 7
 ♦ J 9 7 6
 ♣ 9 7 4

8
 10 14
 8

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

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

Board 11

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

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

♠ K 5 3
 ♥ A
 ♦ J 9 8 7 6
 ♣ 8 7 6 4

11
 11 10
 8

AUCTION. A handful of Wests will open here; they have great controls but still and all...In third seat non-vulnerable quite a few Norths will try a 1♣ opener, even though that call is neither preemptive nor especially lead directing these days. E/W should be able to compete to 3♥, and N/S are relatively unlikely to save in 4♣ – which would cost 300, if the defenders double and attack spades early. However, no one is likely to be able to double a club partscore, especially if East has made a weak jump in hearts.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. If East is allowed to open in fourth seat they should bid 2♥. All this stuff about Pearson points is very overrated. If neither opponent acts, when they are non-vulnerable, partner always has a maximum pass in my experience. (Plus, my experience is that passing out a deal minimizes the opponents' chance to err...)

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

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ J 2
 ♥ J 8 4
 ♦ Q J 8 7 2
 ♣ Q 8 5

♠ K Q 7
 ♥ A Q 9 3
 ♦ K 10 6 4 3
 ♣ 2



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

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

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

| | |
|----|---|
| 7 | |
| 14 | 8 |
| 11 | |

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.

PLAY. Against a spade partscore South might lead a mundane top club, then perhaps shift to a trump. Now +110 looks about par for the course, one way or another.

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.

As a side issue; I think East does better to bid 1 ♠ at the first chance to bid, not 1 NT. With a softer diamond honor, I might feel otherwise.

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Board 14

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 Q J

| | |
|----|----|
| | 5 |
| 12 | 15 |
| | 8 |

AUCTION. Anyone who constructs an auction to a contract other than 3 NT should stay very quiet about it. Yes some kibitzer is pointing out that hearts plays for 10 tricks, but I'm going to keep my fingers in my ears until they stop talking.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. Sophisticated partnerships have an honor lead structure against no-trump that lets 3rd hand signal count or unblock on one specific honor lead and signal attitude on others. If using this approach South should probably not lead the unblock card here.

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

Board 15
 South Deals
 N-S Vul

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|-------|------------------|
| ♠ K 10 6 5 | ♠ Q J 8 3 | | ♠ A 4 |
| ♥ J 9 5 | ♥ Q 8 7 6 | N | ♥ 2 |
| ♦ J 8 7 | ♦ Q | W ↓ E | ♦ K 10 9 5 4 3 2 |
| ♣ K 10 4 | ♣ 8 6 5 2 | S | ♣ A 9 7 |

| | | |
|--------------|--|------|
| ♠ 9 7 2 | | |
| ♥ A K 10 4 3 | | 7 |
| ♦ A 6 | | 8 11 |
| ♣ Q J 3 | | 14 |

AUCTION. There is very little to the play here, so the auction (and the degree of North's aggression) are likely to determine who wins the matchpoints here. Facing a 1♥ opener and a pass on the right I have NO idea what the field will do as North. Hyper-aggressive players will bid 4♥, some will invite game or jump to 3♥ either as a mixed raise or even a preemptive one. And there will be some pairs playing Bergen raises who will treat their hand as a Mixed Raise. Whatever North does, East will surely bid diamonds at the lowest legal level...and then what? I don't see any reason for either North or South to bid past the three level, or indeed to double East whatever level of diamonds they bid.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. I believe if North makes a Bergen raise – a call of three of a minor to show a mixed or limit raise - the meaning of a double by East should vary. A double of a limit raise should show that suit, a double of a call showing a mixed or preemptive raise should be take out of the promised major.

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

Board 16

West Deals

E-W Vul

| | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----|--|
| ♠ A K 10 8 | | | |
| ♥ — | | | |
| ♦ Q J 9 8 | | | |
| ♣ A 6 4 3 2 | | | |
| ♠ J 7 2 | ♠ Q 9 6 5 4 | | |
| ♥ 10 5 | ♥ K 7 6 3 2 | | |
| ♦ A K 7 5 3 | ♦ 4 | | |
| ♣ Q 7 5 | ♣ 10 9 | | |
| ♠ 3 | | | |
| ♥ A Q J 9 8 4 | 14 | 5 | |
| ♦ 10 6 2 | 10 | 11 | |
| ♣ K J 8 | | | |

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

| | | |
|---------------|----|----|
| ♠ 3 | 14 | 5 |
| ♥ A Q J 9 8 4 | 10 | 11 |
| ♦ 10 6 2 | | |
| ♣ K J 8 | | |

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ N | ♠ N |
| ♥ 3 3 3 2 4 | ♥ 3 3 3 2 4 |
| ♦ 3 3 3 2 3 | ♦ 3 3 3 2 3 |
| ♣ - - - - - | ♣ - - - - - |
| ♠ - - - - - | ♠ - - - - - |

| | |
|-------------|-------------|
| ♠ N | ♠ N |
| ♥ 3 3 3 2 4 | ♥ 3 3 3 2 4 |
| ♦ 3 3 3 2 3 | ♦ 3 3 3 2 3 |
| ♣ - - - - - | ♣ - - - - - |
| ♠ - - - - - | ♠ - - - - - |

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 3NT.

You will note that I didn't mention the possibility of a Michaels Cuebid by East; I know many of my readers have sensitive stomachs...

PLAY. 3NT 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 3NT 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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. A popular style in the US these days after three one-level calls such as 1♣-1♥-1♠ is to play XYZ. Here 2♣ by responder initiates slam sequences, 2♦ is game forcing relay, and jumps to the three level are natural slam tries. This gives up on playing 2♣, but there again, the opponents never let you do that, do they?

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

Board 17

North Deals

None Vul

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------|-------|---|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------|----|
| ♠ A K 8 6 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♥ J 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♦ Q 5 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣ J 8 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♠ Q 9 3 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W ↑ E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W ↑ E | S | ♠ — | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| N | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W ↑ E | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♥ 10 7 5 4 | | ♥ A Q 6 3 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♦ K 10 2 | | ♦ A J 9 8 7 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣ A K 7 | | ♣ 9 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;"></td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">♣</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">♦</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">♥</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">♠</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">1</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">6</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">-</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">3</td> </tr> </table> | | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | N | N | 1 | - | - | 3 | - | S | 1 | - | - | 3 | - | E | - | 6 | 6 | - | 2 | W | - | 6 | 6 | - | 3 | ♠ J 10 7 5 2 | 11 |
| | ♣ | ♦ | ♥ | ♠ | N | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| N | 1 | - | - | 3 | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S | 1 | - | - | 3 | - | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E | - | 6 | 6 | - | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | - | 6 | 6 | - | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♥ K 8 | ♥ K 8 | 12 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♦ 6 | ♦ 6 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣ Q 10 5 3 2 | ♣ Q 10 5 3 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

AUCTION. Some Norths will pass here, a disciplined and perfectly reasonable action but it might be a huge loser today. If North passes E/W ought to have enough room here to identify their fit and values early, and bid to game, or even slam, in a red suit. With the ♥ K misplaced declarer will have to find the ♦ Q to make the slam. If North opens 1 ♠ then South will surely bounce to 4 ♠ at their first turn over the likely Michaels cuebid from East, and now what does West do with their balanced defensive hand? West could hardly be blamed for trying for a penalty – which is a measly 100 today.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. I do not have strong feelings here, but I assume the majority of my readers will open 1 ♥ rather than 1 ♦. In each case South may stretch to act and North will get the partnership to 4 ♠; the difference is that E/W will be better aware of their partner's values early on. They should find a way to buy the hand and East will surely drive to the five level.

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 ♦?

Board 19

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ Q 9 6 3

♥ Q 8

♦ Q 7 6 5

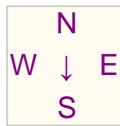
♣ 10 8 4

♠ A 10 8 4

♥ K 5 4 2

♦ J 4

♣ K 6 5



♠ J 5 2

♥ A 10 9 7 3

♦ K 3

♣ A 9 2

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

♠ K 7

♥ J 6

♦ A 10 9 8 2

♣ Q J 7 3

| | |
|----|----|
| | 6 |
| 11 | 12 |
| | 11 |

AUCTION. Whether South opens the bidding or not, you'd expect E/W to play hearts, but if you just look at their two hands, you'd far rather settle in a heart partscore than play game. (Actually 3NT by East on a diamond lead is not terrible, but really hard to reach.) Curiously if South does open the bidding, then when West finds a light takeout double East will surely drive to game. By contrast if South passes initially then West may do so too, letting East play a heart partscore after a Drury sequence.

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.

PASSING THOUGHTS. Say the auction starts: (1♦)-x-(1♠): if East wants to invite, rather than drive to game, in hearts -- say East's actual hand with ♣Q not ♣K -- there are two ways to do that. They can jump to 3♥ -- which should be more about shape than HCP, perhaps a hand more like ♥KQJxx and a king; or they can cuebid 2♦ on the example hand, as an invitation in hearts or any game force. West can sign off in 2♥, or make a natural forcing bid.

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

Board 20

West Deals

Both Vul

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|-------|---|-------|--|
| ♠ 5 3 2 | | | | | | |
| ♥ 9 6 4 3 | | | | | | |
| ♦ A J 8 5 | | | | | | |
| ♣ J 8 | | | | | | |
| ♠ K Q J 8 6 4 | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W ← E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W ← E | S | ♠ 9 7 | |
| N | | | | | | |
| W ← E | | | | | | |
| S | | | | | | |
| ♥ Q 7 | | ♥ J 5 2 | | | | |
| ♦ K 7 6 | | ♦ Q 3 2 | | | | |
| ♣ 10 6 | | ♣ A K 9 7 5 | | | | |
| ♠ A 10 | | | | | | |
| ♥ A K 10 8 | | 6 | | | | |
| ♦ 10 9 4 | | 11 10 | | | | |
| ♣ Q 4 3 2 | | 13 | | | | |

AUCTION. Another challenging competitive auction is likely here. If E/W play 2/1 GF, East must respond 1 NT to 1 ♠, letting South find a light take-out double if they dare (and yes, it is easier and safer to come in now than balance over 2 ♠). Regardless, West will rebid 2 ♠, and some will buy it there. If N/S find a way into the auction North may be able to show a two-suited hand facing a double with a call of 2 NT. The likely N/S resting place is 3 ♥, but East ought surely either to double or compete to 3 ♠.

PLAY. E/W can be held to eight tricks. However, repeated heart leads by the defense, let through the overtrick, and +140 will score West very nicely. After a heart lead it appears South has a natural shift to ♦ 10 to save the overtrick. That may also be necessary after a trump lead to the ♠ A at trick one. Repeated trump leads, for example, might see declarer come to the overtrick, because the favorable lie of the clubs allows for a ruffing finesse.

PASSING THOUGHTS. At pairs when you can judge that the opponents will score very well if their contract makes, AND your side was making their contract, a double is almost free if your side has half the deck. In my view these three conditions apply here. East should reason that – selling out to 3 ♥ can hardly be the best matchpoint score. And indeed, since 3 ♥ goes one down, the difference between +100 and +200 for E/W might easily be more than half a top here.