

**Board 1. Love All. Dealer North.**

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

Unless East has a way to show a weak two-suited hand, North-South are likely to arrive in 3NT after a 2NT opening and some form of Stayman response. If East has passed throughout, West is likely to make the unfortunate lead of a heart, making a score of 460 possible. Mind you, to do that declarer probably has to take the diamond finesse and guess the spades right. On any lead but a heart, 10 tricks are the limit in 3NT. 5♣ and 4♥ make but score less than 430.

**Board 2. NIS Vul. Dealer East.**

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

After East opens 1♣ and West responds 1♦, North overcalls 1♠. South scrapes up a raise to 2♠. West, with six diamonds, competes to 3♦, which should end the auction. Par in 3♦ is nine tricks, though the defenders may need to be on their toes to stop 130. South does best to overtake the spade lead and switch to the ♥J. If North-South compete to 3♠ – rash at this vulnerability – they go two down if West scores a heart ruff. Even one down if doubled is costly.

**Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

Correct Acol bidding starts with 1♣ from South and then two passes. East probably reopens with 2♠ – clearly not weak in this position. South competes with 3♣ or, if North would read it as unusual, with 2NT. West raises to 3♠, perhaps trying to show some values with 3♥ (or 3♣ over 2NT). Most likely 3♠ will be the final contract. 4♠ makes (indeed with an overtrick) but only because the weak North hand has the ♥K. 3♣ or 3♦ make for North-South.

**Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

If West opens a weak 2♥ and North passes, East raises to 3♥ and South doubles. North then jumps to 4♠. If North comes in with 2♠ over 2♥, it will be harder to stop in 4♠. South will not envisage that half of North's values are in hearts! If West passes, a weak 2♠ or pass (probably correct) from North will lead to 4♠. If North opens 1♠, there is a danger of getting up to the five level. With the clubs foul, you need to guess the diamonds to make even 4♠.

**Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

With 34 HCP between them, East-West should get to at least to a small slam. A start of 1♣-1♠-2♦ tells West they are in the slam zone. Assuming you play 2♠ now as forcing, 2♠-2NT-3♣ should be the next three bids. It gets murkier after that! As the clubs will yield five tricks on any 3-2 split or if the jack is bare or if South has the singleton nine, 7NT is the place to be. 7♣ never makes when 7NT is failing. On some layouts, 7♥ makes when 7NT fails – but not many.

**Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

Whether East opens 1♣ or 1♦, West responds 1♠ and East wants to make a splinter raise (game values, spade support and heart shortage). I like 3♥ to show a singleton and 4♥ to show a void. East's choice of opening will affect how much this enthruses West. A slam will seem closer if East opened 1♦. In any case, if someone uses a form of Blackwood in which the ♠K counts as an ace, it should be clear to stop short. 12 tricks do not make here even on a club lead.

**Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.**

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

The bidding should be simple and concise: 1♠-2♠ – with three trumps and a ruffing value, 2♠ is better than INT – North is not quite good enough to bid 2♦. East might toy with a take-out double of 2♠ but game all is a bad vulnerability for competing. The obvious losers in 2♠ are two trumps and two aces, making 140 a popular score. Any East-West pairs who buy the contract will regret doing so. For example, 3♣ doubled goes for about 800.

**Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.**

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

East-West can make 3♣ or 3♥ while North-South can make 3♦ or 3♠. With neither side vulnerable, this should lead to some nice competitive auctions! If East opens an off centre INT and South passes, West still steer the contract into 2♥. South then reopens with 2♠ and East competes to 3♥. If South comes in directly over INT or if East opens 1♣, finding the heart fit will be harder. I suspect that few pairs who get a plus score will find it is below average.

**Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

If North-South both bid cautiously, they might stop out of game: 1♥-1♠-2♠. More likely North will upgrade the hand to six losers because of the very good controls and jump to 3♠. South then goes to game. It looks like there are just two losers in 4♠: a trump and a diamond. Might the defenders make a third trick? If the play in trumps is the ace and then towards the queen, a smooth duck from East might induce declarer to play West for a doubleton king.

**Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.**

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

1♦-1♠-3♣-3♦-3NT seems the likely if not almost universal way to bid the East-West hands. If the defenders get two spade tricks to go with a heart and two diamonds, they defeat 3NT. As South will surely start with a heart, someone (presumably North) will need to switch to spades before declarer has set up the diamonds – if South makes the switch, North must not play the queen. With the unfavourable layout in the diamond suit, 5♦ and 5♠ also fail.

**Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

Once in while, playing a weak no-trump results in losing a big penalty. This looks like the time! In INT doubled, South makes a trick in each major and the ace of clubs to lose 800. It is a similar story playing in a suit contract (which would have to be at the two level). Declarer makes those three tricks plus a trump trick to lose the same 800. Evidently, East-West can make an easy overtrick in 3NT for 430 but this will be below average for them.

**Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

1♥-INT-2NT-3NT is how I would bid the East-West hands. East is too flat to raise 1♥ to 2♥ and too weak to bid 2♦ – with only nine points, you need a decent five-card suit for a two-level response. The overtrick in 3NT largely depends upon South's lead. A club gives declarer an easy route to ten tricks. A spade works best, eventually setting up a long spade. If South leads a red card, North needs to find a club switch. 4♥ makes 10 tricks whatever the lead.

**Board 13. Game All. Dealer North.**

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

1♦-1♠-2♦-2♥ seems a good start to the auction: the change of suit should be forcing. East now wants to do something more encouraging than 3♦ – a fourth suit 3♣ seems best. West might then show the diamond support (3♦), the sixth spade (3♠) or the club stopper (3NT). As is often the case, the cheapest bid (3♦) works best. 6♦ is a very good contract and makes in comfort. 6♥ also makes if declarer guesses right. 3NT fails. 4♠ makes with an overtrick.

**Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.**

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

What does South bid over 1♠? One option is 2♠ (Michaels, hearts and a minor) with a view to calling 4♥ over whatever North does. With freak hands, there often is no 'book' bid. Most likely South will play in 4♥ rather than 6♥. With the diamond finesse (against the opening bidder) working, 12 tricks are always available. On any lead other than a spade, the ♣J goes on the ♠A for 13 tricks. 510 will be the most common score.

**Board 15. NIS Vul. Dealer South.**

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

After South opens the bidding, it will be hard to stay out of game. If West bids 1♠ and North 2NT, South surely jumps to 4♥. If North passes over 1♠, South reopens with 2♥, and North jumps to 3NT. 4♥ is likely to go one down but would fail by two tricks if West leads a club. In 3NT declarer starts and ends with eight tricks. The top scores for East-West will come to those doubled in a low-level spade contract. North has to cash the ♠A-K to stop nine tricks!

**Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.**

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

If North-South stay silent, Pass-1♠-2♥-4♠ is a possible auction – or maybe East will simply open 4♠ – a slam seems unlikely facing a passed partner. If South gets to bid clubs, North can raise, perhaps pushing their opponents to 5♠. So long as declarer retains an entry in dummy to reach the ♥J, the only losers in a spade contract should be the two aces. 5♣ doubled is a cheap sacrifice, down 300. It even pays to go on to 6♣ (doubled), down 500.

**Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.**

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

How good a contract is 6♠? It is hard to say. It is safe to say it is a much better bet if North bids hearts. Then you know to play for the ♥A onside, making twelve tricks by way of seven spades, a heart, a heart ruff and the ♣A-K. If North opens a weak 2♥, East might bid 3♠ or 4♠. West might bid clubs (as a cue bid) or perhaps try 5♥ (assuming the spades are solid and asking East to bid 6♠ with a heart control). I suspect 480 will be the most common score.

**Board 18. NIS Vul. Dealer East.**

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

1♣-1♠-INT-4♠ is how I would bid the North-South cards. Most lines lead to exactly 11 tricks for 650. If East finds the diabolical lead of a low heart, declarer might play low from dummy and make only 10 for 620. 3NT is more interesting, with the vital eleventh trick at stake. Suppose West leads the ♦Q. Declarer wins and leads a top club. West needs to duck and, if South leads another top club, win and return a club. Stopping 660 is easier on a heart lead!

**Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.**

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

Suppose the bidding starts 1♣-Pass-1♦-Double-2♣. Should West bid 2♥? It is tempting. Let us say West passes and North raises to 3♣. East then doubles again. West surely needs now to jump to 4♥. If East instead rebids 3♠, West will do well to bid 4♥. To stop the overtrick in 4♥ North must lead a diamond at trick one or trick two. Likewise it takes a club lead and diamond switch to stop 650 in spades. 5♣ doubled is down 500 – cheap if the field is in game.

**Board 20. Game All. Dealer West.**

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

What, if anything, should East respond to 1♦? 1♠, 1♥ and pass all have advantages and disadvantages. 1♦ makes – just. 1♦-1♠-INT-2♥ is one route to 2♥ – with game interest, East would enquire with 2♣ (Checkback/Crowhurst) rather than bid 2♥. 140 is likely in a heart contract, losing two spades, a club and a diamond. In a spade contract, club forces are awkward – East can make 2♠ by playing on the red suits. North-South can make 2NT or 3♣.

**Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.**

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

With the soft ♠J, poor diamond spots and lack of aces, not every East will open. The majority will, in which case 1♥-1♠-2♦-4♥ should be a popular auction. The opening lead is critical. If South goes for the unbid club suit – unlucky. The fourth club trick, or at least the threat thereof, proves decisive. If South leads a diamond (unlikely), North must win and return a trump. Plenty will make 4♥. 3NT is the easier contract make.

**Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.**

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

For a change, we have quiet Board. A third seat weak INT by West may be the only positive action in the auction. On a heart lead, INT goes two down: the defenders score four hearts, a spade, a diamond and two clubs for 200. Given the vulnerability West may open 1♠, planning to pass whatever East bids. In this case, East raises to 2♠, which goes only the one down. North-South can make 2♥, losing two spades, a heart and two diamonds.

**Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.**

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

After 1♥-1♠, South wants to rebid two and a half sparts! Unfortunately, the bidding box contains no card for that. Here South's rebid should not matter as most routes lead to 4♣ (rather than 5♣ down one). The defenders had better cash the first three tricks (two diamonds and a club) or they will run away. On the lead of a trump (not a good idea when you expect both opponents to have a long suit) declarer can set up the hearts and make twelve tricks.

**Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.**

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

Most routes lead to 3NT. If North opens 1♦ and East bids 2♠ (weak), South doubles (for take-out). North rebids 3♦ and South calls 3NT. West might lead any of the four suits! With diamonds 3-3, declarer can set up the suit, losing just two diamonds, a heart and a club along the way. With two hands in view, it is not so clear to go after the diamonds. If declarer plays on clubs, the defenders should have time to make two tricks in each minor as well as a heart.

**Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.**

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

7♣ is a good contract but hard to bid on these values. If the vulnerability keeps East-West out, the bidding might go: 1♣-1♦-1♠-3♣-3♠-4♦-4♥-5♣-6♣. I suspect that even 940 will be above average. Now let us say East comes in with a weak 2♥. South bids 3♣ and a brave West may bid 4♥. An 1100 penalty goes begging when North bids 4♠. South needs to bid 6♣ now as for all North knows 3♣ was a stretch. At the very least South bids 4NT to show a good 5♣ bid.

**Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.**

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

We come back down to earth with a bump when West cannot respond to the 1♥ opening. North reopens with 1♠, East probably bids 2♦ (rather than passing or doubling). West gives preference to 2♥ but South reopens with 2♠. If they get all their tricks – two tricks in each of the side suits – the defenders can beat 2♠. Quite often 2♠ will make. In any event, with 2♥ makeable, going one down in 2♠ (if East attacks clubs early) is cheaper than losing 110.

**Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.**

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

North opens 1♦ in third seat, East overcalls 1♠ and South jumps pre-emptively to 3♦ (a cue bid of 2♠ would show a sound raise to 3♦). This frustrates West's plan to raise spades pre-emptively. Whether 3♠ is a jump or not, East will do well to pass it. Even though the club position is very favourable, 4♠ fails. Par is for North to go one down doubled in 4♦ – a tough ask as declarer needs to guess the hearts and endplay East to avoid losing five tricks.

**Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West.**

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

With the values all in the two suits, North opens a thin 1♦. East doubles. West might bid 1♠, 2♠ or, given the diamond holding, INT. East will bid again over any of these actions, making a final contract of 4♣ highly likely. The defenders have two clubs and a diamond to take, with no great need to take them quickly. 420 will be common. 3NT is not a good spot, with six losers in the minors. 4♥ can make even on trump lead as declarer can set up a diamond.