

ACBL-wide Charity Pairs Game #2

Wednesday, April 16, 2025 (morning or afternoon)



Analysis by Paul Linxwiler



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The analyses for this set of hands assumes that pairs use Standard or 2/1 game-forcing methods. Partnerships who use weak notrumps or strong club systems will, of course, have different auctions.

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

At most tables, North will open 1♠ and South will respond 1NT (whether forcing, semi-forcing or non-forcing). West will try 2♥ or 3♥, and North has some choices for a rebid.

Over either 2♥ or 3♥, a takeout double is possible for pairs who use that method after responder bids 1NT. This keeps all other suits in the picture and allows responder to convert to penalty where that seems appropriate, as on this construction, especially at equal vulnerability. With proper play, West can be held to six tricks in hearts, so that's +300 or +500 depending on whether West bid 2♥ or 3♥. But there will be some Souths who pull the double to 2NT, driving their side to 3NT or 4♠.

At other tables, North will bid 3♠ over 2♥ or 3♥. This shows extra length/values in both cases, which North has. This will get the partnership to 4♠.

To get the matchpoint maximum, North must aim for 11 tricks in spades, and to do this, North should aim to take a ruffing finesse in diamonds as follows. After ruffing East's opening heart lead, North should cash the ♠Q in dummy. The fall of the 10 by RHO, as well as the auction, makes the chance of a 4-1 split more likely, so North should not draw a second round of trumps. Instead, the ♦K and ♦A should be cashed followed by the ♦J, ruffing if East covers. With the ♣K favorably placed, this allows declarer to lose just one trump and one club trick.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

Although some Easts will open 1♦ to give them a convenient 2♣ rebid, we suspect most Easts will open 1♣ with the plan of rebidding 1NT over a major-suit response. South can make a takeout double over 1♣ (but likely not over 1♦), but regardless of whether South doubles or passes, West will bid 1♠.

Where South has doubled 1♣ initially, some aggressive Norths will compete to 2♥. Despite the (sub-)minimum high-card strength, the ♠K and ♦K appear to be working values. This is not everyone's cup of tea, but Norths who take this approach here will get their side to the top spot.

Where North passes over 1♠, East will continue with the original plan and rebid 1NT, likely ending the auction, although some Norths may try 2♥ in the balancing position. A typical matchpoint partscore dogfight.

E-W have an easy time arranging seven tricks in notrump, while N-S can score eight tricks in hearts by take the finesse against the ♠J at some point to lose one spade, two hearts, a diamond and a club.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

West has a classic weak two-bid in diamonds, suitable for second seat vulnerable, the situation demanding the least amount of nonsense. But how should N-S react to this? As all but the most aggressive Souths will have already passed in first seat, North will have to judge whether to risk a takeout double. The pattern is acceptable for the action, but the values are sketchy, especially opposite a passed partner. If East is loaded with values and has diamond shortness, North's double could cause his side to run into a penalty. But if North passes, a major-suit contract could be missed if South is unable to balance when the auction is Pass-2♦-Pass-Pass. On the actual deal, South might decide not to risk a balancing double with shortness in clubs. Bottom line: E-W might get to bid and make 2♦ on a deal where N-S can take 10 tricks in hearts. Getting to 4♥ is less of an issue for N-S than simply competing against 2♦.

Board 4

West Deals
Both Vul

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

How should the West cards be handled in first seat? The seven-card suit and less-than-opening values suggests a 3♥ preempt (or a conservative 2♥), but the suit is missing all the high honors, and the values – although useful-looking – are parked in the other suits. An aggressive 1♥ opening is also possible on this tough-to-describe hand, but there will be a wide variety of choices, including Pass. Most E-W pairs will land in 4♥ here; getting to 6♥ is difficult, even in cases where West opens 1♥. Besides, the contract depends on getting the clubs right. As a side note, it would be poor form for East to use Blackwood (or Roman key card Blackwood) after West opens some number of hearts. With no controls in the black suits, East can't afford that action, even with 19 HCP; there's too much "stuff" missing.

Board 5

North Deals
N-S Vul

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

After North opens 1♣ and South responds 1♠, some Wests may venture a 2♦ overcall. When this passed back to South, there are several choices available, but the simplest is just a jump to 3♥, as 2♥ could easily be treated as non-forcing. North should know that South has at least five spades and four hearts on this sequence; with a 4-4 pattern, South would have responded 1♥ originally. Regardless, with four-card heart support, North should proceed to 4♥. Note that if West stays silent in the auction, N-S will use New Minor Forcing or similar gadget to discover the 4-4 heart fit, allowing them to reach the same contract. An opening diamond lead by West gives declarer the most problems, as the defense is threatening to obtain multiple diamond ruffs by East. To get home, declarer should play low from dummy at trick one, winning the diamond in hand. To drain the East hand of trumps, declarer should go after the suit by just banging down the ♥A. West is in overwhelming favorite to hold the ♥K if West bid during the auction, and there's even a chance that declarer will drop a singleton king offside with this move. When both defenders follow low to the first round of trumps, declarer plays another round of the suit, and West will win the king. East can get a diamond ruff after that, but the defense will only collect the ♣A after that, and declarer will take 10 tricks. If South plays the "inferior" 5-2 fit in 4♠, he can make an overtrick against the same opening lead by drawing four rounds of trump. The defense never scores a ruff in that strain.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A J 10 9
♥ K 6 4 3
♦ 5
♣ K J 4 2

♠ K Q 3 2
♥ A
♦ K Q
♣ A Q 9 8 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 6 5 4
♥ Q J 8
♦ 10 9 4 3
♣ 10 7 6

♠ 8 7
♥ 10 9 7 5 2
♦ A J 8 7 6 2
♣ —

This will be an exceedingly frustrating deal for N-S to bid.

At most tables, West will open 1♣ in third seat. (South should avoid preempting 2♦ in second seat with a five-card major and a void on the side; North will never envision that type of hand.) North should double; although takeout doubles are normally pattern-based with shortness in opener's suit, very strong hands (say, 19+ HCP) must start with a double too, as there is no other forcing option. South has a difficult set of decisions to make over North's takeout double: Which suit and what level should he respond? Matchpoint fiends may choose to emphasize the major suit (hearts) even with longer diamonds. And the extreme distribution makes a simple one-level response is too conservative; but what level is correct? Say South chooses to respond 2♦. If North continues with 3♣ (which is generically forcing; North's actual club length is coincidental), South can then bid 3♥. Most Norths would try 3NT over that, but if South passes, the duo will end up with a minus score; 3NT has little play. If South tries to "pattern out" with 4♥ over 3NT, however, North may get the message about South's 5-6 pattern and correct to 5♦. Well done to any N-S pair who gets there.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 4
♥ Q J 10 8 5
♦ 10 9 5
♣ Q 9 4

♠ 10 7 5 3
♥ K 4
♦ K 7 2
♣ 8 6 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 2
♥ 9 6 2
♦ Q 8 6 3
♣ J 10 7 5

♠ K Q 9 8 6
♥ A 7 3
♦ A J 4
♣ A K

South can open an extremely heavy 1♠ or 2NT to show a balanced 20-21. For those who prefer to upgrade this pretty hand, 2♣ followed by 2NT is also fine. But 2♣ followed by 2♠ is a bit off the mark: The hand is a bit too balanced and lacks the suggested number of winners for such an approach, typically about nine. Where South opens 2NT, a Stayman sequence will get the partnership to 4♠. If South prefers the 2♣/2NT path instead, the conclusion will be the same.

Yes, N-S can make 6♠. No, they shouldn't bid it. It takes a successful heart finesse, as well as trumps behaving, for 12 tricks to come in.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

♠ J 8 6 5 3
♥ J 9 2
♦ Q 6
♣ A Q 9

♠ A 10 9 7
♥ Q
♦ J 10 9 3
♣ J 8 7 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 4
♥ K 10 6 5 4
♦ K 7
♣ K 10 6

♠ 2
♥ A 8 7 3
♦ A 8 5 4 2
♣ 5 3 2

At almost every table, East will open 1♥ in third seat. West, with three-card support and 10 HCP, should content himself with a simple 2♥ raise. This "quacky" collection is not worth an invitational raise. East should not attempt a game-try with this aceless 5-3-3-2 construction.

For matchpoint fanatics only: After West raises to 2♥, some (very) aggressive Norths might think about a "pre-balancing" takeout double. This would allow N-S to compete to 3♦, a maker on this deal. If this happens, E-W must continue to 3♥ to protect their score equity of +140.

On lead against 3♥, South's lead of the singleton spade is a standout and allows the defense to score a ruff, along with their three aces, to hold declarer to nine tricks.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 10 8
♥ K 8 2
♦ Q 5 4 3
♣ A 10 2

♠ J 5
♥ A Q J 9 6 5
♦ 9 8 6
♣ Q 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 7 3 2
♥ 10 7
♦ K 2
♣ K J 8 4 3

♠ Q 9 6 4
♥ 4 3
♦ A J 10 7
♣ 9 6 5

A weak 2♥ opening in first seat will be a popular choice for most North players. East, lacking sufficient values and the right pattern for a takeout double, should pass (in tempo, please), and the auction will swing around to West. Should West act? And, if so, how?

A takeout double is possible for West, but a real problem is that East may get overly excited and force the partnership too high. If East could be content with 2♠ or 3♣ in response to the double, that would be fine, but some Easts might jump, say, to 3♠ or even cuebid 3♥. Either of these actions would drive E-W beyond their depth. What about a balancing 2NT by West after the weak 2♥ is passed around to fourth seat? The West hand is a bit light for this action, but, again, the more serious problem is that East may insist on 3NT. That contract will fail - even if West successfully guesses clubs (a dubious proposition here) - provided that North leads the standard ♥Q at trick one.

Board 10
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ A K Q 6	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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		♠ 9 8 7 5 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 9 7 3	♥ Q 6 4 2										
♦ A 10 3	♦ Q										
♣ 5 4 2	♣ 10 9 6										
♠ J 4		♠ 10 3									
♥ A J 8		♥ K 10 5									
♦ K J 9 5 4 2		♦ 8 7 6									
♣ K 7		♣ A Q J 8 3									

After West opens 1♦ in third seat, many North players will be tempted to overcall 1♠ with the chunky four-card suit. Where that happens, South will likely advance with 2♣, placing North in an awkward situation. These types of two-level advances after a one-level overcall are generally treated as a one-round force, and more often than not, they deny a fit for overcaller's suit. If North breaks discipline and passes, he'll get the partnership to a makeable contract, but these kinds of unilateral decisions are bad for partnership harmony in the long term. If 1♦ is passed around to South, a 2♣ balance is reasonable, but many Norths will find it difficult to go quietly. It will be very easy for N-S to get overboard on this layout, as eight tricks are the maximum in clubs with proper defense.

Board 11
South Deals
None Vul

♠ K J 9	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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 8 6 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ J 10 9 4 2	♥ A 8										
♦ Q 8 6 5 3	♦ A 10 9 7										
♣ —	♣ A 9 4										
♠ A 7 5		♠ 10 4 3									
♥ K 5		♥ Q 7 6 3									
♦ J 4		♦ K 2									
♣ K Q 10 7 5 2		♣ J 8 6 3									

Where West opens 1♣, some Norths will intervene with 2NT to show a red two-suiter, but there are several reasons why this isn't a good idea on this particular construction. First, the suit qualities are poor; if East has values/concentration in the red suits, he will know what to do, especially at equal vulnerability. Second, the chunky three-card spade fragment may make a terrific dummy if South wishes to compete in spades; a two-suited 2NT overcall may lose a potential spade fit. Finally, if E-W declare on this deal, the unusual overcall will draw a road map for declarer, especially after the club void comes to light: It will be easy to place North with a 3=5=5=0 pattern, and declarer can play almost double-dummy. There are too many red flags to employ a conventional 2NT overcall. Regardless if North bids or passes, most E-W pairs will land in 3NT and will have 10 easy top tricks. Where East declares a notrump contract (or West provided North doesn't lead a low diamond), 12 tricks are available by running the clubs first, putting unbearable pressure on North who must find six discards. If North has bid 2NT during the auction, things will be especially clear to declarer on how to proceed. On, say, a low heart lead from South, East wins, cashes the ♣K to discover the 4-0 split, and runs the suit. North can pitch a low spade, but the other five discards will be red. If North abandons hearts, declarer cashes the ♥K and plays the ♠A and a spade. The spade suit - 3-3 with the ♠K onside - will provide three tricks for declarer. A similar ending occurs where North gives up on diamonds, and (after running the clubs) declarer plays the ♦A before attacking spades.

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 7	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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 6
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ A K 10 8 4	♥ Q										
♦ Q 9 8	♦ J 7 6 5 2										
♣ J 8 2	♣ 10 6 4										
♠ K 9 2		♠ 8 5 4 3									
♥ 9 6 5		♥ J 7 3 2									
♦ K 10 4		♦ A 3									
♣ A Q 5 3		♣ K 9 7									

All but the most rigid Wests will choose 1♣ as their opening bid. North will overcall 1♥, and East has an easy negative double. South will raise hearts, and there are several ways to do so. A simple 2♥ is possible, but it feels like a mild understatement of the hand's potential. A raise to 3♥, where the partnership plays it as preemptive, is too heavy; the South hand has good values on defense and offense. For those partnerships that play a "mixed raise," the conventional 3♣ cuebid is a good compromise. Regardless of which path South chooses, N-S should get no higher than 3♥. 3♥ down one (undoubled) will be a common result, and a good matchpoint spot against the makeable 2♠ or 3♦ by E-W.

Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

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

The most common bidding sequence will be three passes to West who will choose 2NT or possibly 2♣-then-2NT. There will be a few Wests who open 2♣ with the idea of rebidding 3♦, but beyond possibly wrong-siding the contract after a potential/likely 2♦ waiting response, it's also more difficult to bid accurately after the auction starts that way. 2NT gives West all of his systemic tools (Stayman, transfers, etc.), so it's easier to proceed. After 2NT, East can use Stayman to check for a 4-4 spade fit but then retreat to 3NT. With the ♦Q obligingly dropping singleton, declarer has 10 running tricks and can easily develop an 11th in clubs. Where North fails to find an opening heart lead, some Wests may come to 12 tricks with inspired play.

Board 14
East Deals
None Vul

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

The common approach with a balanced 22-count is 2♣ followed by 2NT, and most Easts will do that here. After an initial 2♦ waiting response, West could follow up with Stayman after East's 2NT rebid, but many Wests - holding such a flat, "quacky" 8-count - will choose 3NT instead: The hand screams notrump. If South leads the ♥10 against 3NT, an interesting position arises in the suit, as declarer's 8 prevents South from leading the suit again without giving up a trick. For example, after the ♥10 gets covered by the queen, king and ace, declarer can cross to the ♦Q and take spade finesse, losing to South's queen. But South can't continue hearts from his side of the table without blowing a trick. This gives declarer time to make an overtrick. Many Souths will get to enjoy their singleton ♣K, as declarers will often attack clubs by playing low towards dummy's queen. This is not relevant in many lines, as declarer is always entitled to two club tricks on this layout, but it does affect the possibility of an overtrick. Declarers who make 10 tricks in notrump will get most of the matchpoints here.

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

East will get to open in fourth seat at most tables, and those players must choose between 1♠ and 1NT. It has become more common practice among experienced players to choose 1NT with 5-3-3-2 hands that fall into the 15-17 HCP range when the five-card suit is a major. The reasons for this are straightforward: Responder immediately knows more about opener's hand, and the systemic tools of Stayman and transfers are available, giving responder more control than in auctions that begin 1♠ with a forcing 1NT response. Yes, it's possible to miss a 5-3 major-suit fit, but sometimes it's irrelevant. And at matchpoints, the possibility of playing in the higher-scoring notrump is attractive if the same number of tricks are available as in the major suit. Finally, the defense may be unaware of the danger of opener's long suit being a major; sometimes, they lead it! Here, 1NT will likely end the auction, and the opening lead of the ♠K by South will be welcome to declarer. East will eventually come to seven tricks, as the defense is forced to help declarer late in the play in most variations. By contrast, Easts who open 1♠ and get a passed-hand response of 1NT must decide how to proceed. 2♣ is possible (as is pass), and West will likely take a preference to 2♠. On this layout, 2♠ is inferior to 1NT.

Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 9 6 4
♥ K J
♦ J 4 3 2
♣ 9 8 2

♠ A J 10
♥ 7 3 2
♦ K 10 8 7
♣ Q J 10



♠ 8 5 3 2
♥ A 10 9 8 5
♦ 9 6 5
♣ 7

♠ K 7
♥ Q 6 4
♦ A Q
♣ A K 6 5 4 3

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

♠ K 9 2
♥ J 7
♦ A K Q 5 4
♣ K 7 6

♠ 10 5
♥ Q 8 6 3 2
♦ J 8 7
♣ A J 2



♠ A
♥ A 10 9 5 4
♦ 10 9 6
♣ 10 8 4 3

♠ Q J 8 7 6 4 3
♥ K
♦ 3 2
♣ Q 9 5

Board 18
East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A 8 7 4
♥ K J 10 5
♦ A K Q 4
♣ 3

♠ 6
♥ 9 3
♦ 9 6 3 2
♣ K 9 7 6 5 2



♠ Q 10 5
♥ Q 7 6 4 2
♦ 10 7
♣ J 10 4

♠ K J 9 3 2
♥ A 8
♦ J 8 5
♣ A Q 8

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 9 6 5 4
♥ Q 10 7
♦ 9 4
♣ J 9 8 4

♠ K 7
♥ K J 9 5 2
♦ A J 8 5
♣ K 10



♠ Q 10 3 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ K Q 10 2
♣ A 2

♠ A J 8
♥ 8 4
♦ 7 6 3
♣ Q 7 6 5 3

Some Norths will open the attractive 11-count in second seat (it has concentrated honors and excellent intermediates), but we suspect East will get to open 1♣ in third seat at most tables. After a 1♠ response, East can jump to 2NT to show 18-19 HCP. 3♣ would risk wrong-siding the contract if West bids 3NT over that: The ♠K and the A-Q diamond tenace are exposed to attack on opening lead if West declares. Most Wests will bid 3NT over 2NT. East will succeed in 3NT unless South finds a diamond lead AND North plays low at trick one. Declarer will win the ♦Q, but when North gains the lead on third round of clubs, another low diamond will drive out declarer's ace. When South gets the lead with the ♥A, a third diamond by South will give the defense two more tricks, with North's K-10 perched over dummy's J-4. Well done to any N-S pairs who manage this defense, but we suspect most Easts will make 3NT.

We expect East will preempt 3♠ in second seat at most tables, and that West will carry on to game, although passing is entirely reasonable, too. Imagine, for example, if East started with two low hearts instead of a singleton; nine tricks might be the limit of the deal. In 4♠, East must lose the trump ace, a heart and a club, so plus 420 (or 170) will be a common result. If N-S somehow climb over the preempt and find the heart fit, the 5♥ sacrifice will cost them just 300.

As with Board 15, East must choose between a 1♠ and a 1NT opening. This is less about right or wrong; it's more a question of partnership style. Regardless of which bid is chosen, West will certainly move toward slam. There are several ways for the auction to go. Where East opens 1♠, West might splinter with 4♣, showing club shortness, four-card trump support and game-going values or better. Experienced players often cap the upper strength of a splinter bid to about 15 points, so this hand might be too good for that approach. However, if West's plan is splinter-then-Blackwood, this may not matter so much; establishing the trump suit is first priority, and the West hand is good enough for this action. A Roman key card Blackwood auction will reveal that the ♠Q is missing, so stopping in 6♠ is best. Converting to 6NT is risky on this sequence because West bid notrump first with 4NT, meaning a club lead could come through the A-Q-8 in dummy. Where East starts with 1NT, a Stayman sequence will reveal the spade fit. Responder's follow-up with a conventional 3♥ is a slam-try agreeing spades. (After Stayman and a major-suit response, three of the other major is an artificial slam try. Responder should not just jump to 4NT; that shows a balanced slam invitation with four of the other major.) After this start, responder can next use RKCB to move toward slam. Here, a conversion to 6NT is possible. There is nothing to the play, and declarer simply has one trump loser.

After 1NT by South and a heart transfer by North, what should North do next after 2♥? A 3♦ continuation, natural and game-forcing, is certainly acceptable, as is a quantitative 4NT, showing five hearts and slam invitational values in a roughly balanced hand. For those who agree to hearts at a low level followed by North asking for key cards, it will be discovered that an ace and the ♥Q are missing and North will (should) settle for 5♥. As it turns out, the ♥Q is onside, so N-S will take 12 tricks in notrump or hearts.

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 9 6	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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 7 5 4 3 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 8 5 4 2		♥ 9 3									
♦ J 10 3 2	♦ K 8 6 4										
♣ A 8	♣ 9										
	♠ K										
	♥ A 10 7										
	♦ 7 5										
	♣ K J 6 5 4 3 2										

After North opens a strong 1NT, methods will dictate the rest of the auction, with South using whatever gadget is available to show club length, but the practical-minded Souths will keep 3NT in the picture for the maximum matchpoint payout. Where North declares 3NT, there is nothing to the play, as declarer has plenty of time to drive out the ♣A. Eleven tricks will be easy from the North side, with the defense scoring only the ♣A and the ♠A. For those pairs who land in 5♣, 11 tricks are also available, provided North declares. If South declares, and West finds a diamond lead, South will be held to 10 tricks, as the defense will score the ♦K in addition to their two aces.

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A 6 5	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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		♠ 9 8 3 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ Q J 10 6 3 2		♥ A 8 7									
♦ A 10	♦ 7 6										
♣ J 9	♣ A 8 4 3										
	♠ K J 10 7										
	♥ 9 4										
	♦ Q 9 8 5										
	♣ Q 10 5										

At almost every table, West will open 1♥ in third seat, and East will raise, likely with a simple 2♥. Some Easts may try an aggressive Drury raise instead, but we predict most E-W pairs will subside in a heart partscore. The double-dummy analysis says that E-W can make 10 tricks. This seems incorrect at first glance, as West appears to have two spades losers, one diamond loser and a club as well. But say North leads a diamond. Declarer wins and runs the ♥Q. North covers, so dummy's ace wins and a low club goes to the 9. Where South plays low, North will win the king, cash a diamond and exit a spade. Declarer can finish drawing trumps, and the 2-2 split means that the ♥8 in dummy is a later entry to the table. Next comes the ♣A and a club ruff, establishing dummy's ♣8 as a winner. The trump entry allows declarer to return to dummy and take a spade pitch on the good club. It does not help if South goes up with the ♣Q the first time the suit is played, as the same ending arises. Shame on you if you bid 4♥, but congratulations to anyone who makes 10 tricks here.

Board 22
East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A J 10 7 4 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; 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		♠ 5
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 2		♥ A K J 7 4 3									
♦ K J 10 7 3	♦ Q 6 5										
♣ 7	♣ A K Q										
	♠ K 8										
	♥ Q 10 9 5										
	♦ A 9										
	♣ 10 8 6 5 3										

The 19-point East hand is difficult to describe using standard methods. After East opens 1♥ and West responds 1♠, a jump to 4♥ is a possible but too unilateral/rushed. 3♥ is an underbid, as the range for that action is 16-18. A 2NT rebid showing 18-19 HCP is possible, but the shape is wrong. That leaves a contrived 3♣ jump shift, game forcing. These type of "lies" are unlikely to do any serious damage in the bidding, as the partnership will preferentially strive for game in notrump or a major. After 3♣, West has a comfortable 3♦ rebid, allowing East to bid 3♥. It will sound as if the East hand is 6-4 at the point, which is close to the actual pattern. North can then try 3♠, which suggests at least five spades (probably six, though) and four or more diamonds. After this more patient auction, East can go to 3NT, confident that no major-suit fit exists. And as it turns out, notrump outscores either major on this deal, especially with East declaring. In the play there are 10 easy tricks once the ♦A is dislodged: one spade, two hearts, four diamonds and three clubs. So how does East come to 11 tricks as indicated by the analysis? An extra trick is available in spades with the right timing. After, say a club lead by South, declarer wins and knocks out the ♦A. Another club by South is won and a spade is played toward the dummy. If South rises, dummy's ace wins and the ♠J drives out the queen while a diamond entry still exists to dummy. If South plays low on the spade instead, declarer sticks in the 10 (or jack), allowing the king to be dropped on the next round of the suit. Yes, it's double-dummy, and some Easts will try the heart finesse instead, finishing with 10 tricks.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

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

Some Souths will happily open a weak 2♦, while others will avoid it, citing the side four-card major and a void. Where South opens 2♦, North will not be pleased. Some Norths (especially those playing with less-disciplined partners) may decide to go quietly, but others may force with 2♠ and then give up over South's 3♦ rebid. (Note that if North's major-suit pattern were reversed, 4♥ would be easy, and even 6♥ would be playable. This gives ammunition to the argument that South should pass initially.) Where North gets to open 1♠, the common continuation of 1NT; 2♣-2♦ will present North with the same unpleasant choice as those that heard a first-seat diamond preempt. Playing in diamonds against the lead of the ♠K, declarer can dump a club on the ♠A, take the diamond finesse and then play the ♣AK and ruff a club, establishing the ♣10 in dummy. After two top trumps reveals that East has a trump winner, declarer can return to dummy with the ♥A and pitch a heart on the good club. Declarer loses only two hearts and a trump with this line, +130.

Board 24
West Deals
None Vul

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

Most tables will see North preempt 3♥ in second seat. If East passes, this will likely end the auction. Some Easts, enticed by the good honor structure and double heart stopper, will risk an under-strength 3NT. This is quite dangerous, of course, as South will be quick to double when it's right to do so. Here, 3NT will likely end the auction, unless South wishes to try the effect of a penalty double. Where North declares a heart contract, a successful diamond finesse gives North a parking place for a slow club loser. With the ♦K and the ♣A favorably placed, North will take 10 tricks, losing just the ♣A and two trump tricks. Should N-S bid 4♥? No, but 10 tricks happen to be available on this layout. Where East declares the dicey 3NT against a heart lead by South, declarer can hold the damage to down one by playing high diamonds out of the closed hand, although this plan is completely double dummy. Oddly, a penalty double might actually guide East in this direction. East can score three diamonds, two hearts, two clubs and a slow spade trick.

Board 25
North Deals
E-W Vul

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

For the second deal in a row, North can preempt 3♥. This will silence the other players at most tables, though some aggressive Easts will try a takeout double. This is a bad idea on this hand, especially at unfavorable vulnerability, with only three cards in spades and a likely worthless ♥K. In 3♥, North will lose three spades and a diamond on top, and then East will also lose two trump tricks unless employing mirrors to see the singleton king in East's hand. 3♥ down two will be a common result. But where West plays 3♠ (after East makes an ill-advised takeout double of 3♥), the best West can do is seven tricks for minus 200.

Board 26
East Deals
Both Vul

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

After East opens 1♦, West responds 1♠ (South should not overcall 1♠ vulnerable with this poor hand and suit), and East rebids 2♣. This may not be possible, however, if North sticks in a 2♥ overcall. In that case, East will likely pass (3♣ should deliver a better hand), and South will raise to 3♥. This sequence could end the auction, as it would be too difficult for E-W to discover the club fit at this level. Double dummy, the best defense is a top diamond, switching to a club, allowing the defense to cash two club tricks, followed by another diamond back to East. Having taken all their minor-suit winners, East can now exit with a third round of diamonds, allowing West to ruff with the trump queen. Down one. Note that if East tries the ♦A K followed by the ♦Q at the outset, declarer can simply pitch a club from dummy. The defenders must grab their club winners before attempting to give West a diamond ruff. Yes, E-W can make 4♣.

Board 27
South Deals
None Vul

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

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

Opinions will vary on whether the South hand is suitable for a one-level opening. Those Souths that choose to open 1♥ will propel their sides to 4♥ (or maybe 3NT), but the 4-1 trump split and the hostile defensive layout dooms the game-level contracts. Where South passes initially and North opens 1♦, a 1♥ response by South and a 1NT rebid by North will see South try a checkback gadget such as new minor forcing to explore for a heart fit. 4♥ may well still be reached via this path. Most declarers in 4♥ will go down one, losing two hearts, one diamond and a club.

Board 28
West Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

An opening 1NT by West will be a popular choice, but with four-and-a-half “quick tricks” and a five-card suit, the hand is worth closer to 18 points than 17; opening 1♦ with the plan of rebidding 2NT is good evaluation. Notice that if West opens 1NT, and East transfers to spades, the partnership could miss an easy spade game, and that’s a real possibility on this layout. If instead West opens 1♦ and gets a 1♠ response, E-W are much better placed to find the spade game. West could rebid 2NT (3♠ isn’t absurd), and a checkback/new minor sequence would uncover the 5-3 spade fit. There is nothing to the play, as there are just two heart losers in a spade contract.

Board 29
North Deals
Both Vul

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

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

The auction at most tables will begin 1♠ by North and 1NT by South. Regardless of how 1NT is played (natural, forcing or semi-forcing), North must decide how to describe this pretty 16-count. A popular approach with 6-4 hands is to bid the four-card suit on the second round if the hand is good, but rebid the major if the hand is bad. Using that sensible approach, 2♦ will be the choice of rebid for many North players. With less than invitational values, responder typically takes a preference to opener’s major when holding a doubleton. Here, however, despite holding “only” 9 HCP, responder should seriously consider a 2NT rebid. The intermediate cards are excellent, and the shape is textbook for such an action. And over a 2NT rebid, opener can go directly to 4♠. If responder chooses a 2♠ rebid instead, opener must choose between a 3♠ and 4♠ continuation. The play is trickier than it seems at first blush, especially if West ducks the ♥A the first time the suit is played, but the scarcity of dummy entries may work in declarer’s favor when tackling the trump suit, oddly enough. Looking at all four hands, it’s easy to see that declarer can drop the doubleton queen offside, but in a vacuum, some/most declarers would finesse. But because the sole dummy entry (hearts) is needed to lead up to the diamond holding in the closed hand, many North players will be tempted to just bang down the ♠AK. That works wonders here. For example, say East leads a low club against 4♠, ducked around to declarer’s ace. The ♠AK are next, and the last trump is drawn. Now comes a heart to the table, ducked, and a low diamond toward the closed hand. To make the maximum number of tricks on this layout (11), declarer must stick in the ♦10. In this line, declarer loses only the two red aces. Results will vary here, with some declarers going down, but others making 10 or 11 tricks.

Board 30
East Deals
None Vul

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

After East opens 1♦, there may be some South players who offer a rock-bottom 1♥ overcall based on the quality intermediates. But let's say South stays quiet during the bidding, and West responds 1♠. What does East rebid?

Most pairs prefer a rebid of opener's suit to show six cards (or five with an excellent suit in a pinch), so 2♦ isn't a good choice. 2♥ would be a reverse, showing longer diamonds than hearts, but with extra values, usually at least 17, so that's out, too. 1NT is ugly with a singleton, but it's the least distortion here, and it will be the default choice of many East players. (2♣ is a cute try, too, as responder will take a preference to diamonds with equal length in the minors, or pass with longer clubs. Try building several non-forcing West hands with at least four spades to see how this could work. On the actual hand, West will choose 2♦ over 2♣ to get to the top spot!)

1NT will often end the auction (West's who choose to rebid 2♠ will not like their decision; the suit texture argues against it anyway), and declarer will have to take an inspired view to get to seven tricks. Say South leads the ♠J, ducked all around, and another spade goes to North's king, East pitching a low heart. This line will allow declarer to possibly build a spade trick late in the play. A low heart exit will run to South's 9 and declarer must play low from dummy to succeed – not an easy play to make. The idea is to drain North of hearts and cut the communication between the defenders' hands. The ♥A is next, dropping dummy's queen, and the ♥J runs to the king, North pitching a club. When declarer plays the ♣K, North ducks but wins the ♣Q and exits with a club to dummy's jack. If declarer is confident of the spade position, he can then play a low spade from dummy to drive out North's ace, and the forced diamond return allows East to take a free finesse and score the last four tricks: three diamonds and the ♠Q. Alternatively, declarer can take the deep finesse in diamonds (low to the 9) and score four diamond tricks.

Board 31
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

After 1♦ by South and 1♥ by North, East may try a light takeout double, but South will raise hearts ... but at which level? 2♥ feels like an underbid with this excellent hand, but game-forcing actions such as a 3♠ splinter or a shape-showing 4♦ (a good 4-6 pattern), are a bit of a stretch, so maybe just an invitational 3♥ gets the job done, as North will continue to game. The score hinges on the opening lead, as this is a "five or seven" hand: Declarer will make five or seven depending on whether East leads a club. On a spade lead, declarer wins the ace and runs the ♥Q. When trumps prove to be 2-2 with the king onside, North can easily take all 13 tricks.

Board 32
West Deals
E-W Vul

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

Aggressive Wests may open 1♥ (or 2♦ for pairs who use the Flannery convention), but South will get to open 1NT at most tables. Where West has passed initially, we expect to see West use whatever conventional gadget available to show both major suits. This will likely silence North, and East will take a preference to hearts. 2♥ by East or West will be a common contract, as will 2♠ North or South depending on how conservative West is. Where East declares hearts against a spade lead, declarer has time to ruff a low spade in hand. At trick two, East can play the ♥Q, covered by the king and ace, ruff a spade and play the ♥8. The defense gets one heart, one diamond and three clubs. But where West declares a heart contract, an opening trump lead by North gives the defense timing to remove dummy's trumps before a spade ruff can take place, and seven tricks will be the maximum. Where N-S play in spades, there are four trump losers (one via a diamond ruff) and a heart loser, so 2♠ will make exactly two.

Board 33
North Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 5 3
♥ K Q 5 3
♦ 9 6
♣ A 10 3 2

♠ A 8 2
♥ 6 4
♦ A 8 7 3
♣ Q 9 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 4
♥ A J 9 7 2
♦ K J 4 2
♣ K 8

♠ K Q J 10 6
♥ 10 8
♦ Q 10 5
♣ J 7 4

East will open 1♥ in second chair, and South will overcall 1♠. West can easily raise to 2♥, though some will prefer a stronger raise, either through conventional means or via a 2♠ cuebid. North will happily raise spades and N-S may buy the auction in 3♠ if E-W are unwilling to compete to the four level. E-W can make 4♥ on this magic fit if the diamond suit is correctly negotiated, but few pairs will get there.

Board 34
East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 10 9 2
♥ 8 7 4 2
♦ 5
♣ A K 7 3

♠ 6 5
♥ K J 9 5 3
♦ A 10 9 4 2
♣ 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 4
♥ A Q 6
♦ Q J 7 6 3
♣ Q J 9

♠ A J 8 7 3
♥ 10
♦ K 8
♣ 10 6 5 4 2

An interesting situation occurs in the auction after East opens the yucky 14-count 1♦, South overcalls 1♠ and West makes a negative double. Assuming North passes, what should East rebid? Despite holding just Q-x in overcaller's suit, East should try 1NT. It's the most descriptive bid to describe the pattern of the hand. And because North did not raise spades, the chance that West has some spade help is increased. West may raise to 2NT, but passing is the better option in the long term with 10-counts. East can take nine tricks in notrump (three spades, two hearts and four clubs) thanks to the favorable position of the ♥K and the ♠J (the latter of which is essentially revealed by the spade overcall).

Board 35
South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 7 5
♥ J 9 5 3
♦ A Q 10 2
♣ J 4 2

♠ K Q 9 8 4 3
♥ 10 8
♦ 6 5 3
♣ 10 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A
♥ Q 6 4 2
♦ 9 8 7 4
♣ A Q 9 6

♠ J 10 6 2
♥ A K 7
♦ K J
♣ K 7 5 3

Where South opens a strong 1NT and North transfers to spades, East has an opportunity to get his side into the auction by interrupting the transfer sequence with 2♠, a takeout action. This is quite dangerous, especially at these colors, and most Easts won't have the stomach for it, but here, it works quite well. N-S can take nine tricks in spades, but E-W can take 10 tricks in hearts, although most E-W pairs won't even be in the auction.

Board 36
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 6
♥ A K 3
♦ A Q J 6
♣ K 7 6 4

♠ A K J 10 8
♥ J 8 6 4 2
♦ K 9
♣ 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 9 7 4 3 2
♥ 5
♦ 5 3 2
♣ A J 10 9

♠ 5
♥ Q 10 9 7
♦ 10 8 7 4
♣ Q 5 3 2

West opens the 19-count 1♣ or 1♦, but when North overcalls 1♠ and two passes follow, West should downgrade the hand. A balancing double is best, but North may well try 2♥, which will shut East out of the bidding. Even if North passes on the second round and East bids 2♣ in response to the double, this will get passed back to North who will try 2♥ at his third turn. In hearts, North loses only two top trumps, a diamond and a club for nine tricks total.