

# ACBL-wide International Fund Game #2

Wednesday Afternoon – Sept. 11, 2024



Analysis by Frank Stewart

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

## Board 1

North Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

We'll find out who the bold East-Westes are. When North opens 1♥, many Easts won't act. South responds 1♠, and North raises to 2♠. After two passes, West might risk a balancing double, East will bid 3♦ and North-South will compete to 3♠. Then East-West may sell out, having accomplished their goal of pushing North-South up a level. East-West won't often push on to 4♦, and the "par" result of 4♦ doubled, down one, will seldom be achieved. A few Easts may jump to 3♦ directly over 1♥. South isn't worth 3♠ but might try a negative double, and here East-West may buy the contract for 4♦ undoubled. Some North-South will employ Flannery: North will open 2♦ to show four spades, five hearts and minimum values. Here, we think North-South are more likely to play at 3♠ for +140 and a good matchpoint score.

## Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ 7 6 5 2  
♥ K 10 5  
♦ 8 4 2  
♣ 5 4 2

♠ Q J 8  
♥ 8 3  
♦ A K J 6 3  
♣ K 8 6



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

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

We expect 1NT-3NT at most tables, and West, not possessing a crystal ball, will often lead a passive spade. South wins in dummy and immediately finesses in hearts. When West takes the king, he might place South with the ♠AK, ♥AJ and (because he has not attacked the diamonds) the ♦Q - therefore, not much in clubs - and find the good shift to a club. South can salvage 10 tricks by playing low from dummy, but if he goes for broke by putting up the ♣K, he will be down two. Wests who make no attempt to visualize the South hand and continue with a second spade will watch declarer reel off the next 10 tricks, making five. We predict that North-South will need +660 for a strong matchpoint result.

## Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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



♠ —  
♥ A Q 8 7 6  
♦ J 10 9 8 7  
♣ Q 9 6

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

If West opens 1♠ and East raises to 2♠, South may trade on the favorable vulnerability to come in with a double, a bid of 2NT (planning to convert 3♣ by North to 3♦ to suggest red-suit length) or even a shape-showing bid of 3♠. In any case, West will often play at 3♠, and the defenders should manage to take their four top tricks, holding him to +140. But if North-South somehow judge to compete to the four level, they may profit since only repeated spade forces would beat 4♥ doubled or 4♦ doubled one trick. Opening-bid standards seem to be getting ever lighter, and a few Souths will open the bidding. (To open wouldn't occur to us.) Then North-South might buy the contract at 4♥, but another possible result is +730 to East-West when North thinks his partner has something and doubles West at 3♠.

**Board 4**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

We think about 40% of the North players will open 1♣. That figure would be higher if their long suit were a major. If North opens, East will overcall 1♠. If South doesn't act, West will raise to 2♠. After two passes, South might boldly try 3♦, and neither West nor East has a clear continuation to 3♠. South is likely to go down one but could get home by dropping East's bare ♣K. Other Souths might try 1NT over 1♠, and then North might play at 3♣, maybe down two. At tables where North doesn't open, East will start with 1♠, raised to 2♠ by West. North-South will be reluctant to compete at the three level, vulnerable. At 2♠, East is off a trump, a heart, a club and two diamonds, but even +110 may not be a great result for East-West; some North-Souths will be -200 at an unsuccessful minor-suit partial.

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

♠ K 7 5 2  
♥ 7 6 4 3  
♦ J 7 5  
♣ 4 3

♠ J 10 4  
♥ 5  
♦ K 10 4  
♣ A K Q J 10 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ A Q 3  
♥ A Q 9 8 2  
♦ Q 8 6 2  
♣ 6

Almost every North-South will land at 3NT. A "standard" auction may be 1♣-1♥, 2♣-2♦, 3♣-3NT. (North may like his solid clubs and sound hand enough to bid 2♠, an encouraging "fourth-suit" call, at his third turn.) West will often lead the ♠2, and South can play wide open, winning with the queen and leading a diamond to dummy's 10. When East takes the ace and returns a spade, South can win the rest, making six. With the diamonds sitting well, he has six clubs, three diamonds, two spades and a heart. If South wins the first spade in dummy and leads a heart to his queen, he can still win 12 tricks but might settle for a sure 11, not pushing his luck, by leading a diamond to the king next. We think North-South must be +690 to avoid a poor result. A few pairs will attempt 60, sunk by a spade opening lead.

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

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

♠ J 10  
♥ 10 9 7  
♦ K Q J 8 5  
♣ 10 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

If the auction starts with 1♦ by East, 2♣ overcall by South, West's hand is short of the values to bid 2♠, but he can suggest length in both majors and fair values with a negative double. Even if North raises to 3♣, East can compete with 3♠; competition by the opponents may oblige a player to stretch his values to avoid being shut out. North-South will have to subside since they could be doubled at 4♣ for -300. At spades, East will take nine easy tricks, losing two clubs, a diamond and a heart, and +140 to East-West will be a common result. But North-South can get a good result if their opponents bid too much - overreaching to 4♠ - or too little - selling out tamely to a club partial.

**Board 7**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 9 5 4 3  
♥ 10 7 4  
♦ A 9 8 7  
♣ 9 3

♠ 6  
♥ K Q 6 3 2  
♦ Q 10 4 2  
♣ K 8 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

South will open 1♣ though he would rather (as in board 4) that his long suit were a major. North responds 1♥, East overcalls 1♠. Then many Souths will rebid 2♣. A modern tendency is to freely rebid a good suit, which may be a vehicle for contesting the partscore, even with a high-card minimum. If West wants more strength to compete with 2♠, North can raise to 3♣, and East will try 3♠. Since East's vulnerable bidding to the three level shows more than chopped liver, it will be up to West to appreciate the power of his ♦A and four trumps and bid 4♠. South will probably lead his singleton ♥9, making East's life easy, but East should win 10 tricks with any lead. We think East-West will win 80% of the matchpoints for +620. North-South can save some matchpoints by saving at five of a minor for -500.

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul

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

When West opens 1♦, North may preempt with 2♥, goading East into stretching to bid 2♠. When West rebids 2NT, some Easts may raise to 3NT. Others will try 3♣, and then West must choose among rebidding 3♦ on his five-card suit, taking a 3♠ preference on A-Q or persisting with 3NT. At tables where North settles for a 1♥ overcall, East will bid 1♠, and East-West will have more room to investigate and could reach any of three games. For a good result, they must make a game as well as bid one. At 3NT, West may be favored with the ♥J lead. When the queen holds, West can set up spades or diamonds for nine tricks.

(In fact, he could win nine tricks on any lead.) West could also make 5♦, but tops may go to pairs who play at 4♠. East can manage four trumps, four diamonds, a heart and a club for +420.

**Board 9**North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

Almost every North-South will reach 3NT with 15 points opposite 10. Often, 25 points are too few to produce nine tricks if both hands are balanced and lack good intermediates, but here the lie of the cards is so friendly that the issue is overtricks. West will usually lead a heart, riding to the 9. That lead looks costly, but South could take 11 tricks with any lead. The key is how he handles the diamonds. He can lead the jack from dummy, capture an honor when East covers, then let the 8 ride; or he can lead the 8 from his hand and pass it. He wins three diamonds, four clubs, two spades and two hearts. (After a heart opening lead, he should still lose two tricks.) We expect North-South to score well for +460. A few pairs will be +490 when East fails to split his honors on a spade lead from dummy.

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

Easters who were absent when fear was doled out will open a weak 2♦ despite the vulnerability. Then West might jump to 5♦ as an "advance sacrifice," forcing North to double and hope for a worthwhile penalty or that South will obligingly take out to a black suit. East will be down one at 5♦ doubled, -200. If West goes slower and responds 2♥, North can double, and North-South may reach their makable 4♠, putting West to the necessity of saving. When East passes as dealer, West will open 1♥ in third seat, and North will usually double, risking an awkward diamond response from his partner (North would try 3♣ next) to get his spades into the game. Then East-West may not find their diamond fit, and if North-South reach 4♠ and play there, South can guess well to win ten tricks for +620 and most of the matchpoints.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul

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

Here's another delicate partscore deal where plus scores will be desirable. After 1♣ by South, 1♠ by West, North is worth a negative double, and East might try 1NT. West will bid 2♠, passed out. If instead East passes at his first turn, South will bid 1NT. Then even if West passes, North may try 2♦, and after two more passes, West will bid 2♠. North-South are unlikely to compete to 3♦, probably -50. They can be +50 against 2♠. If North leads a club or a highish heart, North-South can deprive West of dummy entries for two trump finesses. (If West led the ♠10, covered by the queen, he could reason that South wouldn't cover with Q-x-x but would with Q-9-x-x.) East-West might do well to let South play at 1NT. After a low-spade lead, South could escape for down one only by leading a club to dummy's 9.

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

♠ K Q 5 4 2	<table border="1"> <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		♠ 9 8 6
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ Q J 6 5		♥ K 10 4 3									
♦ 5	♦ K Q 2										
♣ A Q 9	♣ J 7 5										
	♠ 10 3										
	♥ 9 8 2										
	♦ A 8 6 3										
	♣ K 10 6 3										

East will raise West's 1♠ opening to 2♠. West may be tempted to try for game since an ideal East hand would offer a play for ten tricks, but since partners seldom produce ideal hands, and the danger of not winning even nine tricks is evident, most Wests will pass. With the vulnerability threatening, North can't afford to balance at the three level. North will lead the ♦J: king, ace, five. If South returns a diamond, West can pitch a club, take dummy's ♦Q and lead a trump to his king. North takes the ace and forces with a diamond. Declarer then cashes the ♠Q and starts the hearts. He can reach dummy to finesse with the ♣Q, making three. No other line of defense is likely to help North-South, and we expect East-West to score a bit above average for +140.

**Board 13**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

♠ J 10 9 8	<table border="1"> <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 Q 6 2
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ 8 6		♥ K 9 5 4									
♦ A J 9 3	♦ 10 4 2										
♣ K Q J	♣ 9 2										
	♠ 7 5 3										
	♥ A Q J										
	♦ 5										
	♣ A 10 7 6 5 4										

If South opens 1♣ in third position, some Norths will respond 1♦ and South will rebid 2♣. After two passes, East should not sell out cheaply when he has four cards in each major, and West is marked with some points. If East reopens with a double, West will take out to 2♠, passed out. At other tables, North will respond 1♥ to 1♣, a call less attractive when he is a passed hand and might be dropped in his response. Then South might pass, raise to 2♥ or rebid 2♣, passed out. South could score nine tricks at clubs for +110, and North could scramble home at 2♥ for the same score. If West plays at 2♠, North will lead a club to the ace, and South will switch to the ♦5. West may do well to diagnose the situation and put up his ace. If he ducks instead, North-South can be +200 for a top.

**Board 14**  
East Deals  
None Vul

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

After East opens 1♥ and West responds 1♠, North will annoy East by jumping to 3♦. East has only 12 high-card points and only three-card spade support, but to pass with a diamond void would be questionable. Many Easts will compete with 3♠, and West will go to 4♠. West can take 11 tricks, but the play may be stressful. If North leads a high diamond, West ruffs in dummy, discards a diamond on the ♥A and ruffs a heart with a middle trump. If North discards a club, West can ruff his last diamond in dummy and cash the ♠K, then lead the ♣A and a second club. Many Wests will win only nine or 10 tricks. At a few tables, North-South may save some matchpoints by saving at 5♦ doubled, -300. At others, East may rebid 3♥ over North's 3♦. If West passes from fright, North-South will get a plus score and a top.

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

♠ 10 8	<table border="1"> <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		♠ A J 6 4
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ A J 7 6		♥ 9 5 3 2									
♦ K 5	♦ J 3 2										
♣ A K 7 6 4	♣ 3 2										
	♠ Q 7 5										
	♥ Q 10										
	♦ A Q 8 4										
	♣ Q J 10 5										

Much will depend on South's choice of an opening bid. (When hand evaluation was based on "honor tricks," he might not have opened at all; but the 4-3-2-1 count took over long ago.) If South starts with 1♣, he may silence West. North will respond 1♠, and South will rebid 1NT, passed out. The defense can beat 1NT, but the play will be complex, and South may take seven tricks. At tables where South opens 1♦ - probably the choice of a slight majority of experts - West will overcall 2♣, an action with obstructive as well as constructive value. If North raises to 2♦, East might make a responsive double to show both majors, but even if East and South pass, West can continue with 2♥, locating his major-suit fit. Wests at a heart partial can win nine tricks with capable play, and East-West will score well for +140.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

At many tables, North-South's auction will be 1♦-1♠, 3♦-3NT. West will lead a heart, and East can take the king and return the 10, ducked by West to preserve communication. South can take the ♣KQ, four spade tricks and the ♣A, and next lead a diamond. West has shown four clubs, three spades and apparently five hearts, so South should judge that finessing with the ♦Q can't be right. He will settle for nine tricks, +400. We hate to report that Norths who open an off-shape 1NT may do well. South will use Stayman and bid 3NT when North denies a four-card major. East will usually lead a diamond. When dummy's 10 holds, North can take the ♣KQ, lead a spade to dummy and continue with the ♣A and a fourth club, setting up dummy's fifth club and ending with 10 tricks, +430.

**Board 17**  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

North-South can make 4♠, but almost every pair should play at a spade partial. When East opens 1♦, South might pass if East-West were vulnerable, hoping for a fat penalty. As it is, South will pursue his own contract by overcalling 1NT, and North may transfer to 2♠. If West leads a diamond, East takes the ace and shifts to the ♥6. Even if South ducks, he can end with ten tricks since if West wins and returns a heart, East gains nothing by ruffing. If North plays at 2♠, East will lead his singleton, and the play will be complex. To make four, North must grab the ♥A (to avoid a club shift by West), then find a difficult series of plays, leading low to his ♣Q and back to dummy's 10 later, stripping the diamonds and finally endplaying East with his trump trick. North-South will win most of the matchpoints for +170.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

This may be a distressing deal for the side that declares. When East opens 1♦, West will feel constrained to respond 1♠, despite his lack of high-card points, instead of hanging partner out to dry at 1♦. If North risks 2♥ despite the adverse vulnerability, East will rebid 3♦, and South will compete with 3♥. East will subside, and North's shaky overcall will come home to roost when the defenders pick him clean. East cashes his ♣A, then leads the ♦AK. West ruffs(!) the second diamond, gives East a club ruff, ruffs the next diamond and gives East another ruff, and East's ♥A scores for +300. Many Easts will play at 3♦ and will be dismayed to go -50, off two spades, two hearts and a trump, but even +110 might not be a good result for East-West.

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

♠ A 4  
♥ A Q 4 2  
♦ A K Q 10 5 3 2  
♣ —

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

How about this auction? West opens 2♣, and North jumps to 4♣. East might cuebid 5♣ with his useful values or pass as an encouraging move; he would double with some poor hands to warn West against going on. South has tactical options such as a gentle club raise or some outrageous bluff bid, but our style, assuming expert East-Wests, is to preempt to the limit directly. Thus, South should bid a direct 7♣ and let his opponents sort things out with no further exchange of information. West, with first-round club control, can pass 7♣ around, but whether East-West will land on their feet is uncertain. They can make 7♦, and 7♥ if West is declarer. Tops will go to pairs who play at 7♥ by East, doubled for an unusual lead by North. If South fails to find the killing diamond lead, East-West will be +2470.

**Board 20**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

<p>♠ Q J 4 2 ♥ A K 4 3 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ 5 4</p>	<p>North: ♠ 8 7 6, ♥ 7 2, ♦ J 9 4 2, ♣ Q J 3 2 South: ♠ A 5, ♥ Q J 8 6, ♦ A 5, ♣ A K 10 8 6</p>	<p>♠ K 10 9 3 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ K 10 8 7 ♣ 9 7</p>
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West, with 12 HCP and length in both majors, will usually feel constrained to open 1♦. (Some players would open with even less strength, of course, even when vulnerable.) East responds 1♠, South doubles and West raises to 2♠. After two passes, South should double again, North responds 3♣ and East-West will retire; neither player has enough to compete to the three level and, indeed, East-West could be -200 at 3♠ with good defense. (South leads the ♣K, and North signals with the queen. South switches to the ♦A and another diamond and later underleads in clubs to get a diamond ruff.) At 3♣, North will have no trouble winning nine tricks when trumps break 2-2. We expect +110 to North-South at many tables.

**Board 21**  
North Deals  
N-S Vul

<p>♠ Q J ♥ 6 4 ♦ 8 6 5 ♣ A Q 9 8 6 4</p>	<p>North: ♠ A 10 8, ♥ 7 3, ♦ A K Q J 4 3, ♣ J 7 South: ♠ 9 4 3 2, ♥ A K 10 2, ♦ 10 9 7, ♣ 5 3</p>	<p>♠ K 7 6 5 ♥ Q J 9 8 5 ♦ 2 ♣ K 10 2</p>
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When North opens 1♦, some Easts will toss in 1♥. South will double (negative), West might introduce 2♣, North will rebid 2♦, East can compete with 3♣ and South will try 3♦, maybe ending the auction. At tables where East doesn't overcall, South will respond 1♥. If West passes, North may jump to 3♦, but South will pass. (If West is willing to enter with 2♣ on a hand with so many losers, East-West will compete to 3♣, but North-South will go to 3♦ again.) We expect most Norths to play at 3♦ for +130, especially if East has bid hearts and his opening lead is the ♥Q. Some East-Wests may compete to 4♣. If West plays at 4♣ doubled, the defense may start with a high diamond and a heart shift, and after the ♥KA and a third heart, West must guess the trump position to avoid -300 and a matchpoint zero.

**Board 22**  
East Deals  
E-W Vul

<p>♠ 9 8 2 ♥ 10 3 ♦ K Q J 7 ♣ 9 6 5 2</p>	<p>North: ♠ A J, ♥ A K Q J 9 5, ♦ 8 6, ♣ K J 3 South: ♠ K Q 10 6 5 3, ♥ 8 4, ♦ A 2, ♣ Q 8 7</p>	<p>♠ 7 4 ♥ 7 6 2 ♦ 10 9 5 4 3 ♣ A 10 4</p>
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The hardest slams to bid feature two solid suits, controls in the other two suits but minimum points. Here, North-South have robust hearts and spades plus controls in the minors. South will often open 1♠, though we would accept a solid weak 2♠ in second seat. Over 1♠, North might jump-shift to 3♥ and rebid 4♥ over South's 3♠. Then South can try for slam with a 5♦ cuebid, and North can bid 6NT - the best spot - to protect his ♣K. If North responds only 2♥, perhaps because a jump would be weak or invitational, South will rebid 2♠, and if 3♥ by North would not be forcing, he might improvise with 3♣. North-South should still reach a slam, but the often-maligned strong jump-shift would make it easier. Against any strongly-bid slam, East can save some matchpoints by taking the ♣A to stop an overtrick.

**Board 23**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

<p>♠ 5 4 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ Q 10 7 6 4 2</p>	<p>North: ♠ K Q 9 3 2, ♥ K 8 4, ♦ A J 8, ♣ J 9 South: ♠ 8 7 6, ♥ A Q J 9, ♦ 10 9 7 2, ♣ K 3</p>	<p>♠ A J 10 ♥ 10 6 3 ♦ K Q 5 3 ♣ A 8 5</p>
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When North opens 1♠, some Souths will respond 1NT. (South might instead issue a heavy raise to 2♠; North might have opened light in third seat.) If 1NT isn't forcing, North will pass; if not, North rebids 2♦, and South will jump to 3♠ to invite game. North will pass. If East leads the ♦K, the defense gets a diamond, a diamond ruff, East's two trump tricks and the ♣A. If instead East leads a passive heart, North wins in dummy and leads a trump to the king and ace. If East then underleads his ♣A, North must guess right to avoid down one again. Souths at 1NT will get a club lead and should be +90. A few Easts will double 1♠. South will redouble, and West will run to 2♣. After two passes, South's 2♠ may end the auction, and North-South will be +110. They may also go plus when North responds 2♣, Drury, to 1♠.

**Board 24**West Deals  
None Vul

♠ 9 7 6 5 3  
♥ —  
♦ 9  
♣ K J 10 9 7 6 5

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ A K Q 10 2  
♥ A Q 10 4  
♦ K J  
♣ Q 8

We expect many different auctions and results here. First, West must judge whether to preempt in clubs despite five - count 'em, five - cards in spades. If he opens 3♣, East may try 3♠, West will get excited and East-West may have trouble stopping at a safe level. If West opens 4♣, East may raise to 5♣ for +400 or +420. At tables where West passes as dealer, East may open 1♠, and if West jumps to 4♠, East-West may quest to the five level again. South will lead his singleton club against a spade contract, and the defense will get the ♣A, a ruff and the ♦A, holding East-West to 10 tricks. Meanwhile, North-South can make 5♦ if they can find way to enter the auction (and if North can handle the hearts for one loser). The "par" result is not what you would think: 5♠ doubled for +100 to North-South.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Many Easts will open 2NT. If South intervenes with 3♦, West can cuebid 4♦ as a substitute for Stayman and raise East's 3♠ to 4♠. If South jumps to 4♦, West will double - for penalty unless East-West have a different agreement. South should win eight tricks, -300. (If East opens 1♣, South will bid 3♦.) After two passes, East will reopen with a double. If West takes out to 3♠, East can risk a raise; if West bids 3♥ instead, East can try 3NT, and West should go to 4♠ since East suggested majors by doubling instead of bidding 3NT directly.) Though East-West should score well for +300, 4♠ is makable at double dummy. After the ♦K lead, East can take the ace, ruff a diamond, lead a trump to his jack but then abandon trumps. Eventually, he can endplay North in trumps. East-West will surely get a top for +620.

**Board 26**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Few Easts will open 2♠ vulnerable. South will open 1♣, and North responds 1♥. If East keeps silent, South rebids 1NT. Then North may pass or remove to 2♥, and East may still be unwilling to act. If South plays at 1NT, and West leads the ♦Q, South can win and guess to lead a heart to his jack. With the cards sitting perfectly, he can take four hearts (reaching dummy with the ♣Q) and win a finesse with the ♠Q to end with nine tricks, +150. Norths at hearts will find the same friendly lie of the cards. They should win nine tricks, and the defense must take care not to allow 10. A few Easts will bid. If East boldly opens 2♠, he may play there; if he backs in with 2♠, North-South may attempt a matchpoint double. If South leads the ♥K, East may rack up +670, but with any other lead he will need precise play to avoid -500.

**Board 27**South Deals  
None Vul

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

♠ A K 10 7  
♥ A J 10 6 3  
♦ 10 9 6  
♣ 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

When South opens 1♦, some West will overcall 1♠. North might pursue a penalty at IMP scoring (West would be -300 at 1♠ doubled), but at matchpoints North will bid 2♥. South will rebid 3♣, and North will try 3NT. If East leads a spade to the 8, jack and ace, North can lead a diamond next, finding a favorable lie of that suit, and when the hearts are friendly as well, the defense will get only two tricks. At tables where West declines to overcall on his junky hand, North-South will bid 1♦-1♥, 2♣-2♠, 2NT-3NT. West will probably lead the ♠Q for the same result. We think North-South will need +460 for a good matchpoint score and can indeed win 11 tricks with any lead. But if North is declarer at 3NT and East leads a club, North will need precise play to make the maximum.

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

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

After three passes, South will open 1♦, and North might respond 1NT or, if he doesn't like his weak spade holding for notrump, raise to 2♦ despite having only three-card support. South could raise a 1NT response to 3NT, or jump to 3NT over a raise to 2♦, but even if he settles for an invitational or exploratory sequence, North has a sound minimum hand, and the partnership should arrive at 3NT. If North is declarer and East leads a low heart, North wins with the king, unblocks the ♣A Q and forces out West's ♦A. North can win the heart return and take the ♣K. When East discards, North cashes the diamonds and the ♠A for 10 tricks. We expect +630, though at a few tables North will be allowed to make a second overtrick or somehow hold himself to only nine tricks.

**Board 29**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

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

If West hears three passes, he will open 1♦ and raise East's 1♠ response to 2♠. West's hand is a maximum for a single raise; if he held ♠A J 7 5 ♥A Q 9 7 ♦K 10 7 4 ♣2, he might stretch a bit to raise to 3♠. East will pass 2♠, and South will lead the ♣K. East can take 20 tricks by cashing the A-K of trumps and ruffing two clubs in dummy. He can't manage 11, even if he places South with the ♠Q, since East lacks the transportation to ruff either two clubs in dummy or two hearts in his hand while picking up the trumps. At many tables, South will open a light and lead- directing 1♣ in third seat. This action may make it easier for East-West to reach game. West will double, and if East jumps aggressively to 2♠ to invite, West can raise to 4♠. East-Westers who are +620 will win most of the matchpoints.

**Board 30**  
East Deals  
None Vul

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

At a few tables, North-South won't be in the auction. If West is left to open 1♦ in third chair, East will respond 1♠, West will rebid 1NT and East will run to 2♠. The outcome should be +100 to North-South, a fair result for them, though if South's opening lead is a diamond, North must win and shift to a club to achieve down two. At other tables, South will open 1♥, and North will drive to game: 1♥-2♦, 2♥-3♣, 3NT. West can beat the ambitious notrump game by leading a diamond or a black ace. At tables where South doesn't open, he may come in with 2♥ over East's 1♠. North will do well to pass - South is a passed hand - and East will probably sell out instead of risking being doubled at 2♠ for -300. At hearts, the play may be complex, but South can emerge with nine tricks for +140, a maximum North-South result.

**Board 31**  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

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

After Pass, 1♣-1♥-1♠-Pass, West must choose a rebid. East's 1♠ instead of a negative double promises five or more spades, so a raise to 2♠ would be reasonable. True, West's ♥KJ5 suggests that he be declarer at notrump, but that holding may be a liability at any contract, and West's hand is weak in diamonds. West's winning action is to raise. The defense against 2♠ will tee off with a heart to the ace, a heart ruff and a club shift. East takes the ace and leads a trump. North can rise with his ace and give South another heart ruff, but then East can set up dummy's ♣J for a diamond discard, losing only one more trick. A diamond shift by North at the second trick won't gain for the defense. Some East-Westers will reach 2♠ even if West rebids 1NT, and East-West should score well for +110; Wests at 1NT may go minus.



**Board 32**  
West Deals  
E-W Vul

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

  

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

A solid 1NT opening by North will usually be passed out. West might risk balancing aggressively (with a conventional takeout for the major suits) if his side were not vulnerable. If East leads a major, North can win, force out the ♣A, win the major-suit return and take eight tricks for +120. Some Easts will lead from their only four-card suit. North can put up dummy's ♣10 and next try a diamond to his jack and East's queen. Then East can still hold North to eight tricks with a spade shift, but if East shifts to a heart, North can win, lose to the ♣A, duck East's heart return, win the third heart, cash the ♦A and concede a diamond. He wins three clubs, two diamonds, two hearts and two spades for +150 and an excellent matchpoint result.

**Board 33**  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

  

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

North will often open 1♣. South responds 1♠, and when North rebids 1NT, many Souths will bid 3NT instead of seeking a 5-3 spade fit; they have a balanced hand with ample, well dispersed high-card strength. East will lead a heart, won by the 10, and North might return a heart. East must be alert to grab his ace and lead a diamond to beat the contract. He can infer that North has good spades, else he would be trying to set up the spades. Other Norths may finesse with the ♣J at the second trick – and go down three. North might also run the spades first, but East-West should discard successfully. Many North-Souths will get to 4♠. When East gets in with the ♥A, he must switch to diamonds to win four tricks. North-South will win some matchpoints for -50 and may get a top for a plus score.

**Board 34**  
East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

  

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

When East opens 1♠, South will be reluctant to overcall at the two level, vulnerable, with skimpy values and a five-card suit. West is worth a limit raise to 3♠, and North may judge there is less to gain than to lose by bidding. If East goes on to 4♠, no South will find the lead of the ♥8, which lets North win and return a diamond, for down one. Instead, South may lead the ♥A for -420. We're sure some Norths won't resist entering the auction. If North comes in with 4♥ at his first turn, South can visualize his partner's spade void and take the rare vulnerable-against-not five-level save. Then the best East-West can do is double, and they will consider themselves lucky to be +200; swap the positions of the ♦9 and ♦10, and the "sacrifice" would turn into a make.

**Board 35**  
South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

  

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

South will open 1♦. (He has possible rebid problems; that is sometimes a reason not to open a borderline hand.) Then some Norths will jump to 2NT, invitational. We dislike that treatment because the rest of the auction can be murky, and it will come to grief here: South will pass, and East can lead the ♠K for down two or more. Other Norths will respond 2♦, an "inverted" raise. East may act, but North-South will often play at 3♦ for +110. Many Norths will raise to 3♦, limit. If East passes, South will pass also, and North-South will be +110 again. If instead East comes in with 3♠, North-South may be +100 if they sell out and -50 if they go to 4♦. They will do best to double 3♠, hoping for +200 to protect their likely plus at 3♦. They will also score well if East doubles 3♦; West may take out to 3♥, down a few.

**Board 36**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

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

  

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

After 1♦ by West, 1♠ response, West is too heavy to jump to 3♦, with a seventh diamond and impressive controls. West might force with a reverse to 2♥, especially if East-West may stop below game. East may bid 2NT next, and when West continues with 3♦, East can make the key decision to raise to 4♦. Then if West visualizes an East hand with a high diamond plus a decent spade suit, he can reasonably commit to a slam that may depend at worst on a heart finesse. At 6♦, West wins a club lead, takes the ♠AK, ruffs a spade high and leads the ♦Q. North wins and leads another club. Declarer pitches a heart on the ♣K, ruffs a spade high, draws the missing trump with the king and discards his ♥Q on the good fifth spade. If you were +1370, well done!