

ACBL-wide Junior Wide Game #2

Tuesday Evening – August 7, 2018 – Set 218032



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Oren Kriegel



Oren grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and learned bridge at 14. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 2016 and has been playing and writing about bridge full time since then. His articles appear frequently on BridgeWinners and in The Bridge World. He is a regular on U.S. Junior teams. He has won a gold and silver medal in world Junior tournaments and was the non-playing captain of the U.S. open team in 2016.

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

No one would open 2♥ with the North cards, right? Good, moving on. East will open 1♠, and West has a hand worth a slam drive. Even if a 4♥ splinter is allowable with a singleton ace in your methods, a splinter will not let West find out useful information about East's distribution.

Instead, West should use Jacoby 2NT. In a standard Jacoby 2NT structure, East will rebid 4♠, showing a minimum with no side shortness. Some balanced 14-counts might qualify for a 3NT rebid, showing mild extra values, but with ace-empty-fifth of spades and three queens, this one doesn't. Instead, East rebids 4♠, over which West will ask for keycards with 4NT, then may bid 5NT as an attempt to find a grand slam — or 6NT. East's king denial of a side-suit king will end any ambitions above 6♠.

An unfortunate South might find a diamond lead, after which East might decide to play safely by rising with dummy's ♦A, protecting against South's having led a singleton diamond. Today, East will be rewarded for this dubious matchpoint play with a juicy overtrick.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

With the auction to themselves, N/S will have to cope with a somewhat misfitting pair of two-suited hands. Likely auctions are 1♠-2♥-3♦-3♥-4♥ and 1♠-2♥-2♠-3♣-3♦-3♥-4♥, depending on your style for opener's three-level rebid. Based on how the auction times out, North might be tempted to try for slam. It should be easy to stop at the five level, which is safe as the cards lie. However, a slam-try auction might tip East off to the need to cash the ♠A before it goes away.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

South opens 1♦, North responds 1♥, and East overcalls 1♠, probably losing the E/W club fit. It's not clear whether South should pass over 1♠ or rebid 2♦. A 2♦ rebid doesn't show any extra values, but with a bare minimum with two short honors and length in spades, there is a good case for South to pass. If South does pass, North might merely invite game by jumping to 3♦, keeping N/S in plus-score territory. Lots of pairs will drive the N/S hands to game, though. 3NT on a spade lead has a chance if the defense fails to shift to clubs. 5♦ looks slated for down two after the normal spade lead.

Board 4
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 10 9 8 5
♥ A J 5 3
♦ A 9 4
♣ 8

♠ A K Q
♥ Q 9 8
♦ 7 3 2
♣ K 7 5 2



♠ 4 3 2
♥ 10 2
♦ K 10 5
♣ A J 10 4 3

♠ 7 6
♥ K 7 6 4
♦ Q J 8 6
♣ Q 9 6

Should South respond 1♦ or 1♥ to North's 1♣ opening? 1♦ is correct in a traditional up-the-line style, but we strongly prefer to respond 1♥. Bypassing a four-card diamond suit to bid a four-card major is routine for us, and with a weak hand, we would respond 1♥ even with five or more diamonds.

Should West overcall 1♠? It's not clear. Many would, but with poor spades, vulnerable, there is a good case for passing. Still, West has a maximum for the initial pass with two aces. If West overcalls 1♠, the final contract will likely be 2♠, down one or two. If West passes, North will probably play in 1NT. A spade lead looks best from East, even without the overcall, because against 1NT, it is often correct to lead passively. A spade lead will hold the opponents to seven tricks. -90 should score well on a deal when many E/W pairs will go minus in 2♠ or allow an overtrick against 1NT.

Board 5
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ K J 6 4
♦ A J 8 2
♣ 3

♠ 10 9 5
♥ 10 3
♦ 7 5
♣ Q 10 9 7 6 4



♠ K J 8 2
♥ Q 8 7 2
♦ K Q 10 4
♣ J

♠ 6 3
♥ A 9 5
♦ 9 6 3
♣ A K 8 5 2

We would open the East cards, despite holding the singleton ♣J. Players who use a sound opening style might pass, however. We certainly would not overcall 2♣ with the South cards. There are many strikes against it: minimum values, passed-hand partner, poor distribution, adverse vulnerability. The main upside is that a 2♣ overcall of a 1♦ opening bid can often prove disruptive to the opponents' bidding.

West responds 1♥, and East raises to 2♥. West has enough strength for a slam-try, but West can't be sure the partnership belongs in hearts yet. East might have raised with three-card support. West's options will vary based on partnership agreements, but East will confirm a minimum hand with four-card support. E/W have no safety at the five level, but the enemy cards are friendly today, and 11 tricks are available.

Board 6
East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 9 7
♥ Q 7 4 2
♦ A 10 7 5
♣ Q 10

♠ A J 10 6 5 2
♥ J
♦ Q 4
♣ K 9 8 6



♠ Q
♥ 9 8 5
♦ K J 8 3 2
♣ A 4 3 2

♠ 8 4 3
♥ A K 10 6 3
♦ 9 6
♣ J 7 5

After two passes, should West open in third seat? We would not, with a scattered 11-count, particularly since E/W are vulnerable. North has the option to open 2♠ in fourth seat. This is not a weak two-bid, because there is no need to preempt with a weak hand in fourth seat. There is no universal agreement on the exact range for 2♠. We would recommend about 10-13 HCP and a good six-card spade suit. If North does open 2♠, it will likely end the auction.

East should choose an unlucky heart lead, allowing declarer to discard a diamond loser. Declarer is in dummy for what might be the last time, so it looks right to lead a club toward the ♣K. If East reads the club position, East can return the ♣2, a suit preference signal, showing strength in diamonds. If West underleads the ♦A, West can get a club ruff. The defense will later score a spade trick, to hold declarer to eight tricks.

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ K 3
♥ 8 7 6
♦ 9 7 6 2
♣ J 8 7 2

♠ 4 2
♥ Q J 3 2
♦ K 5
♣ 10 9 6 5 3



♠ A Q J 9 5
♥ A 9 5 4
♦ Q 8 4
♣ K

♠ 10 8 7 6
♥ K 10
♦ A J 10 3
♣ A Q 4

The auction should be short and simple: South opens 1♦, West passes, North responds 1♥, and East overcalls 1♠. No one has any reason to act over that, so East declares 1♠.

South leads the ♥K, which declarer wins, because hearts might be 5-1. Ducking, while unlikely to cost, serves no real purpose, and occasionally South will be able to find an entry to the North hand, who can then lead the ♥Q for a ruffing finesse. Unless the defense gets sloppy, declarer should take just five trump tricks and the ♥A for down one.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

♠ K 10 8 2
♥ Q 8 3
♦ A K 6 5 4
♣ 7

♠ A J 6 5
♥ J 10 5 2
♦ Q 8 7
♣ 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 4 3
♥ A K 9 4
♦ 3 2
♣ 10 9 6 5

♠ 9 7
♥ 7 6
♦ J 10 9
♣ A K Q J 8 4

After West's 1♦ opening bid, should East force to game? We would, but it's not clear. Inviting game would be a reasonable choice, particularly in a light opening bid framework. If East does respond 2♣, we prefer to play that opener rebids 2♦ with five or more diamonds, so a 2♥ or 2♠ rebid shows exactly 4-4 in the two suits. After 2♦, East rebids 3♣, and West tries 3NT.

Deep Finesse says eight tricks are the limit in notrump, but the defense has only four obvious tricks: two in each major. The key play for the defense is to shift to a club. Because West has a singleton club and dummy has no side entry, declarer must cash all of dummy's club winners, which squeezes the West hand in three suits. West can afford to pitch one spade and two diamonds, but the fourth and fifth discards will be painful.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A J 3
♥ J 8 7 6 5
♦ Q 10
♣ J 10 7

♠ Q 10 8 6 4
♥ K 10 3
♦ A 9 8 4
♣ 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 7
♥ A Q
♦ K 7 6 3 2
♣ K 8 5 4

♠ K 5 2
♥ 9 4 2
♦ J 5
♣ A Q 9 6 3

After two passes, South opens 1♦, and West passes — overcalling 1♥ on this hand, vulnerable, would be sick. North responds 1♠. Despite holding only 12 HCP, South should not pass 1♠ with a doubleton spade. It's not clear whether to rebid 1NT or 2♣. The matchpointy action is probably 1NT, which might work especially well today, if North elects to play in 2♠ rather than 2♦. The uber-friendly lie of the E/W cards means North can take 10 tricks in spades or diamonds, losing just two spades and one club. 2♦ is the safer partscore, but +130 will not garner many matchpoints.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

♠ 7 5 4
♥ A J 10
♦ Q 9 2
♣ 10 9 8 6

♠ 10 9 6
♥ 9 8 6 5
♦ K J 8 4
♣ Q 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K Q 8 3 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ 7
♣ A K 5

♠ J
♥ K 7 3
♦ A 10 6 5 3
♣ J 7 4 3

South opens 1♠. Should North raise to 2♠? It depends in part on partnership agreement, but we would respond 1NT. In the mainstream modern style, a simple major-suit raise is mildly constructive. With a bad 7 HCP or worse, North will typically respond 1NT, planning to take a preference to 2♠ on the next round.

A 2♠ raise will surely drive N/S to game, but they might be able to stay low after 1NT response. South should rebid 3♠, although a game-forcing jump-shift into 3♣ would not be much of an overbid. (Jump-shifting into a three-card suit looks like the bigger flaw for 3♣.) If North chooses to pass 3♠, N/S will go plus, but no one could fault a raise to 3NT. The diamond values need not be as wasted as they are.

Reaching 3NT, which can make as the cards lie, looks reachable only through an "imaginative" 3NT rebid by South and a well-judged pass by North. A 3NT rebid over 1NT does show a hand with long, strong spades, but doing it with a small singleton? That's a little unusual.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 5 3
♥ A J 8 6
♦ A Q 9
♣ Q J 9

♠ A J 10 8 6
♥ —
♦ 10 8 7 5
♣ 10 7 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K
♥ Q 10 7 2
♦ K 6 4 3 2
♣ K 8 5

♠ Q 7 4 2
♥ K 9 5 4 3
♦ J
♣ A 3 2

Do you open the South cards? We don't—South's 11 HCP are soft, the singleton ♠K is a downgradeable feature, and South will face a difficult rebid after a 1♠ response. After West opens 1♣, North's standard auction is pass, but a 1♠ overcall might be the matchpoint winner's choice (we wouldn't know—we'reimps players). Unless North overcalls now, N/S probably will not enter the auction. N/S can compete effectively to 4♦, but even 4♦ doubled will be profitable compared to defending a heart partscore.

That said, it's not clear how N/S should find diamonds. +140 for E/W is probably a likely result, although it would be easy for declarer to lose five tricks in hearts, so some N/S pairs might go plus on defense.

Board 12

West Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 8	♠ K J 9 5 4	♠ 10 7 6 3									
♥ A 10 6 5 3 2	♥ J 4	♥ 8									
♦ 10 9 8	♦ K 5 3	♦ A J 2									
♣ A 8 7	♣ K 10 6	♣ J 9 5 4 3									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 2										
	♥ K Q 9 7										
	♦ Q 7 6 4										
	♣ Q 2										

We would open 2♥ with the West hand, despite some flaws. The two aces give West more defense than usual for a weak two, particularly a first-seat favorable weak two. However, 2♥ is the field action, and there doesn't seem to be a compelling reason to go against the field here.

North is a little too weak to overcall 2♠. East passes, and South balances with 2NT, which has a wide range in balancing seat — about 14-18 HCP. North will probably transfer to spades and bid 3NT, and the spotlight shines on South. The textbook action is to pull 3NT to 4♠ with three-card support, but South's hand screams notrump. Passing 3NT looks like the best long-run matchpoint action, and it is successful today, because 4♠ goes down, off three aces and a heart ruff. Of course, 3NT doesn't have to be the winner. Clubs could be

the weak spot, leading to 3NT going down when 4♠ would make. Another possibility is that N/S can take one more trick in spades than notrump, leading to +650 vs. +630 or +620 vs. +600.

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ 7	♠ Q 10 9 6 5	♠ 8 4									
♥ K 6	♥ A Q 9	♥ J 8 5 3 2									
♦ Q 5 4 2	♦ A K J 7	♦ 9 8 3									
♣ K Q J 10 9 8	♣ A	♣ 7 5 2									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K J 3 2										
	♥ 10 7 4										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ 6 4 3										

North should not consider opening 2♣ with this hand. 20 HCP with 5-4-3-1 distribution is not close to strong enough for a 2♣ opening. An offbeat 2NT opening does not appeal to us, but it might work sometimes.

How strongly should South raise spades? The spade support is great, but the shape is poor. We would like to offer a mixed raise, showing about 7-9 HCP, at least four-card support, and a little shape. (This is roughly equivalent to the constructive four-card raise playing Bergen raises.) If that option is not available, we would make a limit raise. A simple raise to 2♠ looks like a big underbid, and a leap to 4♠ should not be made on a 5-3-3-2 hand.

If South makes a limit raise in spades, North will surely drive to slam. If South makes a mixed raise or simple raise, the partnership might miss slam, but there is a fighting chance to get there after a mixed raise.

Twelve tricks are guaranteed, and declarer should take 13. Draw trumps and run the ♦10. If it wins, repeat the finesse and pitch two hearts. If it gets covered, pitch one heart and lead a heart to the ♥Q. Today, the ♦10 might get covered, but even if it does, East's ♦9-8 fall, promoting the ♦7, so declarer does not need the heart finesse. If the ♦10 loses, declarer can pitch two hearts from dummy.

Board 14

East Deals

None Vul

♠ A Q 6 4	♠ —	♠ K 9 7 5 2									
♥ Q 10	♥ 8 4	♥ A J 9 7 3									
♦ K J 10 6 3	♦ Q 9 7 5 4	♦ A									
♣ K 8	♣ A Q 10 9 6 3	♣ 7 4									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ J 10 8 3										
	♥ K 6 5 2										
	♦ 8 2										
	♣ J 5 2										

If E/W had the auction to themselves, the auction would likely begin 1♠-2NT (Jacoby)-4♥ (5-5 in the majors)-4♠-Pass. 4♠ looks safe, but a club lead will defeat it on this layout, because two finesses lose and spades are 4-0.

Should South find the club lead against a spade contract? Maybe. After 1♠-Pass-2NT, North should get into the bidding. North might simply overcall 3♣ or North might try something more exotic, perhaps an intended-as-unusual 3NT overcall, trying to get both minors into the picture. We like the mundane 3♣ overcall, because the clubs are longer and so much stronger than the diamonds.

The scores on this deal will probably be all over the map. Some +420s, some -50s, and some more unusual scores. There also will probably be some N/S pairs going minus in clubs, perhaps even some -500s in 5♣ doubled.

Board 15

South Deals
N-S Vul

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

South opens 1♦, West overcalls 4♠, and North doubles. This is not a pure penalty double — it just shows values. It looks best for South to pull the double, with a decent minimum, 6-4 distribution, and a singleton spade. South could just bid 5♣, but 4NT is a better call, provided North will interpret it as takeout. These competitive 4NT bids often show two places to play. South might have long diamonds and four clubs or diamonds and hearts. North bids 5♣ over 4NT, and South will pass. If South had diamonds and hearts, South would bid 5♦ over 5♣, asking North to choose between the red suits.

Against 5♣, East will probably lead a spade. Our line would be to play for hearts not 5-1 and clubs not 5-0. Win the ♠A, ruff a spade (high or low, it doesn't matter), then play ♥A and a heart. If West follows to the second heart, ruff a heart high, then draw trumps ending in the North hand. With clubs 4-1, it is necessary to take the spade ruff before working on hearts.

Board 16

West Deals
E-W Vul

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

We would open 1NT with the North hand. North has a decent five-card suit, including some useful spot cards, and the favorable vulnerability makes the upgrade more attractive. We would pass the South hand without a second thought, but some players seem to have success bidding Stayman with hands like this. Stayman is a big winner if North holds spades, a loser if North holds just hearts, and a mystery if North holds no major (South will pass 2♦ and who knows how that contract will matchpoint).

West might be tempted to balance over 1NT. We would probably pass, with weak suits, vulnerable. If West does come in, it will be a N/S bonanza, as E/W will likely end up in 2♥, possibly doubled.

E/W can hold declarer to seven tricks in 1NT, but as is often the case in 1NT, the play and defense can take many paths. On this layout, many of those paths will lead to eight or even nine tricks for declarer.

Board 17

North Deals
None Vul

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

After two passes, South opens 1♣. West passes — do not be tempted to double with 13 HCP and a doubleton spade or to overcall a weak four-card suit. After passing, West might be able to enter the auction later, if the opponents bid spades. (For instance, if North responds 1♠ and South bids 1NT, 2♣, or 2♠, West might double.) Emphasis on "might" — this is a very marginal delayed double. However, at matchpoints with no one vulnerable, it's probably the right action.

North responds 1♥, not 1♦ (see Board 4). East might stick in a 1♠ overcall, but it's a little scary. Either way, South will raise to 2♥. If East has overcalled, West might try 2♠ with two honors doubleton. If East passed over 1♥, East probably will balance with 2♠ over 2♥.

Exactly where this deal gets played is anyone's guess. This is the sort of board where it's hard to predict how the auction will go at most tables. Either side could easily go plus or minus on offense or defense. We don't have much insight to impart other than being on the right side of these competitive partscore deals is crucial for success at matchpoints.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

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

Our auction, which will be uncontested by E/W: 1♦-1♥-1♠-2♣ (fourth suit game-forcing)-2♦-3♦-3♠ (emphasizing the strong spades)-3NT-Pass. Note West's 3♦ bid, as opposed to a seemingly matchpoint-oriented 2NT. West has slam potential, and when there might be a slam, raising partner's suit is often key. East's 3♠ bid does not show extra shape (if East had 5-6 distribution, East would have rebid 2♠, not 2♦), it simply pinpoints the spade values. That's not what West wants to hear for a slam contract, so West suggests 3NT. East has no reason to remove that contract.

After the normal club lead, declarer wins the first club with the ♣A and has no reason not to play ♦A and another diamond. North shows out, so declarer allows South to win the ♦Q. The defense will cash out its club winners, and declarer will have nine tricks.

By the way, getting to the double-dummy best spot of 7♦ is ridiculous, but 6♦ is a very reasonable contract. Declarer will plan to ruff two spades in dummy and make the contract if the ♦Q drops singleton or doubleton or the ♥K is inside. Kudos to any partnership who reaches 6♦ intelligently.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

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

What's your bidding philosophy with the North hand? Do you make the technical 1♦ response, or do you go right for the brass ring with some number of notrump? We would respond 1♦, but as previously noted we areimps players. Maybe the matchpoint mavens respond some number of notrump. After 1♦, it is more important for South to rebid 2NT, showing the range and hand-type, than to bid a major. North can check back for a major-suit fit if need be.

Against 3NT by South, West will probably lead a club, despite the opening bid. Sometimes it is right to hold up on the first round of a suit with two stoppers, but not here. Win the first club and play three rounds of diamonds. With diamonds 3-3, there will be no further problems, and declarer will take 12 tricks.

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

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

After South opens 1♥ in fourth seat, North will presumably respond 1♠. A natural 2♣ response would be a better description, but most pairs play that as Drury. A natural 3♣ call, if available, would work well on this layout, but jumping to the three-level while suppressing the five-card spade suit seems wrong to us. Over 1♠, South will probably rebid 3♥, even though the heart suit is a bit weaker than ideal for a jump-rebid. We would rebid 3NT as North, just hoping to survive.

On this deal, 3NT will make — probably 11 tricks after a diamond lead — but any pairs who make their way to 6♣ can feel proud. At our table, that suit wouldn't even get mentioned.

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

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

N/S rate to have the auction to themselves. South will open 2♣ and rebid 2NT over North's waiting 2♦ response. It is normal to play 2NT systems on this auction, so North will transfer to 3♥ and then rebid 3NT. South might consider passing 3NT with 4-3-3-3 distribution, but this deal is a good demonstration of why that strategy is dangerous. Unlike after a 1NT opening, responder does not have the option of bidding a new suit below 3NT, so North's 3NT rebid might be based on an unbalanced hand. Just because South is balanced doesn't mean he will be buying a suitable dummy for play in 3NT.

Trumps split 3-2 and one of the finesses wins, so 4♥ should make an overtrick in comfort. Meanwhile, the normal club lead against 3NT will kill declarer's chances.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 9 6
♥ Q J 6 3
♦ A 10 3
♣ Q 5 3 2

♠ K 8 7 3 2
♥ A 9 5 4
♦ 2
♣ A 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10
♥ K 10 8 7
♦ K J 9 5
♣ K 9 6 4

♠ A Q J 5 4
♥ 2
♦ Q 8 7 6 4
♣ J 10

Would you open the East hand? We're on the fence. Nonvulnerable, we probably would, but vulnerable we would pass. Move the ♣J-10 into diamonds and we would open, even vulnerable. If East doesn't open 1♠, North will. South responds 1NT, North rebids 2♥, and South raises to 3♥. Jumping to 4♥ is possible, but 3♥ looks more prudent at matchpoints. There is no guarantee that both of the minor-suit kings will be useful cards in a heart contract.

Against 3♥, East's natural lead is a club, preferring two touching honors to queen-empty-fifth of diamonds. Deep Finesse says N/S can take nine tricks in hearts, but that looks like a difficult feat. We would expect most declarers in 3♥ to fail. Well done to any N/S pair that manages to go plus after a 1♠ opening by North.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

♠ K 7 3
♥ J 4 3
♦ Q J
♣ A Q J 8 4

♠ 10 6 4 2
♥ Q 10 6
♦ 10 6
♣ K 10 9 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 9 8
♥ 9 8 7
♦ A 3 2
♣ 5 3 2

♠ J 5
♥ A K 5 2
♦ K 9 8 7 5 4
♣ 6

West opens 1♣, and East will respond 1♦ or 1♥. The traditional response is 1♦, and even some pairs that typically respond in a four-card major when holding a longer diamond suit will respond 1♦. Only die-hard Walsh-style players will respond 1♥, and only if East evaluates his hand as not worth a game-force. (We would just invite.)

All roads should lead to 3NT by West. North has a normal spade lead, after which West will establish the diamonds, taking five tricks in that suit, plus two hearts and one in each black suit. +600 for E/W should be a fairly flat score around the room.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

♠ K 7 6 5
♥ A K 6
♦ K 7 4 2
♣ Q 9

♠ Q 9
♥ Q 4
♦ 3

♣ A J 10 8 6 5 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 8
♥ 10 9 8 7 5
♦ A J 10 8 6
♣ K

♠ J 10 4 3 2
♥ J 3 2
♦ Q 9 5
♣ 7 3

How many clubs do you bid with the North hand after West's 1NT opening? We would go for 4♣, but if we were vulnerable, we would not consider bidding more than 3♣. 5♣ looks too aggressive.

It looks like there are just 10 tricks in clubs: eight clubs and two aces. However, if South somehow becomes declarer (don't ask us how), West is endplayed on opening lead. After the likely heart lead, declarer can set up the heart suit with one ruff. Because West holds the ♠K, West is unable to profitably attack spades, leaving declarer enough time to establish the hearts while the ♠A remains as an entry. If North is declarer, a spade or even a diamond lead will give the defense the upper hand.

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10 6
♥ K J 8 7 4
♦ A
♣ K J 9 4 3

♠ Q 8
♥ A 6 2
♦ 10 8 7 5 3
♣ 10 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 9 7 5 4 2
♥ 9
♦ K 9 4 2
♣ 6

♠ J 3
♥ Q 10 5 3
♦ Q J 6
♣ A Q 5 2

North passes, East opens 1♣, and South jumps to 4♠. Facing a passed hand, the big preempt has a lot of upside. On this deal, it gives West a big problem. The winning call is double, as long as West leads the ♦A, crosses to East in clubs, and can ruff out South's ♦K. However, it looks very possible for West to commit the partnership to 5♣, which should be down two, losing two spade tricks, the ♥A, and a heart ruff. Going plus on this deal will probably be a good score for both sides.

Board 26

East Deals
Both Vul

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

After two passes, West opens 1♥, and East has to choose between responding 1♠, raising to 2♥, or using Drury. We would never respond 1♠. There is a known eight-card heart fit (unless West has opened a four-card suit in third seat, which is his problem), so why bother introducing the spades? Spades might be the right strain for slam (give West something like ♠K10xx ♥AKQxxx ♦Ax ♣x, where 6♠ will likely make and 6♥ is nearly hopeless), but if that is the case, there will be time to find spades later.

A more interesting question is whether East is strong enough for Drury. That depends on partnership style. If you play sound opening bids, then it makes sense to keep Drury as showing a full limit raise or close to it. If you open light, then there will not be very many full limit raises, and you will get more mileage out of Drury if you lower

the floor a bit, including some good 9-counts. We think this hand is very close to the borderline for Drury, but we are light Drury bidders. There's no right or wrong answer — pick a style that works for you.

It looks normal to reach 4♥ by West. North will probably lead a spade, which looks better than leading a diamond from the ♦K. We would win the ♠J in dummy and finesse in diamonds, which is not the winning play. After that, good defense will hold declarer to 10 tricks. Taking 11 tricks on this deal will be worth a good score for E/W.

Board 27

South Deals
None Vul

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

Should North open light in third seat? We probably wouldn't, but some might. A light opening might work on this deal if E/W don't have the tools to find their heart fit or to penalize the opponents. However, N/S are in danger if E/W start doubling them. Anything higher than 1♠ can be doubled and beaten at least 300.

Ironically, it may be more disruptive if North passes, rather than opens. East might open 1♦, although we prefer 1NT, upgrading for the strong five-card diamond suit. South overcalls 1♠. Then if West chooses to make a negative double, East will either rebid 2♦ or (our choice) 1NT. West has no reason to bid over either of those contracts.

A 1NT opening by East will fare better. West should use Stayman, then bid 2♥ over East's 2♦ rebid, showing both majors and less than invitational strength. (If East had bid a major, West should invite, but it looks better to go low at matchpoints when East has no major.)

Board 28

West Deals
N-S Vul

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

There is another opportunity for a 1NT opening on a 14-count. West passes, and we would open 1NT with the North hand. East passes, and South bids 4♦, a Texas transfer. It's not clear for East or West to come into the auction, and they will miss a decent 4♠. Meanwhile, it's not automatic for E/W to defeat 4♥.

East leads a high club, and West should discourage, even though he has the ♣Q. Dummy has a doubleton, so an encouraging signal usually shows the ability to overruff dummy. If West does encourage, East has no reason to suspect West has the ♠A-K and will play a third club: disaster. If West does discourage, East still needs to find the winning shift of a spade. A spade looks like the best shift, but a diamond could be the winner as well.

Board 29

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ K 10 8 6 3
♥ J 8 7
♦ K 10 8 6
♣ J

♠ J
♥ Q 10 3
♦ Q 7 4 2
♣ K Q 5 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 5 4
♥ A K 9 6 5 4
♦ 5
♣ A 10 6

♠ A Q 7 2
♥ 2
♦ A J 9 3
♣ 9 8 7 2

Time to talk about one of our favorite conventions: transfer over a takeout double of a major. After 1♥ (X), 1NT shows clubs, 2♣ shows diamonds, 2♦ shows a constructive heart raise, and 2♥ shows a weaker raise. Showing a new suit is usually based on length in that suit, but it could also be a prelude to raising partner's major with a hand that wants partner to lead the suit transferred to. This convention is useful because it allows responder to show his suit immediately, whether he has a competitive hand or a stronger hand. Having two tiers of raises at the two-level is also beneficial.

On this deal, West has an easy 2♦ bid, showing a constructive raise. Without a way to show a constructive raise, West would feel a bit guilty about bidding 2♥, which could be bid on a significantly

weaker hand. The 2♦ transfer gets the hand off West's chest immediately.

North bids 3♣, and East competes with 3♥. If N/S compete to 4♣, East will have an easy time doubling, expecting West to have some defensive strength. That will net +200 and a great matchpoint score. It would be less comfortable for East if West's raise was wide-ranging, as 4♣ could easily be making.

Board 30

East Deals
None Vul

♠ 8 7 4
♥ Q 9 7 6
♦ 10 6 5
♣ J 9 4

♠ Q 6 5 2
♥ 10 5
♦ A Q J 8
♣ 6 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 3
♥ A K 8
♦ K 7 4
♣ A K 10 8 5

♠ K J 10 9
♥ J 4 3 2
♦ 9 3 2
♣ Q 7

East has 21 HCP, but the aces, kings, and strong five-card club suit make this hand an automatic upgrade to a 2♣ opening and a 2NT rebid. We would not use Stayman as West, because of the 4-3-3-3 distribution. Instead, we'd just raise to 3NT.

South has a difficult opening-lead problem. We'd be torn between spades, hearts, and diamonds. It's probably best to lead a spade, in case partner has an honor there. Even if partner doesn't have a spade honor, it still might be best to get spades started. Spades is the winner here. After winning the ♠A, it looks right to cash one high club, test hearts, then fall back on the club finesse. When North follows with the ♥10 on the second round of the suit, it's not clear whether to finesse or not. Finessing is the right play in a vacuum (a discussion of restricted choice is beyond the scope of this analysis, but that is the relevant principle to this topic), but that

is a committal play that costs the only entry to dummy when it fails.

Finessing hearts is the winner here, but when declarer finesses in clubs, the roof falls in. The defense can cash its spade winners, squeezing declarer's hand. East must either bare the ♦K or discard an extra winner in clubs. If East does keep two diamonds and North wins the last round of spades, North can exit in clubs, forcing East to lead a diamond away from the ♦K. This is a strip-squeeze (or squeeze-endplay) against declarer. Kudos to any defenders who pull it off.

Board 31

South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 9 6 5
♥ 5 2
♦ A J 10
♣ A 6 5 4

♠ 2
♥ J 8 7 6
♦ K 9 8 6 5
♣ Q 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q J 10 3
♥ A Q 9 3
♦ 7 2
♣ K 10

♠ 8 7 4
♥ K 10 4
♦ Q 4 3
♣ J 9 8 7

West and East begin by bidding 1♣-1♠-2♠, after which East has to decide whether to try for slam or simply bid game. Slam is against the odds, but investigating it is unlikely to help the defense, so East probably should make a slam-try. East might bid 2NT if the partnership plays that as an artificial asking bid. Here, West will show a minimum with four trumps. Over that disappointing reply, East just bids 4♠.

The E/W hands actually fit very well together, making the chances for 12 tricks roughly 50-50 — hinging on whether the heart finesse wins or loses. On this layout, the finesse loses, so 11 tricks are the limit. If a pair bids slam and goes down, they can consider themselves mildly unlucky.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 9
♥ 10 5 3
♦ A 9 4 3 2
♣ A Q 9 5

♠ 6
♥ A J 4
♦ J 10 7 5
♣ K 10 7 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 8 7 5 3
♥ Q 9 2
♦ Q 8 6
♣ J 2

♠ A K Q J 4 2
♥ K 8 7 6
♦ K
♣ 8 6

After three passes, South opens 1♠. West might make a takeout double with a maximum passed hand, but with only three hearts, it's a bit dangerous — East might overcompete in hearts. If West wants to come into the auction, the best choice looks like 1NT, showing both minors.

It will be hard for N/S to stay out of game here. 3NT looks like the best game, but 4♠ is very reasonable too. The bad spade split looks like it will sink either contract. N/S pairs who manage to go plus rate to score very well.

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 6 3
♥ K 7
♦ A Q 8 5 2
♣ 9 8 4

♠ 10 5
♥ 8 5
♦ 10 9 7
♣ A K 7 6 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K J 8
♥ A Q 9 4 3 2
♦ 4 3
♣ Q

♠ Q 7 4 2
♥ J 10 6
♦ K J 6
♣ J 10 5

We would pass with the North hand. A 3♣ opening might work, but there are many strikes against it: only a six-card club suit, weak spot cards, and the worst possible distribution, for three. Having the ♣A-K is also a mild negative factor. North has a bit more defense than is ideal for a preemptive opening.

East has a slightly awkward hand to bid. If East chooses to reverse into 2♠, E/W should get to 4♥. The more conservative 2♥ rebid will likely lead to missing game. We will dodge the question of what to rebid by explaining that we play Flannery. We would open 2♦ and over West's 2♥ response, we would rebid 3♥, showing extra values but limited to about 16 HCP.

The diamond finesse wins, and the spade finesse loses. The fall of the ♠10 means that 11 tricks are likely. We have sympathy for the pairs who miss game, but our sympathy will not be much consolation to the pairs who score +200 with these cards.

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A K 6
♥ Q 8 7 6 5
♦ A K
♣ A 10 6

♠ 10 8 5 3 2
♥ A K J 4
♦ 7 4
♣ J 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 7 4
♥ 10 9 3
♦ Q 10 9
♣ K 9 3 2

♠ Q 9
♥ 2
♦ J 8 6 5 3 2
♣ Q 7 5 4

A simple auction: West will open 2NT and East should raise to 3NT. Even if E/W play Puppet Stayman, it looks wrong to use it with East's flat distribution. Even if there is a 5-3 fit, it is far from clear that the major will play better than 3NT.

If the auction is unrevealing, North might try leading a high heart against 3NT, rather than the five-card spade suit — planning to shift to spades if need be. What happens at trick two will depend on N/S's carding methods. If they play standard carding, North will shift to spades, and it will be hard for West to avoid playing the ♠J from dummy. That will go badly for declarer, and 3NT will probably fail. If N/S use upside-down carding, North might continue hearts, which will be costly for the defense.

If E/W reach 4♥, the fall of the ♠Q makes success likely for declarer, despite having three trump losers. Despite the success of 4♥ as the cards lie, we stand by our auction to 3NT.

Board 35

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q J 3
♥ 10 4 3 2
♦ A 8
♣ K 10 9 6

♠ K 8 7 4 2
♥ A 9 6
♦ K 3
♣ A 5 3



♠ A 5
♥ Q 8 7 5
♦ J 10 9 7
♣ Q 8 4

♠ 10 9 6
♥ K J
♦ Q 6 5 4 2
♣ J 7 2

After two passes, North opens 1♠, South raises to 2♠, and East has to decide whether or not to balance. We are too timid, but it could work. Best play by E/W will lead to eight tricks in hearts, so going down one in 3♥ might be a matchpoint winner. It is unlikely that E/W will be doubled in 3♥.

It looks normal for North to take eight tricks in spades. East leads the ♦J, ducked to North's king. North leads a heart to dummy's ♥K, then runs the ♠10. West does not cover, in part because North might be planning on putting up the ♠K, but more likely because East might have started with the singleton ♠K.

Here, the ♠10 forces out the ace, so declarer takes eight tricks by ruffing a heart in dummy, losing a total of two spades, one

diamond, and two clubs. If E/W don't shift to clubs in time, it might be possible to dispose of a club loser on dummy's ♦Q, after ducking the second round, dropping West's doubleton ♦A.

Board 36

West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 9 6 4 3
♥ 7 5
♦ A 10 4
♣ 8 5 3

♠ —
♥ K 8 6 4 3 2
♦ Q 7 6 5
♣ A 10 2



♠ K J 10 8 5
♥ A J 9
♦ K 2
♣ K 7 6

♠ A 7 2
♥ Q 10
♦ J 9 8 3
♣ Q J 9 4

West and North pass, and East opens 1NT — not 1♠ with a balanced 15-count. West transfers to spades, and whether East super-accepts or bids just 2♠, E/W rate to play in a spade partscore, taking nine tricks. (We could go either way on the question of whether to super-accept or not.)

We would not consider doubling 2♥ with king-empty sixth of hearts. A heart lead might be best, but a diamond or club lead is also very possible to be the winner. If E/W stop in 2♠, North can always balance with 3♥, not that balancing is without danger.