

ACBL-wide Junior Fund Game #2

Tuesday Evening – August 6, 2019 – Set 226032



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

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

North opens 1♠, and East passes. South is close to a response, but pass is probably the majority action in a club game. We might respond 1NT, but let's say South passes. Some players might balance with the West cards, which would be successful on this deal, but we think pass is clear. A 1NT balance over a 1♠ opening should show around 11-16 HCP, and the 11s should be decent.

We think a heart lead by East is best on balance, but here it gives declarer easy access to dummy to lead spades. Which honor should declarer lead up to? If the suit is 3-3 and declarer guesses to play the correct honor, there will be only two losers. However, if East holds ♠Q-10 doubleton and declarer leads low to the king, the ♠10 will fall. Then, a low spade will force East's queen, leaving the ♠J-9

as equals against the ♠A: two losers. The reverse is not true, as the actual layout demonstrates: If declarer leads a low spade to the jack and ace, there will still be two more unavoidable losers. The correct play is low to the ♠K, although it doesn't make any difference here.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

West opens 1♠ in third seat, and North must decide how to enter the auction. A 2♦ overcall can be discounted immediately with a mediocre five-card suit. 1NT is a reasonable call, but with only 15 HCP, vulnerable, and facing a passed hand, it can be costly when wrong. Here, the 1NT call may land N/S in hot water. We prefer a takeout double, which keeps all options open, including notrump.

East passes over the double, and South bids 2♦ with trepidation. West can double, showing a sound hand with support for the unbid suits. E/W will likely bid to 2♥, and North must decide whether to take the push to 3♦. Pros: five-card diamond support, mild extra values; cons: poor distribution, the vulnerability. If North does venture to the three level, East should issue a matchpoint double,

which will net a juicy penalty of plus 500 if E/W never break clubs, and a respectable plus 200 otherwise.

Board 3South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 7 5 2		♠ Q 10 6									
♥ 10 9 3		♥ A K J 5 4 2									
♦ K 10 8		♦ 9									
♣ Q 6 5 4		♣ J 9 2									
♠ K J 9 4	<table> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ A 8 3
N											
W			E								
		S									
♥ 7	♥ Q 8 6										
♦ A Q J 7 6	♦ 5 4 3 2										
♣ K 10 7	♣ A 8 3										

E/W should have an uncontested auction. Ours would be: 1♦-1♥-1♠-2♣ (some Easts might merely invite)-2♦-2♥-2NT-3NT-Pass. We expect most of the field to reach 3NT, although Deep Finesse says to play 4♠ in the 4-3 fit.

After a club lead to the ace and a club back, declarer finesses, and North wins the ♣Q. When driving out declarer's last club stopper, North can give a suit-preference signal, telling South where North's entry lies. On this deal, North returns his lowest club, showing something in diamonds.

On balance, it looks best to avoid the heart finesse, which might result in a second undertrick. We would lead spades instead, and

when South wins and puts a diamond through, we would finesse. There's no law saying the defenders have to signal honestly, after all. Rising with the ♦A and finessing in hearts only gains when the ♥Q is onside and hearts are 3-3 and the diamond finesse is offside. This isn't the kind of tradeoff that makes sense at matchpoints.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

♠ 10 9 6 4 3		♠ A									
♥ K 6		♥ Q J 10 5 4 3 2									
♦ K J 3		♦ 9 8 6 5 4									
♣ K Q 3		♣ —									
♠ K J 7 5	<table> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ Q 8 2
N											
W			E								
		S									
♥ 9 8 7	♥ A										
♦ A 2	♦ Q 10 7										
♣ A J 4 2	♣ 10 9 8 7 6 5										

West opens 1♣, and North has to decide whether to overcall. The hand is plenty strong, but the suit is pathetic. Many players would overcall, and we would regretfully count ourselves among them. Purists would pass, and it's hard to criticize them.

If North overcalls, we strongly prefer a 4♥ call by East at the first opportunity. It is reasonably descriptive, and it puts pressure on the opponents. If South competes with 4♠ (we wouldn't, with a borderline hand and only three-card support), the penalty will be 800, assuming E/W work out to double.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 7 5 3 2		♠ K Q									
♥ 10 8 2		♥ K Q 6 5 4									
♦ 4		♦ K Q J 5									
♣ K J 8 5 3		♣ 7 4									
♠ A 10 8 6 4	<table> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ J 9
N											
W			E								
		S									
♥ A 9 7 3	♥ J										
♦ 10 9 7	♦ A 8 6 3 2										
♣ 2	♣ A Q 10 9 6										

North passes, and East opens 1♥ (a few might open 1NT, a call we don't hate but wouldn't make). The South hand is borderline for the unusual 2NT at this vulnerability. We would make it with minor reservations. E/W will surely bid to 4♥ if given the opportunity. That contract can — and maybe should — be beaten on the defense of ♦A, diamond ruff, club over, diamond ruff.

North may sacrifice in 5♣, which might matchpoint reasonably, as some E/W pairs are likely to make 4♥. We would be hesitant to sacrifice at this vulnerability without consulting partner, because our only asset is strong trump support. If possible, we would bid 4♣, but if the auction has already reached the four level before we have a chance to bid, we would close our eyes and bid 5♣.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ —		♠ A K J 5 3 2									
♥ 10 9 4 3 2		♥ A K Q 6									
♦ Q 7 5 4		♦ 9									
♣ A J 9 8		♣ Q 4									
♠ 10 9 7 6	<table> <tr><td>N</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	N			W		E		S		♠ Q 8 4
N											
W			E								
		S									
♥ 8 5	♥ J 7										
♦ 3 2	♦ A K J 10 8 6										
♣ K 10 6 5 3	♣ 7 2										

East opens 1♠, as this hand is not strong enough for a 2♣ opening, and South overcalls 2♦. The West hand is suitable for a preemptive 3♠ raise, if available, and North should compete to the five level, perhaps simply by jumping to it. In contrast to the previous deal, here it is clear N/S will sacrifice over 4♠, quite profitably.

A vulnerable preemptive raise should deliver a little something, so East would be justified competing to 5♠, hoping West can cover one of the minor-suit losers and expecting the penalty extracted from 5♦ doubled to be insufficient to compensate for a vulnerable game. And when dummy comes down, East will think he made the right call: there are only two likely losers. South's trump trick will come as a nasty shock.

Board 7

South Deals
Both Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

South passes, West opens 1♣, and North overcalls 1♥. Even if you would normally double with 17 HCP and a five-card suit (we would typically overcall), it is automatic to overcall 1♥ with the North hand. Doubling 1♣ with a void in spades is a dangerous proposition. East passes.

South will raise hearts, but how? Our choice would be 2♠, assuming partner interprets it as a fit-showing jump. 2♠ tells partner about the heart support as well as the strong spade suit. Lacking this agreement, a 2♣ cuebid looks best. All roads lead to 4♥, which is trivial to make.

Board 8

West Deals
None Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

After two passes, East opens 1NT, and South has to decide what to do with solid diamonds. Some players pass with hands like this, hoping (dreaming?) to be on lead against 3NT. We haven't had much success with that style. We would enter the auction with a penalty double if possible, otherwise by showing diamonds however the partnership does that.

3NT is makeable by North, but getting there looks difficult. It might be possible if South makes a penalty double and then bids diamonds. Making 3NT is not necessarily simple either. On a club lead, it's easy – just drive out the ♠A. A diamond lead lets declarer capitalize on the friendly heart layout to score an extra trick in that suit, plus a spade trick. A low spade lead is the most challenging,

because if West gains the lead, the defense can take three spade tricks plus a heart and at least one club.

Details are left to the reader to work out exactly how declarer makes nine tricks after a spade lead, but the key is to run diamonds and force East to make discards. Assuming declarer reads the layout right, 3NT is always makeable.

Board 9

North Deals
E-W Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

North and East pass, and South has a highly distributional hand at the best vulnerability for preemption. Does that mean South should do something drastic? We wouldn't, preferring a straightforward 1♥ opening. A preempt could work, maybe 2♥, planning to bid diamonds later.

Suppose South opens 1♥. West overcalls 1♠. North is too strong for a simple heart raise, so he cuebids 2♠. A leap to 4♠ looks wrong with East's hand – too flat, and the vulnerability is wrong – so we recommend a gentle raise to 3♠. The South hand is clearly worth competing to the four level, and the right call is 4♦, showing the second suit and helping partner decide whether to bid on. With

their actual cards, East and West won't compete to 4♠, but if they did, North would have an easy double. With values in diamonds and hearts, North would be more likely to compete to the five level.

4♥ can be beaten with a diamond lead or shift, but that doesn't seem realistic. It requires East to have the ♥A specifically, rather than something like the ♦Q and no heart trick. In such a case, cashing the ♦A would cost a trick, and declarer could establish dummy's club suit and discard three diamonds. Similarly, on the actual deal, it is not necessary to guess diamonds, because clubs can be set up and used for discards.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

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

Although 1♦ is a respectable call, we would open 1NT with the East cards, ♠Q-J doubleton notwithstanding. The notrump opening rates to buy the contract, and we would be torn between leading the five-card suit and leading from the sequence. We think the spade lead is a better shot, but we would not be surprised to learn that a heart lead was the winning choice.

After a spade to the ace and a spade return, South might duck, preserving communications between the N/S hands. However, holding a sure entry — the ♣A — it is also possible for South to win the second spade and clear the suit, giving a suit-preference signal on the third round of the suit, letting North know where South's entry lies. Of course, declarer is watching too.

Declarer will probably test diamonds by playing an honor from the East hand, in case the suit divides 4-0. When it does not, declarer has options, and the best play might be to lead a club toward dummy's king early on, provided declarer believes South's signal indicates the ♣A is onside. If South fails to rise with the ♣A and cash the spades, declarer will be in a position to cash the diamond winners and take nine tricks with a heart finesse, although doing so risks taking only seven tricks. Lots of matchpoints rate to ride on the difference between plus 120 and plus 150, while overly cautious declarers taking only seven tricks will probably score extremely poorly.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

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

A 1♦ opening with the South cards is a reasonable call: the 11 HCP are concentrated in the long suits, and South is nonvulnerable. A 1♦ opening might allow N/S to buy it for 2♥ and a good score. Most Souths will probably pass, and East will open 1♣ in fourth seat. South might or might not double. If not, E/W will end up in some partscore, and even though 1NT fails at double dummy, it would probably succeed in practice. A minor partscore also figures to succeed, at least at the two level.

Board 12West Deals
N-S Vul

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

3NT will be the par contract for N/S. The North hand is a hair too weak to upgrade into a strong notrump. South will probably respond 1♠ to a 1♥ opening bid, but we strongly prefer to respond 2♣ with only four spades and the values for game. We would bid 1♥-2♣-2NT-3NT, but all roads lead to the notrump game.

We would start with an ineffective diamond lead as East, guessing that suit for declarer. Declarer will win and should cross to dummy to lead a spade to the queen and king. If East gets lazy and continues diamonds, declarer can establish a second spade winner for a second overtrick and a fine matchpoint score. East should see this danger lurking and shift to clubs when on lead with the ♠K.

Board 13North Deals
Both Vul

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

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

North opens 1♦, and East has to decide whether to bid Michaels or not. This hand is subminimum for a vulnerable 2♦ call, but as the saying goes, it's a bidder's game. We would feel uneasy passing, and a 1♠ overcall could lose the hearts, so we would bid 2♦, prepared to apologize for an inadequate dummy.

South is a tad weak for a card-showing double of 2♦, so South passes. West is probably worth a jump to 3♥, a call somewhere between preemptive and invitational. North can make a takeout double, leaving South with a difficult decision. As the cards lie, 3NT is the winning call, because the diamond suit can be run with no losers by finessing West for the ♦K-10. Pass is a possible call, hoping for plus 200 when game doesn't make or isn't widely bid.

4♣ is also in the ballpark, but we would reject it due to lack of upside.

3NT would be our call, albeit with trepidation. There is the chance of running either minor suit, and it is possible partner will come through with help in the major suits, but we sympathize with the other calls, and we expect anyone who defends and collects plus 200 to receive an adequate matchpoint score.

Board 14East Deals
None Vul

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

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

After 1♠-Pass-1NT, North has little choice but to double. East will rebid 2♣, South will pass, and West will choose from among Pass, 2♦ (our last choice), and 2♠ (our pick). If the auction is at 2♣ or 2♦, North will probably double again fairly comfortably, but if West bids 2♠, North might feel leery about driving his partnership to the three level.

It's close, but nine tricks are possible in a heart contract, so bidding again and reaching 3♥ is a big winner, but if N/S went down at the three level when 2♠ would have been defeated, a second double by North would look silly. We would probably pass, but we have respect for the doublers.

Suppose East is the declarer in 2♠, and South leads a heart. The defense will start with two rounds of hearts and might shift to a club. It can be important to work on the side suit before trumps on a deal like this one, because starting trumps prematurely can cause declarer to lose control. The play in 2♠ will probably become messy, but if declarer is careful, seven tricks should be possible. The key is not to surrender trump control.

Board 15South Deals
N-S Vul

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

♠ Q 4 2	♠ Q 4 2	
♥ —	♥ —	
♦ Q 10 9 7 5	♦ Q 10 9 7 5	
♣ Q J 9 5 2	♣ Q J 9 5 2	

We would decline to open light in third seat with the North hand, although some might open 1♣ (and a few might try 1♠). We would open 1NT with the East hand and then super-accept a 2♦ transfer, which might get raised to game by West. At IMPs we would bid game for sure, but there is much virtue in staying low at matchpoints.

On today's deal, even 3♥ is too high, because it needs the diamond finesse to succeed, but that is due to the unfortunate "mirror" distribution. If you switched the black suits in one of the E/W hands, 3♥ would be cold and 4♥ would be on a finesse.

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 8 5
♥ A 4 2
♦ K 10 6 5
♣ 8 4 2

♠ K 10 2
♥ Q 9
♦ Q 8 3
♣ A K J 10 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 9
♥ J 10 8 6
♦ A 9 7 4 2
♣ 6 3

♠ Q 7 6 4 3
♥ K 7 5 3
♦ J
♣ Q 9 7

We would pass the flat-as-a-pancake West hand, vulnerable, despite ace-ace-king, although opening is perfectly reasonable as well. North opens 1NT, and South has to decide how to continue. A common treatment is that Stayman followed by 2♠ over 2♦ or 2♥ shows an unbalanced hand with five spades and invitational values. Responder need not have length in both majors. If South employs this treatment, he will become declarer in 2♠, the right strain at a comfortable level.

We would lead a club as West, won in dummy to lead a spade to the queen and ace. West might fear declarer's being able to run club winners, so he may shift to the ♥A. Upon receiving a discouraging signal, he might shift to diamonds, scoring that ace. Declarer will

finesse dummy's ♠10, losing to the now-singleton jack, but after that, declarer will take the rest.

By the way, the way the defense holds declarer to nine tricks by force is by attacking hearts, forcing dummy to ruff the third round, preventing declarer from picking up trumps for one loser.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 6 4 3 2
♥ 5 2
♦ J 10 3
♣ 8 6 2

♠ A K J 5
♥ A J 9 7 4
♦ Q
♣ K Q 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 8
♥ 10 6
♦ 8 6 5 4 2
♣ 10 9 7 4

♠ 10 7
♥ K Q 8 3
♦ A K 9 7
♣ A J 3

You weren't tempted to open 2♣, were you? Good — this hand is nowhere close to strong enough. South will use some sort of forcing raise and North will sooner or later employ the Old Black. It should be easy to bid the grand slam, but be careful to bid it in notrump for the extra 10 points.

North will learn partner has three key cards, the ♥Q, and the ♦K. That means 7NT will be cold by discarding two spades on South's ♦A-K... unless South has only a doubleton diamond. If you bid 7NT and go down facing a distribution like 2=5=2=4 when clubs don't split and the spade finesse loses, you must be in the running for world's unluckiest player.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q 10 6 5 4 2
♥ 7 5
♦ A J
♣ Q 4 3

♠ 9 8 7 3
♥ 9 4 2
♦ 10 9 8
♣ A K 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A
♥ Q J 10 6
♦ 7 6 5 4 3 2
♣ J 7

♠ K J
♥ A K 8 3
♦ K Q
♣ 10 9 6 5 2

Some players don't like opening 1NT with 5-4-2-2 distribution, but even purists would surely open 1NT with this South hand. We would not enter the auction as West, but we would balance as East, showing diamonds and a major suit. We like to play Meckwell over strong notrumps at matchpoints: double shows one minor or both majors, 2♣ and 2♦ show that minor and a major, and 2♥ and 2♠ are natural.

After a 2♦ balance, South and West will pass (asking partner to name his major will usually get the partnership to a worse spot), and North will double. This double just shows values and a desire to compete. South will take out to 2♥ and may have to struggle in a 4-3 fit.

2♥ may be difficult to play, but declarer should come through with eight tricks. Plus 110 may not be a stellar matchpoint score (notrump scores significantly higher), but it will be better than defending 2♦ and collecting one or two 50-point undertricks.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 7 6 3 2
♥ A Q
♦ 7 6 4
♣ A 10 6 4

♠ K 9 5
♥ K J 9 7 6 4 2
♦ Q 2
♣ 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 8 4
♥ 10 8 5
♦ A J 8 5
♣ Q 9 8 5

♠ A Q J 10
♥ 3
♦ K 10 9 3
♣ K J 3 2

With 4=1=4=4 distribution, we "always" open 1♦, even when the club suit is stronger. Others open 1♣ always, but the majority is flexible. A likely auction is 1♦-1♥-1♠-3♥, which South should pass. South has a little more than a dead minimum, but the singleton heart is a negative factor. Game makes as the cards lay, but that is only because of the hyper-friendly lie of the heart suit. Overbidding wins the day this time, but in the long run, declining the invitation will come out ahead.

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

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

After 1♣-1♦, we would squeak out a 1♥ response with the East cards, appreciating the doubleton diamond and strong club support. South will cuebid 2♣, and North's signoff in 2♦ will be passed around to West. A reopening double by West is possible, but there is almost certainly no major-suit fit, so double could easily backfire. It shouldn't affect the overall result, because South will compete to 3♦.

East will likely lead the ♣K against a diamond contract, and West should discourage, hoping for a spade shift. If North reads the position, he can play low from dummy, preventing the defense from establishing a second spade trick. As there is no further entry to the East hand, declarer can draw trumps and finesse East for the ♥J.

This sets up the fourth round of hearts, and a spade can be thrown from dummy: 10 tricks. Only a spade lead followed by West underleading the ♣A can hold declarer to nine tricks legitimately.

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

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

North passes, East opens 1♣, and South passes — this hand is far too weak for a vulnerable overcall. West responds 1♥, and North might double, with a maximum for the initial pass. The lack of a fourth diamond and the vulnerability might dissuade North, but it is often right to get in there and contest partscores. If North does double, East will raise to 2♥, and South will compete with 2♠.

That contract could be doubled and beaten 200, but West will bid on, knowing both sides have an eight-card fit. The 3♥ contract will go down one, losing two tricks in each red suit and one club, but no one will have made a mistake. Successful bridge players are ones who create problems for their opponents.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

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

This is another messy deal. After Pass-1♠-Pass-1NT, the East hand can make a takeout double of spades. South will redouble, showing a strong hand, and West will bid 2♣. From there, it is difficult to predict how the auction will go. N/S might defend against 2♣ doubled, or they might find the heart fit, or they might reach a notrump contract.

The play is equally difficult to project. If N/S declare, the double might give declarer a roadmap of the distribution — it is almost certain East holds a singleton or void in spades for the passed-hand double. In a heart contract, this inference might allow declarer to avoid the trap of trying to ruff a spade in the North hand and discard diamond losers on clubs.

We will settle for predicting a wide variety of matchpoint scores across the field.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

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

We feel strongly that the South hand is not suitable for a 2♥ opening. We might commit a preempt with a poor suit when nonvulnerable, but it would take serious persuasion to get us to open 2♥ vulnerable. West rates to become declarer in 3NT on a club lead to the ace. The diamonds behave and the heart finesse produces three tricks in the suit, so plus 630 figures to be a common result around the room.

Board 24
West Deals
None Vul

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

N	E
W	S

♠ K 10 3 2
♥ 7
♦ A 7
♣ K Q J 7 4 2

Danger lurks on this deal. A likely start, with only N/S bidding, is 1♣-1♠-2♠, after which South has a highly promising hand. Finding North with just the ♠A-Q and the ♣A would produce an excellent 6♠.

A possible first step is to inquire with an artificial 2NT, learning partner holds a minimum with four-card support. Our next choice would be to cuebid 4♦, ostensibly denying a control in clubs. It is possible slam will be decent if the ♣A is missing (North may have perfect cards: the ♠A-Q, the ♥A and a red king), but even then, there is a risk of a club ruff, so we would eschew a six-level contract unless North holds that card. By denying a club control, we inform North of slam prospects and may induce him to cooperate when

holding the ♣A, but to sign off without it. With the actual North hand, partner will expect the opponents can take two club tricks off the top and will keep the partnership in the safe harbor of 4♠.

Of course, slam does make as the cards lie, but only if the spade suit is navigated for no losers. Easy enough if you play the ♠A on the first round, but if the ♠K is played first, the percentage play is to finesse on the second round, losing to East's ♠Q-J doubleton.

Board 25
North Deals
E-W Vul

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

N	E
W	S

♠ A J 3
♥ Q 5 4 2
♦ K 10 6 3
♣ A K

The bidding will be straightforward, resulting in 4♥ at almost every table, usually played by South. We would lead the ♦Q as West, which East wins with the ♦A to shift to spades. A spade loser can be thrown on the ♦K, but lots of matchpoints will ride on whether declarer can establish dummy's clubs with no loser.

It's worth the risk to take the ♣A-K before drawing all the trumps. When West drops the ♣J and trumps divide 3-2, the percentage play is to take a ruffing finesse in clubs — successfully, as the cards lie. This is a restricted choice situation, as is the spade layout on Board 24. A full discussion would be beyond the scope of this analysis, but interested readers can search for “restricted choice bridge” on the internet, which will yield many, many hits.

Board 26
East Deals
Both Vul

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

N	E
W	S

♠ K J 7
♥ K 10 3
♦ A 9 6 2
♣ 10 6 2

Pairs using forcing notrump responses to 1♥ will reach 3♥, while pairs favoring semi-forcing* notrump will play in 1NT. Who will do better? At double-dummy, the 1NT players, because 3♥ is down as the cards lie, while 1NT makes.

However, we would lead a club as South, which blows a trick, allowing 3♥ to make. So at least if you were playing against us, you would do better to play in 3♥ than 1NT.

*Footnote to linguistic pedants: Yes, a bid can technically only be forcing or nonforcing, so “semi-forcing” may seem an oxymoron. However, the semi-forcing label is useful in distinguishing a 1NT response that can include a hand like West's from a Standard-American 1NT response, which has a lower maximum. Perhaps you can come up with a more appropriate announcement for this breed of response, but “semi-forcing” gets the message across effectively.

Board 27

South Deals
None Vul

♠ K Q 9 6
♥ A 4 3
♦ J 7
♣ 9 8 7 5

♠ J 10 4 3
♥ Q 5
♦ A Q 9 2
♣ J 4 3



♠ A 8 7 5 2
♥ 8 2
♦ K 10 6 3
♣ K 10

♠ —
♥ K J 10 9 7 6
♦ 8 5 4
♣ A Q 6 2

Some players might open the South or, more likely, the North hand, but we would pass them both. The East hand doesn't satisfy the Rule of 15, which says to open if your high-card points plus your number of spades equals 15 or more, but said rule only applies to borderline hands. The East hand is an automatic opening bid in any seat, although you might open 2♥ as East, showing a strong six-card suit and somewhere in the 9-15 HCP range (the exact range differs between players and partnerships).

A competitive auction is likely to ensue. N/S are likely to compete to 3♠, not realizing the nasty surprise waiting for them in the trump suit. Depending on the auction, East might compete to 4♥, not realizing how strong West's spades are. 4♥ can make if declarer

decides to play for the ♣K to be offside, or if South puts his fingers on an unfortunate ♠A lead. It is difficult to estimate the results on this board — but clearly any pair who manages to bid and make 4♥ (or double the opponents in 4♠) will score well.

Board 28

West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A J 9 6 4
♥ Q 7
♦ 9 4
♣ A K 7 6

♠ K 10 7 3 2
♥ 9 6 5
♦ 6 5 3
♣ 10 3



♠ Q
♥ A K 4 2
♦ A Q J 2
♣ 9 8 5 4

♠ 8 5
♥ J 10 8 3
♦ K 10 8 7
♣ Q J 2

N/S might get in trouble here. West opens 1♠, and East responds 1NT, which South doubles. If West passes, what is poor North to do? We would pass, hoping to defeat 1NT or to avoid disaster in 2♥ or 2♦. East has no reason to remove the double.

North's penalty pass shows length and, presumably, strength in spades, so South kicks off with the ♠Q, won in dummy. With no access to the North hand, South will spend much of the play feeling endplayed. Declarer will start on hearts and eventually take one spade, two hearts, four clubs, and one or two diamonds. That's making two or three for plus 280 or plus 380.

If West takes North off the hook by bidding 2♣ over the double, E/W will probably end up in spades, going down. We think passing over the double as West is best, but we think the result of bidding is unfair punishment.

Board 29

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 10 7
♥ 4 3
♦ 9 8 3 2
♣ A K 10 6

♠ 2
♥ A J 8 6 5 2
♦ K Q 7
♣ 8 7 5



♠ A 8 6 5 4
♥ K 9 7
♦ 10 4
♣ J 9 2

♠ K J 9 3
♥ Q 10
♦ A J 6 5
♣ Q 4 3

The North hand is either a light 1♥ or a heavy 2♥, but never, in our view, a pass. East would double 1♥ begrudgingly, and some players might double 2♥, but we think passing 2♥ is better.

N/S will probably wind up in a heart partscore, and whether there is a ninth trick will depend on how the trump suit is handled. Diamonds should be led before trumps, because the third round will have to be ruffed in dummy, and if trumps are played early, the opponents may be able to play a third trump, stopping a diamond ruff in dummy.

The percentage play in isolation is to play for the drop in hearts ("nine never"), but after a takeout double by East, the odds might favor a finesse. We have much sympathy for declarers who hold themselves to eight tricks, and we would probably be among them.

Board 30
East Deals
None Vul

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

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

Another deal where it is important to stop in partscore after a possible super-acceptance. South opens 1NT, and North transfers to spades. We view it as a close decision whether to jump to 3♠ or not, and we would come down on the side of not super-accepting. If you switched the major-suit holdings, we would jump, however. K-J-X-X may not be valuable in a side suit (as here, facing North's singleton), but it would be in trumps. A-K-J-X, though, would be useful as a side-suit holding.

North has a close decision about whether to bid game over a super-acceptance. We would probably pass at matchpoints but bid game at IMPs. We imagine most pairs will stay out of game, but a few will get overboard.

Board 31
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

After a 1♠ opening, the North hand is too strong for a 4♦ splinter, which should be capped at about 14 HCP. Instead, North can start with Jacoby 2NT, hoping to gain information about the South hand.

North will discover South holds shortness in clubs, but when South fails to show a control in hearts, North should be cautious. If North does decide to bid Roman key card Blackwood, it will be important not to bid slam without all the key cards, because North knows a heart finesse almost certainly must be taken. On the actual layout, the heart finesse wins, and there is only one spade loser, so the overbidders are rewarded with the slam bonus. Justice doesn't always prevail.

Board 32
West Deals
E-W Vul

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

♠ A Q 10 5 4	♠ A Q 10 5 4
♥ K 8 5	♥ K 8 5
♦ Q 10 5 3	♦ Q 10 5 3
♣ Q	♣ Q

East opens 1♣ in third seat, South overcalls 1♠, and West passes. The North hand is barely strong enough for 1NT, and South has a close decision whether to pass or bid 2♦. We mildly prefer the pass.

Suppose South passes, and East makes the normal heart lead against 1NT. Declarer wins the ♥J and runs the ♠J. It may be tempting to let the ♠J hold, denying declarer dummy's spade winners, but holding three low diamonds, that looks like a dangerous play, since anything declarer tries in the diamond suit will succeed. It looks better to win and shift to the ♣4 (no reason to waste an honor) to East's ♣A.

East does best to continue clubs. When North ducks the second club, West can work out to shift back to hearts, because East's ♣8 is the top of a remaining doubleton in clubs. Establishing a heart trick will hold declarer to eight tricks, which is as good as the defense can hope for after the heart lead.

Board 33
North Deals
None Vul

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

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

West has the best hand at the table, but North opens 1NT and N/S can make 4♠. After South's 2♥ transfer, West should probably pass, planning on doubling a later spade call. North bids 2♠ and South passes, as expected.

N/S do best to compete to 3♠ (bidding 4♠ is not realistic, and game probably would not make in practice), but it may not be clear to either player to do so. East will bid 3♦ over the double, but should South bid 3♠ when there may be only a seven-card fit and North might have strong diamonds? Why should North compete over 3♦ holding four cards in the enemy suit?

If 3♦ is the final contract, the defense will probably start with a heart or club lead by South (leading a spade from ace-fifth is a poor idea, even after a 1NT opening bid). Best defense can achieve down two, but that is a rather double-dummy feat. Eight tricks for E/W is a probable result, but not a good one for N/S.

