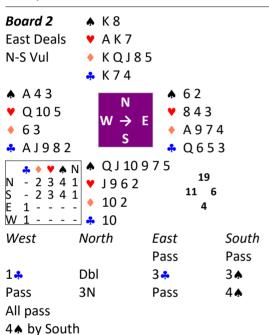


Heart partials seem the most likely result of the bidding on this deal, perhaps reached in a couple of bids playing a 5-card major system. With an awkward choice of lead maybe a trump looks safest. Now it is natural for declarer to play \*A and another to ensure the ruff. West wins the King and plays a second round of trumps. Declarer wins, discards a diamond on the \*Q and plays \*A and a second round to East's Queen. Now East has to find the tough play of underleading the \*A to get his partner in for another round of trumps. Other defences such as a club to the King and a diamond may see declarer making as many as 10 tricks.

If East-West step out of line and contest the partscore, the penalty will be at least 300. For example, anyone for  $2 \spadesuit$  after  $1 \checkmark - 2 \checkmark$  passed back to East?



♠ 643

♦ A96

10 2

w ↓

ς

K 10 8 7 3

KQ82

953

QJ5

J73

8

17

East

**Pass** 

**Pass** 

**Pass** 

9

South

1 •

1N 2◆

3N

South Deals Y A 10 7 6 2

▼ ▲ N ▲ A J 10

♥ Q4

A K 9

North

1♥

2 🚣

2 🔻

A club lead will sink 3NT, so it is vital to reach 4 ♠, where you can eventually pitch your two heart losers on club and diamond winners. Tempting as it might be to open 2 ♠, there are just too many flaws: the vulnerability, your second seat position, and the 4-card heart suit. Over a 1 ♣ opening, North is too strong for 1NT, so starts with a double.

When South shows a bit of life, game should be reached, and South should insist on playing in his long suit, as his hand may be close to useless in 3NT. If West opens an 11-count weak no-trump, North will double, and East may run with some two-suited manoeuvre. The best descriptive bid now by South is 3 \$\infty\$, suggesting a long spade suit but few high cards, and North has enough to raise to game.

Most pairs will get to game here, either inviting after a strong no-trump opening and transfer, or using checkback after the strong no-trump rebid. Making game may prove tricky. After a low club lead, try the 10 from dummy in case the lead is from the QJ. When it is covered by the Jack, duck and win the second round.

If you judge that clubs are 5-3, then a reasonable line is to plan to build a second spade trick for your ninth trick. So, cross to the ◆ A and finesse a spade; if West wins and clears clubs, play ◆ K and another, hoping that East has the long diamond, and you still have the ♥ A as an entry for a second spade finesse. This works fine here as East has both spade honours and the long diamond. To make 10 tricks you have to make the unnatural looking play of attacking hearts first.

Board 3

E-W Vul

♠ 975

♥ KJ8

Q8654

2 4 4 3 4

2 4 4 3 4

**..** 

4 2

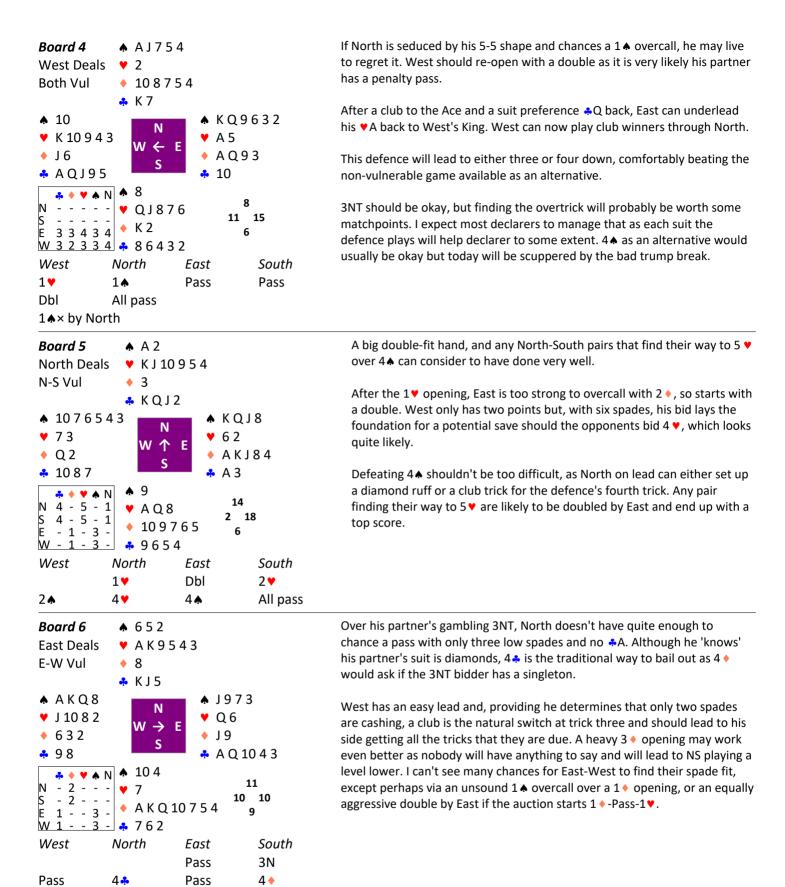
W

West

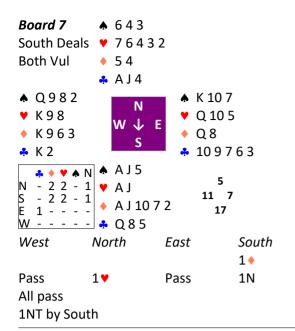
Pass

**Pass** 

**Pass** 



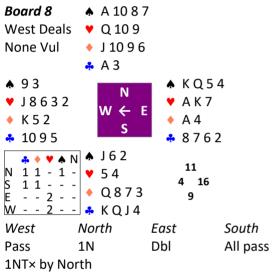
All pass 4♦ by South



There are three likely contracts on this hand: 1 ◆ if North passes his partner's opening, 1NT on the auction above, and 2 ♥ when North transfers to his suit after a strong NT opening. All of these contracts should make, as the cards lie very well for North-South.

Against 1NT on a spade to the King and Ace, declarer crosses to \$\ J\$ and plays a diamond to the Jack and King. West has to play a heart now to stop declarer making an overtrick, as otherwise declarer has the tempo to set up the diamond suit. Indeed, continuing spades would lead to as many as nine tricks. Diamond contracts should come to eight tricks, losing three tricks in the majors and two in the trump suit.

Those in 2 ♥ contracts are in the best double dummy spot and, providing they go after trumps immediately, should emerge with eight tricks: win a spade lead with the Ace, play ♥A and ♥J, and then, on regaining the lead, cross to dummy with a club to split out the trumps.

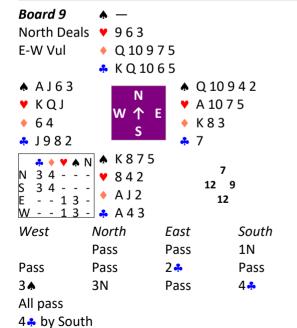


A subtly interesting pairs partscore board with lots of variations possible in the auction. In the simplest scenario, North passes and East opens a strong no-trump and eventually plays and makes 2 ♥ after partner's transfer. If East opens an Acol 1♠, then North will protect and play 1NT.

With all those tens and nines, many will already have opened the North hand in second seat either with a weak no-trump or one of a minor, as system dictates. East will double the 1NT opening which will either lead to 2, this time by West, or maybe 1NT doubled if everyone passes.

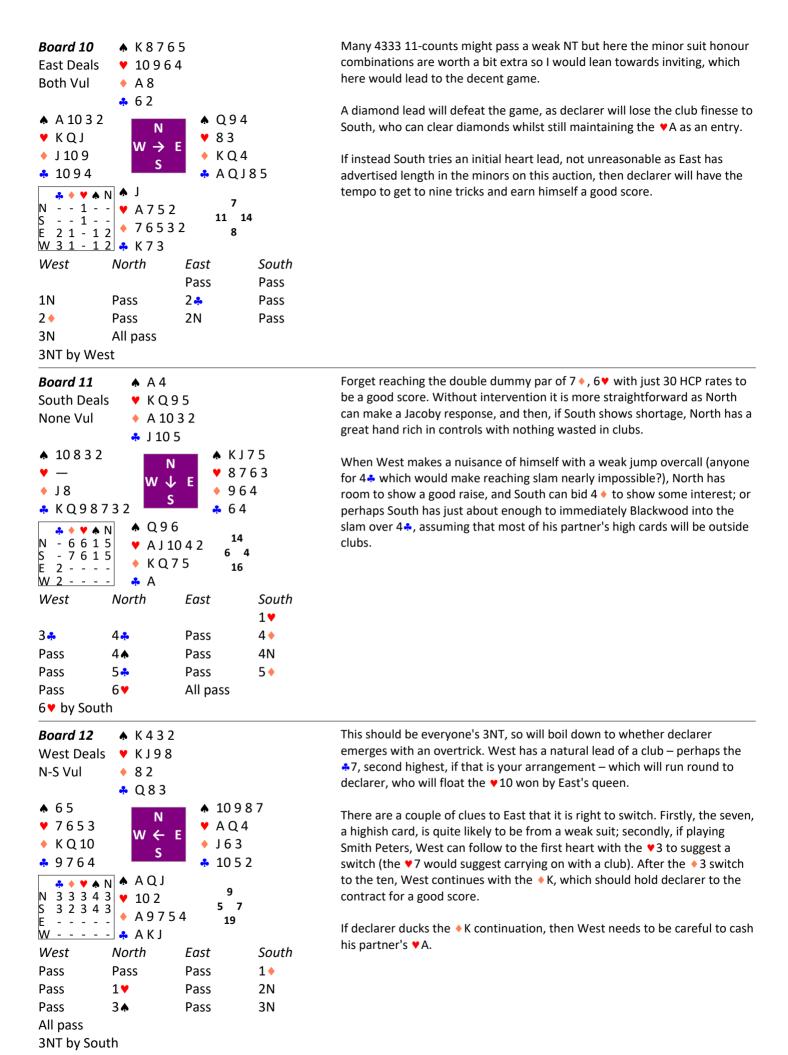
No-trump contracts by North will make seven tricks unless East starts with three rounds of hearts at the start.

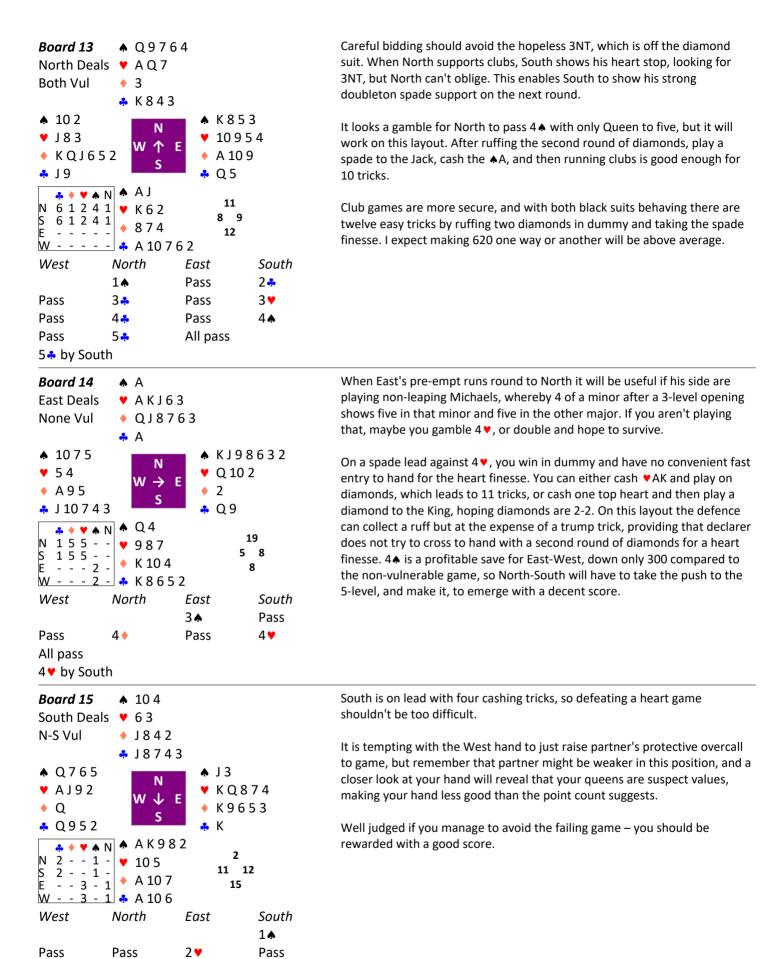
Finally, if East overcalls 1NT over a natural  $1 \diamond$  opening then South may be able to compete to  $3 \diamond$  over  $2 \checkmark$ . This will fail by two tricks, but will be a valuable 10 points less than defending  $2 \checkmark$ .



Who knows what is right for North when partner opens a weak no trump. You could pass and hope that partner has good spades, or that it is the opponents' hand in spades, or guess to transfer to one of your minors. If you transfer to clubs, that is your better suit, but if you have to do so via 2 ♠ you allow an easy double of your void. So maybe transferring to diamonds via 2NT is the better choice, but could still look silly if partner has two little ones. In the auction above, after East-West find their ♠ fit, North can bid 3NT to suggest both minors having passed initially over 1NT. The contract rolls in with the diamond finesse succeeding.

Maybe West with his great cards in the majors should blast 4 \( \bar{A} \), reasoning that either it may make, or his opponents can make something in the minors. Here it may well provoke North to save in five of a minor, enabling EW to go plus.





**Pass** 

All pass

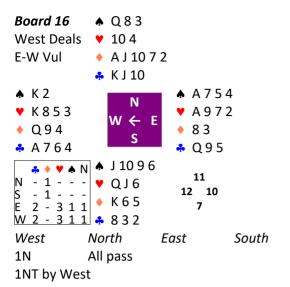
3 🔷

**Pass** 

2♠

**3** 🔻

3♥ by East



The weak no trump should steal the pot. After a diamond lead collects five tricks for the defence, declarer needs a miracle to make his contract. Playing on hearts will set up a sixth trick for declarer but will usually lead to defeat thereafter. However, if North has \*K and the suit splits 3-3, declarer can set up two more tricks for the loss of only one to make his contract.

Strong no-trumpers will do better, as they will locate their heart fit and play that strain in a partial. With the favourable club position and a 3-2 heart split, nine tricks should be available.



4 will be played from both sides, depending on whether East-West play a strong or weak no trump.

Everything is favourable for declarer: spades are 3-2, the ♥A is onside, and both diamond and club finesses are right. So proper technique on, say, a passive trump lead, will be unrewarded: Draw trumps and play a heart towards the King first, because, if the Ace is onside, you don't need the club finesse.

East Deals **9** 8 5 ♦ KJ7532 N-S Vul 🚣 AKJ ♠ 986 KJ 104 AK973 Q 6 4 W 10 A86 987642 3 ▼ ▲ N ▲ A Q 7 3 12 3 - - 1 ♥ J 10 2 2 15 - 3 - -1 Q94 1 - 3 2 11 2 Q 10 5 North South West East 1 🔻 **Pass Pass** 2 • **Pass** 3 • All pass

♠ 52

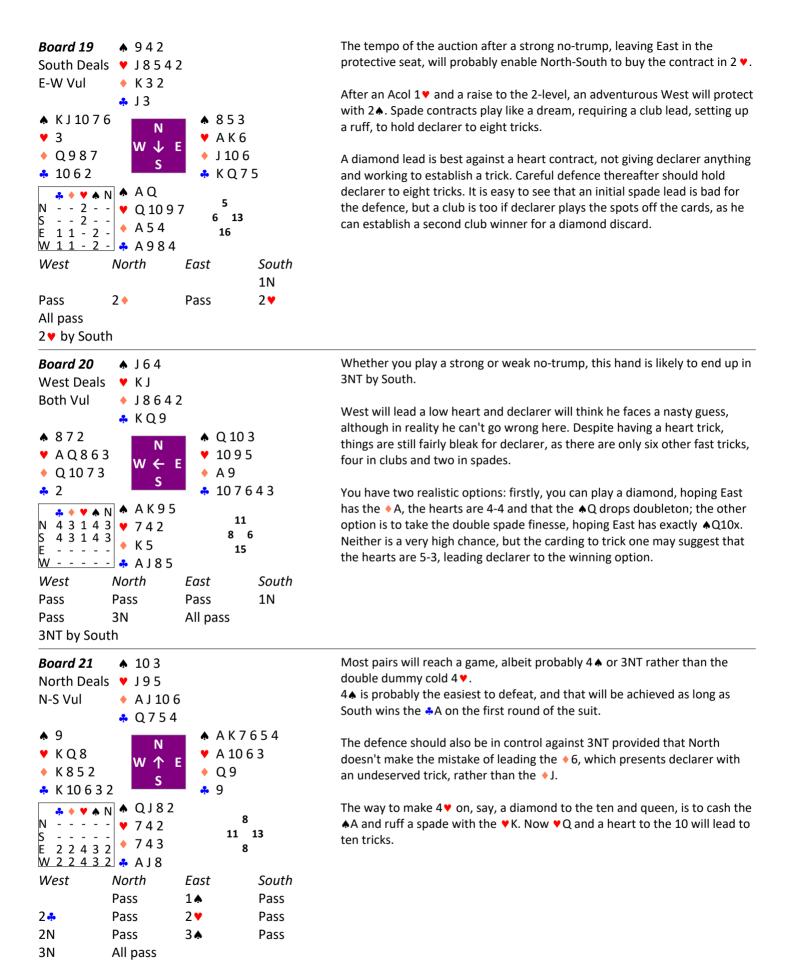
Board 18

3♦ by North

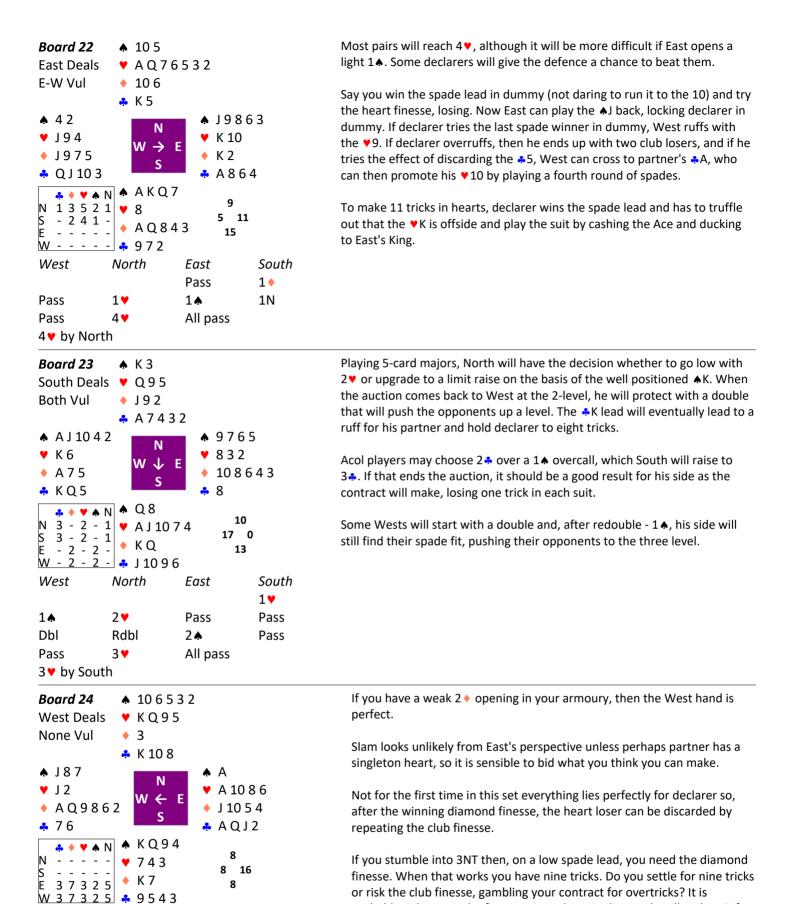
It needs sharp defence to hold diamond contracts to ten tricks. East leads the ♥A and West encourages. East switches to his singleton club and then, after winning the ♦A, he can underlead to West's ♥Q to collect a club ruff.

It is actually East-West's hand in hearts, with nine tricks available. After, say, a diamond lead, declarer can ruff a diamond, draw trumps in three rounds and then concede two spade tricks.

But how do you get there? After North's 2 ♦ bid, East has a good hand but doesn't really have a good bid. He doesn't have a shapely enough hand for 2 ♠, and Double would risk his partner bidding clubs.



3NT by West



North

**Pass** 

East

5 🔷

South

All pass

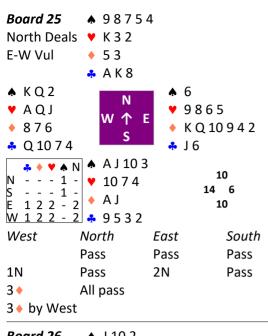
West

5♦ by West

2 •

probably right to try the finesse, since those in diamonds will make 13 if

the club finesse is right and 12 if the finesse is wrong, unless a heart is led.



Passing the weak no-trump is far from obvious, but will work out better because West has at least two stops in all the side suits.

Against a diamond partscore North leads the A and, after partner discourages, has to find the non-obvious switch to a trump, which South can win to play a heart through; otherwise, declarer can play on the black suits to establish discards for his heart losers.

When West opens 1♣, North will probably overcall 1♠ despite the poor suit and his side are likely to buy the contract in 3♠. This will be a certain two down on the ♠ K lead. How good a score that is will depend on whether declarers in diamonds are mostly making 9 or 8 tricks.

Board 26 **▲** J 10 2 **East Deals** Q943 Both Vul 107 J 10 8 2 ♠ 53 ★ KQ94 K 10 5 62  $\rightarrow$ KQ932 A 8 4 A 9 6 KQ73 ▼ ▲ N ▲ A 8 7 6 ♥ AJ87 12 14 ♦ J65 45133 10 W 4 5 1 3 3 . 5 4 South West North East 1N **Pass** 3N All pass

3NT by East

If you adhere to the rule of fourth highest from your longest and strongest, you will lead a heart, which will work out well here as it will establish four tricks for the defence, and all North has to do is to keep his four clubs to hold declarer to the contract.

Personally, I consider leading from a broken series of honours in a four-card suit to be unattractive so would prefer the less successful spade. On a spade lead declarer can run the diamonds and test clubs and, even when they don't break, will end up with an extra trick in one of the majors and a useful overtrick – possibly two overtricks if North errs by pitching a club on the diamonds.

Board 27 ♠ J 4 South Deals VKQ9 None Vul 653 A Q 10 8 6 ♠ Q763 K982 104 A 7 5 2 K842 ΑQ 532 ♣ J74 **♣ ♥ ♠** N **♠** A 10 5 2 1 2 - 2 **♥** J 8 6 3 12 14 2 1 2 -2 J 10 9 7 - 1 -9 ♣ K9 West North South East **Pass** 1N All pass

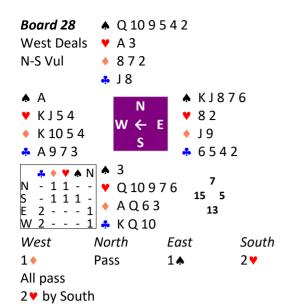
Weak no-trumpers will probably steal the pot, but over a 1 • opening, East will chance a take-out double to get his majors into the game, which may well result in West playing in 2 • Against 1NT which major would you lead?

I would rate a heart as safer, but neither does much damage to declarer here. A start with either ♠2 or ♥2 gives a ninth trick to declarer, but after a spade to the queen and a spade return, it is not hard to imagine declarer making ten tricks: declarer forces out the ♥A and then if East establishes his long spade, declarer will have his three overtricks, East having to find the near impossible play of cashing ◆AQ when he wins the ♥A. Those EW pairs playing 2♠ are already onto a good thing, but the icing on the cake will be to make it. Not that unlikely!

Duck the ♥K lead and North has to switch to a small club to defeat the contract.

On a heart continuation, win and unblock two diamonds, ruff a heart, and cash the • K throwing a club. A fourth round of diamonds follows, ruffed in

dummy, and then cut loose with a club and make two spades in the endgame.



It is easy to imagine contracts being played in any strain with the exception of diamonds, but probably very few will be made.

Whilst you might open a weak 2♠ with the North hand, once the opponents strike the first blow it becomes too risky and has less upside, and indeed here you will probably suffer a penalty. The 2♥ overcall isn't completely secure, with only a poorish 5-card suit and the ◆Q likely misplaced, so it would not be unreasonable to pass and go quietly.

After the A lead, West has to defend carefully by avoiding a diamond switch, which would hand declarer his contract. Say you choose to open 1NT with the West hand. This won't work too well as East will transfer to spades, South will re-open with a double, and North won't find the winning action too hard. Whatever happens I'll wager that the par contract of 2 \* will not be final contract at many tables.