

# ACBL-wide International Fund Game #2

## Thursday Afternoon – September 13, 2018 – Set 218025



American Contract  
Bridge League



Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

### Board 1

North Deals  
None Vul

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

♠ Q  
♥ A 8 7 4 3  
♦ 10 4 2  
♣ K 10 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

Silence will reign at many tables. At a few tables, South will open a third-seat 1♠ on his junkpile, and North's 1NT response will be passed out. If instead West hears three passes, he may try 1♠ for fear that East has some spades and enough high-card strength to make 2♠ a makeable contract. Any Norths who play at 1NT should fail by a trick, but a deal such as this can see twists and turns in the play, and North might be allowed to make his contract. East can make 1NT legitimately if he plays there. All we can say for sure is that any pair who obtains a plus score will pick up most of the matchpoints.

### Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

If Board 1 was passed out, and North hears three passes on Board 2, he may feel constrained to get his entry-fee's worth by opening 1♦. Then South will respond 1NT, often passed out. West leads a low spade, and East takes the A-Q and shifts to the ♥2. South can win in dummy and lead a diamond to his queen and West's ace. South wins the major-suit return, leads a diamond to dummy's 10, and cashes the king and the 13th diamond. He can get to his hand for a winning club finesse and end with eight tricks. We think +120 to N/S will be a frequent result, scoring above average for N/S. At a few tables, West will come in boldly with 2♠ over South's 1NT. If N/S sell out, they may be only +100 for a poor result. They can salvage the board if South competes with 2NT or if someone doubles 2♠ for +300.

### Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

West is worth a 1♥ opening, and most Easts will temporize with a 1♠ response. A direct forcing raise such as a Jacoby 2NT bid would promise four-card or better support. West's 2♥ rebid will suggest six or more hearts. If he had only five, he would have a more descriptive second bid: 1NT, two of a minor or a raise to 2♠. Then East should not rule out slam. He can continue with 3♦, intending to bid 4♥ next – showing slam interest since he didn't raise hearts at his second turn. West won't cooperate, but note that if he had the ♣K instead of the ♣Q, 6♥ would be all but cold. Other Easts may start with a 2♦ response and raise West's 2♥ rebid to 3♥, forcing in a "two-over-one" style. E/W should still avoid slam. We expect +650 to E/W at almost every table.

**Board 4**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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



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

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

When West opens 1♦, East will wonder how to describe his hand and whether to force to game. A few Easts may settle for a 3♦ limit raise — West may pass that bid — but we expect most Easts to force. Some pairs will be using “inverted raises” (not your analyst’s favorite treatment; some responding hands are unbidable), and East will bid 2♦, forcing. If West rebids 2NT, East will probably try 3NT and hope for the best. Other Easts may issue a temporizing 2♣ response, and if West rebids 2NT, East will raise again. If North leads a fourth-highest ♥4 to South’s king, South will surely return the ♥10 (applause to any South who finds a spade shift), giving West two hearts, five diamonds, two clubs and a spade. Some West may even take 11 tricks when South ducks a spade lead and West finesses in clubs later. E/W will need +630 to avoid a poor matchpoint score.

**Board 5**  
North Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ Q J  
♥ J 10 8  
♦ A Q J 7  
♣ K Q 10 5

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



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

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

We expect most Easts to open in second seat; to pass risks a passed-out deal if West has a borderline hand with borderline tolerance for the majors. East is too weak to “reverse” by opening 1♥, then bidding spades. We would open 1♠ on ♠AK632 ♥K97632 ♦— ♣87, but as it is, we would open 1♥ and rebid 2♥, shelving the spades at least for a while. West, with 16 “quacky” points, may bid diamonds and clubs before showing heart support, and E/W will rest at 4♥. East will make it on the nose, losing a trump and the black-suit aces, unless South’s opening lead is an ill-fated diamond. Most E/Ws will be +420, but if E/W find a way to 3NT — and they might when East gets in a spade bid and West has such great high-card strength — they will lose the same three tricks for +430 and a top.

**Board 6**  
East Deals  
E-W Vul

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

♠ 10 8 7 6 5  
♥ Q  
♦ A J 8 6 5  
♣ Q 10



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

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

When West opens 1♥, East’s hand is not fish (a preemptive jump to 4♥) or fowl (a forcing raise or a 3♠ splinter bid) but somewhere in between. Some pairs will have a response such as 3NT to show that type of hand, with enough strength to play at game but too few or too many high cards for any other call. In any case, we expect most E/Ws to land at 4♥. If North leads a spade, West can win, lead a diamond to dummy’s king, draw trumps and lead a second diamond, setting up a diamond discard for a losing club. Even if North happens to lead the ♣Q, West can still take 11 tricks by ducking the first club to break the defenders’ communication. We expect +650 to E/W, but a few pairs may double a 4♠ sacrifice by N/S for +500, and a couple of pairs may overreach to slam and go minus.

**Board 7**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ A K 9 4 2  
♥ A 4  
♦ Q 6 3  
♣ Q 4 3

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



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

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

After 1♠ by West, 2♦ by North, East may double (negative). Some Wests will rebid 2NT, passed out, and the contract will be a big winner (if North fails to find the best defense) or a debacle (if he leads or shifts to a club). A few Wests will rebid 2♠ for +110. Other Wests will open 1NT. If North passes, East will transfer with a 2♦ response, and if West is allowed to play at 2♥, E/W will be +110 again. Many Norths will have a way to show diamonds over West’s 1NT — maybe a conventional double or 2♣ bid — but East will bid hearts, and E/W will buy the contract. When East transfers to hearts, North might “pre-balance” with 3♦ over West’s 2♥. Then if East competes with 3♥, he will go -100. His winning call is a double, protecting his side’s plus at two of a major, and E/W will be +200 for a top.

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul♠ K 9 6  
♥ J 10 7 5 4  
♦ K 10 4 3  
♣ 3♠ Q 10 4 2  
♥ 8 6  
♦ 8 6 5 2  
♣ K 9 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

This deal may prove harder than it looks for E/W. East can open 1♣ and jump to 3♣ over West's 1♥, typically showing a good six-card suit and about 16 high-card points. East's sequence will be invitational but not forcing. It may not encourage West enough to act again, and some E/Ws may be +110 at clubs. (East would make it easier for his side to reach 4♥ if he risked a direct raise to 3♥ or rebid 2NT, but neither action would occur to many players.) If over 3♣ West continues with 3♦, East will take a 3♥ preference, which West can carry to 4♥, or jump to 4♥ himself. North may lead a spade, and West can take the A-K, ruff a spade in dummy and lead the ♥K. With the benign lie of the cards, he should lose only to South's two aces. We think E/W will get a 70% board for +450.

**Board 9**North Deals  
E-W Vul♠ A Q 7 5  
♥ 9 7 3  
♦ J 4  
♣ K J 7 5♠ 9 6 3  
♥ K Q 6 4  
♦ K 6 5  
♣ A Q 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

If North opens 1♣ (let's call it a "prepared bid," not a "short club"), most Souths will pass. Then most Wests will pass instead of stretching to balance with 1NT. East will lead a trump or perhaps the ♠J, and when the smoke clears, North will have taken three tricks for -200. South might improve things, as it happens, if he reaches into the depths for a 1♦ response and passes North's 1♥ rebid. North might scramble as many as five tricks, -100. However, if N/S come to rest at 1♥, West may balance, and E/W may play at a notrump partial. In fact, with the cards sitting perfectly, they can make a game. Unless North leads a low heart against 3NT by West, declarer will take nine tricks unless he goes wrong by playing low from dummy. We think E/W will score only a little above average for +150.

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul♠ 9 6 5 4  
♥ J 6  
♦ 7  
♣ A K 10 9 6 3♠ J 7 2  
♥ A Q 5 3  
♦ Q 5 4  
♣ J 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

When East opens 1♦, some Wests will stretch their high-card values to respond 2♣, intending to rebid 3♣, not forcing. A few Wests will suggest weakness with a 1NT response, hoping to bid clubs later in an attempt to stay low. Other Wests will look for a major-suit fit with a 1♠ response. Any of those plans might work well. In this deal, East may pass a 1NT response, and West will struggle to take eight tricks for +120. He can do better at clubs, losing a trump, a spade and a heart for +130. At tables where West responds 1♠, East's best second call is a raise to 2♠. We strongly advocate raising a major-suit response with three-card support in an otherwise suitable hand, and this deal supports that approach: At 2♠, West can take at least nine tricks, and E/W will win most of the matchpoints for +140.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul♠ 7 5  
♥ K 10 9 6  
♦ K Q J 5 3  
♣ 10 9♠ A 6  
♥ A 4 3 2  
♦ A 9  
♣ K J 6 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

South has a good weak 2♠ opening, and North may have fleeting thoughts of slam. Even if South held a perfect hand such as ♠KQJxxx ♥xx ♦xxx ♣Ax, 6♠ would need a bit of luck, and his hand may be far less suitable, so most Norths will settle for 4♠. When West leads the ♦K, South can take 13 tricks by picking up the trumps with a finesse and running the clubs, and North will wonder whether he should have bid more. It's a "five-or-seven" deal in a way, but an option for declarer would be to take the ♠AK, then start the clubs. That line of play would produce 12 tricks — South could unload his diamond loser on the fourth club as East ruffed, and pitch his heart loser later — and might be considered if the contract were a bold 6♠. We predict that N/S will score about average for +510.

**Board 12**West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

Many Wests will trade on the vulnerability to open 2♠ and give North a king-size headache. If the South/East hands were swapped, North could make 7NT. To avoid being stolen from, he must place South with a fair share of the missing points, so some Norths may jump to 3NT, gambling out the heart situation. East may like that too much to double; if North redoubled for rescue, N/S might find a relatively safe haven at four of a minor. Against 3NT undoubled, East will rattle off six heart tricks. North will pitch three spades, a diamond and a club. When East exits with a spade, North can win and lead the ♦AK and a diamond, endplaying East to lead from the ♣K and escaping for down three. Could some North possibly pass 2♠? With perfect defense, West takes only seven tricks, and N/S may get a top for +50.

**Board 13**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

Many Easts will open 2NT, and West will raise to 3NT. South will lead the ♣Q and grimace when dummy tables K-10-3. East can take the ace, cash the ♠A, lead a club to dummy's 10 and return the ♠J. South takes the queen and probably leads a third club to dummy. Declarer will pitch a heart, take three more spades and then aspire to run the diamonds. When he takes the A-Q and South shows out, East can still make two overtricks: North is left with the ♥A and ♦108, and East can guess to exit with a heart to endplay him. A few Easts will open 1♠, and West will raise to 2♠. Then E/W can still reach 3NT, but many will play at 4♠. South will lead his singleton ♦J, and the defense can get a trump, a diamond ruff and the ♥A. E/W will score almost no matchpoints for +620 and may score average at best for +630.

**Board 14**East Deals  
None Vul

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

When West opens 1NT, most Easts will transfer with 2♦ and pass West's conversion to 2♥. Some Wests will super-accept with a jump to 3♥, probably buying the contract. If all pass, West may steal off with 10 tricks. North will lead a high spade and may (even if South signals for a shift) lead two more rounds, letting West ruff, draw trumps and run the diamonds to pitch a club from dummy. Actually, the deal belongs to N/S; they can take nine tricks at a spade partial. (The Law of Total Tricks is off by one trick in theory here but maybe two tricks in practice.) When West bids 2♥, North is in the wrong chair to balance, but brave Norths may anticipate that East is about to pass and come in with a double. Then E/W will be stuck with a terrible matchpoint result for -140. They may also score poorly when North somehow finds a club shift against 3♥, holding E/W to +140.

**Board 15**South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

East has a solid 1NT opening, leaving West with a judgment call. Since West knows his partnership has a maximum of 25 points, his disciplined call is a pass. Indeed, as the cards happen to lie, E/W can't make even 2NT after South leads the ♥2, and North covers dummy's queen. East should win — a spade shift might be stressful — and set up the diamonds, losing the third round. He will have a couple of awkward discards to make as the defenders cash some hearts but should retain seven winners. We think E/W will score above average for +90. They can take nine tricks at a diamond partial for +110, but few pairs will play at the minor suit. Many will try for game and go minus due to the unfriendly lie of the cards.

**Board 16**West Deals  
E-W Vul

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

West can open 1♥. His shapely 11-count is a bit better than the one he held on Board 3. If North preempts with 2♠, East may consider trying for a penalty, but at the vulnerability, he would need to hold North to four tricks to beat E/Ws at 3NT. So East will bid 3NT or force with 3♣ and bid 3NT next. West is likely to insist on 4♥. N/S could hold 3NT to four, but West can make 5♥. He will have a problem if North leads the ♣10, ducked by South. West must draw trumps to avoid a club ruff, but then if South ducks a second club, West has a second diamond loser. Say he cashes five trumps. South saves four diamonds, two clubs and a spade. West leads a club to dummy, and South must duck again. West then ruffs a spade and leads another club. South is endplayed when he wins, and E/W are +650.

**Board 17**North Deals  
None Vul

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

This board may be prosaic. East has 2½ Quick Tricks and spade length and will be willing to open 1♠ in second seat. West will respond 2♦, and East raises to 3♦. West investigates for 3NT — the cheapest game contract — with a value-showing 3♥ bid, and East, with a club stopper, is obliged to try 3NT. (A lightish 2♣ overcall by South should not deflect E/W from reaching a notrump game.) If South leads the ♣K, East can take the ace and race off the next eight tricks. We see little opportunity for N/S to go wrong in discarding; they should hold East to his contract. A few E/Ws may contrive to miss this game, so E/W should score a bit above average for +400.

**Board 18**East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

We would never open 2♥ as East, with a ragged suit and four cards in spades. If North opens 1♠ in fourth seat, and South responds 1NT, North can rebid 3♠, invitational. With a seventh spade, he might bid 4♠. Even if North settles for 3♠, South may try 3NT, and North will convert to 4♠. (A few Easts may come in with a 2♥ overcall, but South can double, and N/S will reach game.) If East leads a heart against 4♠, North will take the ace and cash the ♠AK. When West discards, North can still succeed by playing East for a singleton high club. North may think of playing West for the A-K instead, but when North gets around to leading a club from dummy and West plays low, North may reconsider. We think 4♠ will be made on occasion, and N/S will score somewhere above average for +620.

**Board 19**South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

This board may see results as flat as a pancake. East will open 2NT or maybe open 2♣ and rebid 2NT, depending on his evaluation. West will usually raise to 3NT, but if East's sequence has shown as many as 24 points, West can invite slam with a quantitative raise to 4NT. East will reject a slam move. If South leads a heart, East wins and takes the ♣KQ. He cashes the ♦A, leads a club to dummy and tries a second diamond to his jack, losing, and the defense also gets the ♠A. We expect +660 across the field, but a few pairs may reach 6NT. It's not the worst slam in history, needing a winning diamond finesse plus one more piece of good fortune. Pairs who are -100 will tell themselves that they could have been luckier.

**Board 20**West Deals  
Both Vul♠ 6 4  
♥ A K 7 4  
♦ A 7 6 5  
♣ A 6 2♠ K J  
♥ Q J 10 6 2  
♦ Q  
♣ K J 9 8 3♠ 9 8 7 5 2  
♥ 9 8 5  
♦ J 3 2  
♣ Q 10♠ A Q 10 3  
♥ 3  
♦ K 10 9 8 4  
♣ 7 5 4

If West opens 1NT, some Norths will unleash a conventional gadget to show hearts and a minor, or to show clubs and a higher-ranking suit. If North's methods call for a 2♥ bid ("Cappelletti"), East can cuebid 3♥, and West's 3NT will end the auction. Many E/Ws will reach 3NT no matter how N/S interfere. North leads the ♥Q, and West wins and leads a diamond. When North's queen appears, West can win and pass the ♦10, applying the principle of "free choice" and also inferring from North's bidding that his hand is short in diamonds. After West picks up the diamonds, he can lead a spade, and the serendipitous lie of that suit will mean 11 tricks. South must be careful to "keep parity" with dummy: save enough spades to control the fourth round. E/W should get a 70% result for +660.

**Board 21**North Deals  
N-S Vul♠ K 4 3  
♥ K 8  
♦ 7 6 4  
♣ A K 10 8 5♠ A Q 10 2  
♥ J 10 7 5 3  
♦ 10 3  
♣ J 9♠ 9 6 5  
♥ Q 9 6  
♦ 9 8 5 2  
♣ Q 6 4♠ J 8 7  
♥ A 4 2  
♦ A K Q J  
♣ 7 3 2

Most E/Ws will have a prosaic auction: 1NT, 3NT. If South leads a diamond or a heart, East will have time to set up dummy's clubs and take 10 tricks: four clubs, four diamonds and two hearts. South's only lead to hold East to his contract is a spade: North can take the queen and continue with a low spade to assure three spades and a club for the defense. (If West is declarer at 3NT, 10 tricks are unstoppable.) Your analyst would lead a spade, of course — he was privy to the deals back in November — but in real life South has no reason to find that lead. Any South who does, for whatever reason appeals to him, will get a matchpoint top.

**Board 22**East Deals  
E-W Vul♠ K Q 9 8 4  
♥ J 9 7  
♦ 9 7 5  
♣ J 5♠ 5  
♥ A 5 4 3  
♦ 10 6 4  
♣ 10 8 4 3 2♠ 7 6 2  
♥ K 6 2  
♦ A Q 8 3 2  
♣ K 7♠ A J 10 3  
♥ Q 10 8  
♦ K J  
♣ A Q 9 6

E/W need to stop at a safe level. Most Easts will open 1NT, and West may transfer to spades with a 2♥ response. Then some Easts will regard their maximum values and good spade support and jump to 3♠, or bid 2NT or a new suit as a "super accept." At other tables, East will upgrade due to his good intermediate spot cards and open 1♣. Then South can overcall 1♦, and West will respond 1♠. East won't like his hand as much — his ♦KJ look wasted — and he will do quite well to re-evaluate and raise only to 2♠ despite his 17 high-card points. E/Ws who get to 3♠ will often go down. South may lead a trump, and the defense can get two diamonds, two hearts and a club. We predict that E/W will score 80% of the matchpoints for +110. A few pairs will stretch mightily to game for -200.

**Board 23**South Deals  
Both Vul♠ A J 8 5 3 2  
♥ 5  
♦ K 7 6  
♣ Q J 3♠ 6 4  
♥ A 8 3 2  
♦ A J 9 5 3  
♣ 9 8♠ K 10  
♥ 10 9 7 6 4  
♦ 10 8  
♣ A K 7 2♠ Q 9 7  
♥ K Q J  
♦ Q 4 2  
♣ 10 6 5 4

West will often open 1♠, though he would prefer better spade spots and another high-card point or two. East has 10 points — one too many, in theory, for a single raise — but his pattern is flat and he has mostly "quacks." At matchpoints, a raise to 2♠, protecting a plus score, is a sound action. If 2♠ is passed out, North may lead the ♣9. South will take the K-A and give North a club ruff, and North can take his aces, holding West to eight tricks. At some tables, East will unwisely respond 1NT, forcing, to 1♠, then raise West's 2♠ to 3♠, thus trading +110 for -100. At a few tables, when E/W stop at 2♠, North will balance boldly with a double. East can redouble and double South's run-out to 3♥. If West leads anything except the ♠A (or the ♦K!), E/W will be +200 for a matchpoint top.

**Board 24**West Deals  
None Vul

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

Many E/Ws will have the auction to themselves. West opens 1♠, East responds 1NT and West's 2♠ rebid is passed out. When North leads the ♥K, West can duck, win the next heart, reach dummy with a club honor, pick up the trumps with a winning finesse and finish with 10 tricks. Some Norths will be willing to double 1♠ despite their flat distribution: They have 13 prime points and no "wasted" spade honors that might win tricks only on defense. East will still try 1NT, and South can compete with 2♥. West will rebid 2♠, and after two passes, South may subside since his ♠K looks like a worthless card. As it happens, South would be down only one at 3♥, but if he were bold enough to bid again, E/W could be equally bold and go to 3♠. We look for +170 to E/W at most tables.

**Board 25**North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

Many N/Ss won't sniff at a slam: The auction will be 1♠-1NT, 3♥-4♥, Pass. Since North has good defensive values and could make a game opposite no more than a bit of support for one of the majors, he might open 2♣. Then after he showed length in both majors, South might invite slam by bidding 5♥, and with controls in both minors, North might go on. Will 6♥ succeed? Most Easts will lead the ♣K, and North can make the slam by taking the ace and crossruffing spades and clubs, losing to the ♦A in the process. At the end, he can draw trumps and score dummy's fifth club. But if East happens to lead a trump, North can succeed only by letting the ♠9 ride at some point. Any line of play to produce 12 tricks will be taxing, so N/S may get a good matchpoint result for +480.

**Board 26**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

The East hand is bereft of winners — the majority of the high-card points are marooned in short suits — but most Easts will open 1NT anyway and play there. The defense will be in charge. South will lead a spade, North takes the ace and shifts to a heart, and the defense clears the suit. East can try a diamond to dummy's king, but North wins and takes two more hearts and two more diamonds for down two. We see little room for variation. Weak-notrump advocates in the East chair will open 1♦ and survive; after two passes, North will balance, and N/S will play at a successful heart or notrump partial. (Actually, they can make a game: 5♣.) We would expect +200 to N/S at most tables.

**Board 27**South Deals  
None Vul

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

South will open 1♠; a "12-point" hand with three aces and five spades is way too good to pass. If N/S play "Standard" methods, North can respond 2♣, intending to support the spades next, inviting game. If N/S use a game-forcing "two-over-one" style, North must start with a forcing 1NT, planning to jump in spades next to invite. Whatever North's action, East will have options: He might double to give his side a chance to reach a heart contract; he might bid some number of diamonds. We expect East to compete as high as 4♦, which he could make if allowed to play there. If N/S then bid 4♠, South won't be doubled but will need double-dummy play to avoid down two and -200. (He can endplay West in trumps with the fourth round of clubs.) We predict some E/Ws will be +510 at 4♦ doubled.

**Board 28**West Deals  
N-S Vul

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

If E/W's auction starts 1♣-1♥, West will usually rebid 1NT; a three-card raise to 2♥ won't appeal when he has honors in every suit and a possible source of tricks in clubs. East will raise to 3NT, and North will lead a spade, riding to West's 10. When West wins a diamond finesse next, he can count 11 tricks and can take 13 with an inspired guess in clubs. Most Wests will just cash the top clubs and wind up with 12 tricks. A few Wests may upgrade their 14-point hand to a 1NT opening due to the good five-card suit and two 10s. Then East will look for a major-suit fit with Stayman and issue a quantitative raise to 4NT to try for slam. West will pass. But if East has tried for slam, North may avoid the "active" spade lead in favor of a passive ♥J. Then West must guess well to win 12 tricks and avoid a matchpoint zero.

**Board 29**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

The board may be passed out at a few tables, but some Easts will open 1♠ despite their striking lack of defensive strength. If West's 1NT response is not forcing, East will pass; if it's forcing, East must rebid 2♣, and West may raise to 3♣, passed out. At tables where East declines to open, South may try a light third-seat 1♦ despite the vulnerability. North will respond 1♥, East will overcall 1♠ and South must see it through with a raise to 2♥. Will aggressive openers prevail? North will make 2♥, losing two trumps, a diamond and two clubs. East can make 2♠, though we doubt that any East will play there. At 3♣, best defense, involving a timely diamond shift, can hold East to eight tricks. As in many partscore deals at matchpoints, any pair with a plus score will do well, but +110 will be golden.

**Board 30**East Deals  
None Vul

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

East will usually open 1♦ and raise West's 1♥ to 2♥. After two passes, most Norths will sell out. Say North leads a spade: queen, king. South shifts to a trump, and North takes the king and returns a trump. Then West seems to have only seven tricks: a spade, a ruff, three trumps and two clubs. He might manufacture one more by endplaying South to concede a diamond trick to dummy or by setting up dummy's ♦4(!) by force, but many Wests will fall a trick short. When E/W stop at 2♥, for North to balance with a double on such a weak hand would be hungry, but here it would be a winning action. South would probably take out to 2♠, and with the lie of the cards favoring N/S, South could win eight tricks. And if E/W went to 3♥, N/S would be sure of a plus and a good matchpoint result.



**Board 31**

South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

  

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

  

N	E
W	S

West has a reasonable weak 2♠ opening, and though East may be tempted to look for greener pastures, a pass is his disciplined call. Even if West happens to have tolerance for a red suit, game is unlikely at best, and East should hope West can manage eight or more tricks at spades and obtain a plus score. Suppose North leads a heart. West will take the ace, cash the ♦AK to pitch his heart loser, and lead a club to his queen and North's ace. It looks as if West might emerge with nine tricks, losing only two trumps and two clubs, but the defense can force him to ruff repeatedly and lose trump control, and eight tricks should be the limit. Still, E/W should get a decent matchpoint result for +110.

**Board 32**

West Deals  
E-W Vul

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

  

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

  

N	E
W	S

Some Wests will open a lusty 2♠; why worry about a little thing like adverse vulnerability? North will double, and South may respond 3♥. (If N/S use "Lebensohl," South can bid 2NT, forcing North to bid 3♣, and then 3♥ by South will be weakish. A direct 3♥ would be constructive.) North's hand is not worth a raise, and if West leads the ♠K, South must play with care to take even eight tricks. At tables where West passes as dealer, some Norths will open 1NT, and South may transfer to hearts and pass North's conversion. If West balances fearlessly with 2♠, North is likely to try 3♥. If instead North opens with one of a minor, South must decide whether to risk 1♥. Whatever he does, we think N/S will wind up at a heart partial. If they find some way to get a plus score, they will enjoy a fine matchpoint result.

**Board 33**

North Deals  
None Vul

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

  

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

  

N	E
W	S

When North opens 1♥ and East doubles, South may "ignore the double," as some players do, and respond 1♠. West can't act, and North's 2♥ rebid will end the auction. Other Souths will prefer to respond 1NT. We agree with that call: After East's double, N/S are unlikely to belong at spades, and if the auction turns competitive, North may benefit from having a general description of the South hand. At hearts, North will take nine tricks, off two clubs and two diamonds. The same nine tricks are available at notrump, though we see no way N/S can arrive at a notrump partial, much less at game. Most N/Ss will be +140, but at a few tables South may pass over East's double, and West will respond 1♠. Any N/S who sells out to a spade partial for +50 or +100 will suffer a matchpoint zero.

**Board 34**East Deals  
N-S Vul♠ A Q 10 8 3  
♥ 9  
♦ A 8 5 3  
♣ K Q 7♠ J 9 6 2  
♥ J 4 2  
♦ 6 4  
♣ A 5 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

Slam in diamonds has a 45% chance, but whether E/W will bid a slam on a finesse is unclear. The auction may be awkward. If E/W start 1♥-1♠-2♦, West will stall with a “fourth-suit” 3♣. If East continues with 3♦, West will want to raise diamonds but may fear that some of his black-suit strength will be wasted at a diamond contract. He would rather hold a 15-point hand such as ♠A10983 ♥9 ♦AQ53 ♣AJ7. As it is, he will fear to play at 5♦ and may sign off at 3NT, and East may pass trustingly instead of insisting on a suit contract. A few Easts may rebid 2♥, hoping to bid diamonds twice. Then if West jumps to 3NT, East may try 4♦; or after 1♥-1♠-2♥-3♦, East will raise to 4♦. In either case, E/W may be propelled into slam. We think few E/W pairs will get to 6♦ for a fortunate +920.

**Board 35**South Deals  
E-W Vul♠ 3  
♥ K 10 7 2  
♦ K J 9 4  
♣ K Q J 8♠ K Q 10 7  
♥ 6 4 3  
♦ Q 8 3  
♣ 7 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

South has length in both majors and adequate defensive values to open; he may hold his nose and start with a 1♣ “prepared bid” on his three-card “suit.” West has no attractive direct action, especially at the vulnerability, but when North responds 1♠ and South raises, West will enter with a double, showing a decent hand with club length and strength, as well as support for the unbid suits. East will take out to 3♦, and neither North nor South has an excuse for competing at the three level. That’s just as well for them, since reasonable defense by E/W would win seven tricks against a spade partial, and a few E/Ws may get a top by defending against a doubled spade partial. Easts who declare at diamonds can do well — with best play, they can emerge with 10 tricks — and E/W may score well for +130.

**Board 36**West Deals  
Both Vul♠ K 4  
♥ A 8 6 3  
♦ K Q 9 7  
♣ K Q 8♠ J 6 2  
♥ J 10 2  
♦ A J 10 2  
♣ J 10 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

After 1NT-Pass-Pass, many Souths will balance with 2♠ or with a gadget to show a one-suiter. East will feel the urge to act but has no obvious call; few Easts would find the winning penalty double. If N/S play at 2♠ undoubled, they will be down one unless the defenders drop a trick, perhaps by letting West be endplayed in clubs. Whether +100 will be a good E/W result is uncertain. If West is left to play at 1NT, he can make an overtrick for +120 if North’s opening lead is a diamond but will be at most +90 otherwise. Tops may go to E/Ws who find a way to hearts, where only a crystal-ball defense can hold West to eight tricks: North leads the ♣J; South wins and returns the ♦6; North takes the ace and returns the deuce for South to ruff. If South ruffs low, he must exit with the ♥Q to avoid a possible endplay.