

ACBL-wide Senior Pairs #2

Friday Morning – October 5, 2018 – Set 218030



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Barry Rigal



Barry Rigal is a player, author, commentator and syndicated columnist. Born in London in 1958, he has been a professional bridge player since moving to New York in 1994. Rigal has written many books, as well as magazine and newspaper columns and has contributed to the world championship books for two decades. He has also served as the Chief Vugraph commentator for the World Bridge Federation for 10 years.

He has won two North American championships as well as EC Mixed Teams and multiple UK titles. As a professional player, he claims to be the only pro ever to have been shut out by his client from declaring a single board in a session – not for want of trying! At college, Rigal reached the quarterfinal round of the University Challenge for Queen's Oxford – where he suffered the indignity of losing to Queen's Cambridge – and a team headed by the comedian Stephen Fry. He also claims that his tutors awarded him the title of "The laziest man in Oxford."

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

Those Norths who open, swayed by their controls, may buy the hand for their side. N/S can make a partscore in diamonds but not notrump, against which E/W can take at least seven tricks. East does best to lead and continue hearts against 3♦, after which a club shift from West should defeat the contract. But on any other defense declarer's winning line is to guess spades, then endplay East in trumps to open up clubs. If North passes initially, E/W may declare 2♥, when West will have to negotiate both clubs and trumps to record +110, for a fine result.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

When South opens 1♣, West will be split between those who jump to 2♥ and the more extrovert who experiment with a leap to 3♥. West's objective will be to keep N/S out of 4♠, where declarer can ruff out the clubs and take the trump finesse to come to a painless +650. Moreover, if East covers the ♠J prematurely, North can switch to a cross-ruff, and come to no fewer than 12 tricks. If West is doubled for penalty in hearts, N/S can maneuver a diamond ruff after the lead of ♣Q and take eight tricks on defense.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

This is a bidding challenge for N/S. South will bid the majors, North will force to game and rebid his diamonds. Then no doubt South will try for (or drive to) slam despite the lack of an obvious fit. What contract should they aim for? 6NT needs diamonds to split; if they do not, declarer would need all the side suits to behave to come close to 12 tricks. However, 6♦ is almost laydown, because the missing ace is opposite North's void. Frankly, I do not know if it possible to reach the correct slam scientifically, but making 6♦ ought surely to score N/S very well.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

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

Some Wests may preempt to 3♦, even though the hand has too much defense and too weak a suit for such an action. If he does open 3♦, though, he might play there or allow his side to find the good 5♦ sacrifice. While neither opponent has an easy entry into the auction, South rates to balance with 3♠. If West opens 1♦, then N/S should get both their majors into play and might well reach their best game of 4♠. That contract stands or falls on locating ♠Q. By contrast, 4♥ fails because the 4-1 trump break prevents declarer from unblocking spades before drawing trumps.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

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

In third seat, South would not have the vulnerability on his side if he chose to act. A few will pass, but more will try 1♦ — or perhaps even 1♥, for the lead. A 1♥ opening bid may see West overcall 1♠, but North is likely to buy the hand in 1NT. After a spade lead, declarer can drive out the ♦AK, but will do well to escape for -100. Should South open 1♦, then West can bid both majors and end up in 2♠. If North kicks off with the ♣Q, for which one could hardly blame him, declarer might work out how to play clubs and emerge with +110, one way or another.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

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

The high cards are equally divided, not so the two sides' trick-taking capabilities. With the clubs lying miraculously for E/W, they can come to no fewer than 11 tricks in either clubs or hearts (so long as declarer guesses to run the ♣Q, pinning the jack). As against that, North has by far the strongest and longest suit, but his side can take just nine tricks in diamonds. Assuming East deals and passes, it will be hard for his side to get to game at all, and N/S might well steal the contract in diamonds.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

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

West will overcall 1♠ over South's 1♦ opening, after which North might or might not raise to 2♦. If he does, will East commit to a takeout double of 2♦? He surely has the shape, even if not quite the values. Should East act, E/W will find it hard to stop short of game, but if he passes, E/W rate to play a spade partscore. After a diamond lead to South's queen, ducked, South may now shift to a low spade. West can put in the ♠10, drive out the trump ace, and come to at least 10 tricks. Making partscores in spades and clubs are likely to be relatively common here for E/W.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

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

N/S clearly have the values and the fit to consider playing slam, but they need to identify not only the successful slams, but also the highest-scoring ones. You'd expect N/S to locate hearts before spades, whereupon Keycard Blackwood will probably take them to 6♥, where they should rack up 12 tricks for a reasonable score. How do N/S find notrump? Your guess is as good as mine; with the soft club honors working overtime, there are 12 top tricks in that denomination, too.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

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

When the auction starts 1♦-2♣, the vulnerability ought to silence West. If West passes, then N/S will surely bid unopposed, perhaps via a quantitative or keycard sequence, to 6NT. If West does risk a call of 3♥, he risks an 800 penalty, but it would be far harder for North to show his extra values. As a result, some pairs may play six of a minor, and some may miss slam altogether. That is the upside to preempting; what is the downside? Well, wouldn't East lead a heart rather than take his ♠A against 6NT, letting through the overtrick?

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

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

If East opens 1♥ (not everyone will at this vulnerability), then E/W may well throw up a sufficient smokescreen to buy the hand in a spade partscore. If West declares 2♠, he should take at least seven tricks, the precise result depending on whether the defenders accurately shift to hearts early enough in the defense. It won't help South to cover the ♠9, since declarer has all the trump spots. If East passes initially, then N/S might play 3NT, which looks cold. Some Norths may cash the ♦A then, knowing that West started with six spades, might misjudge by passing the ♦8.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

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

This is a fine competitive deal, where each side must judge whether, and how high, to compete in their eight-card fits. At most tables N/S will reach 2♠ by bidding and raising the suit. The issue is then whether West (as a passed hand, non-vulnerable) can risk doubling, either at his first or second turn to speak. If he does, East must compete to 3♥, where the favorable lie of the clubs allow him to bring home +140. N/S can take only eight tricks in spades, precisely because of that same bad club lie. The motto of both Britain's Special Air Service and pairs players should be: "Who dares, wins."

Board 16

West Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 10 8 7
♥ A K 8 7 3
♦ 2
♣ Q 9 4 2

♠ K 3
♥ Q 9 2
♦ A J 10 5 4
♣ K 7 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 9 5 2
♥ J 10 5 4
♦ K 7 3
♣ A

♠ Q 6 4
♥ 6
♦ Q 9 8 6
♣ J 10 8 5 3

Few will have a system gadget to open the West cards (2♥ to show hearts and a minor is still relatively unusual in the US). Nonetheless, even if West passes, E/W ought to be able to find their way to a major-suit game. 4♥ looks considerably easier to bring home than 4♠, as the ninth trump allows declarer to play a cross-ruff in some comfort. Of course, one could certainly imagine West treating his hand as a simple raise of a 1♠ overall, and that might see East stop in a partscore.

Board 17

North Deals

None Vul

♠ A K J 7
♥ K J 9 7
♦ K 6 4 2
♣ 10

♠ —
♥ A 10 8 4
♦ A Q 10
♣ A Q 9 8 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ 3 2
♦ J 9 8 7 3
♣ J 5

♠ 10 8 5 4 2
♥ Q 6 5
♦ 5
♣ K 7 6 3

When North opens 1♣, South will respond 1♠, and whether West doubles or not, North is surely going to reverse into 2♥. Some would play South's rebid of 3♣ as promising values here, since they use a call of 2NT as Lebensohl, to try to put the brakes on. But even if South shows some values, it may be hard for N/S to reach 6♣ scientifically. That contract looks excellent on either red-suit lead (declarer can pitch a heart on the diamonds and arrange a cross-ruff). Yes, 3NT also makes, but somehow you'd be embarrassed to end up there, wouldn't you?

Board 18

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A K Q 7 6
♥ 10 6 2
♦ Q 10
♣ K J 5

♠ 10 9 8 5
♥ 9 5 4
♦ A 8 6 2
♣ 10 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ K 9 5 3
♣ 8 6 4 2

♠ 4 3
♥ A K Q J
♦ J 7 4
♣ A Q 9 3

Some Souths might consider their hand unsuitable, or too strong, to open 1NT. But most will simply bid 1NT, with some Wests passing, hoping to defend 1NT, others overcalling 2♠. So who is right, the bidders or the passers? West should defend 1NT by leading a top spade followed by a low spade to East's jack. On a club shift, declarer should take no more than six tricks. If West plays 2♠, he has eight tricks on the likely club lead. On almost any other defense, if West has to use the ♠J to tackle clubs, the defenders can arrange a trump promotion with the 13th heart.

Board 19

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ K Q 8 4
♥ K Q 2
♦ Q 6 5 3 2
♣ J

♠ 7 6 3
♥ 9 7 6
♦ A K 8
♣ 9 6 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 10 5
♥ A 10 8
♦ 10 4
♣ A K 7 5 2

♠ J 9 2
♥ J 5 4 3
♦ J 9 7
♣ Q 10 8

It is hard to envisage many pairs bidding successfully to 4♠ on this deal; much depends on West's rebid after 1♦ - 2♣. Most will play 3NT, a few by West, more by East. If East declares 3NT on a heart lead he does best to go after diamonds, when the defenders may have to shift to clubs to hold him to nine tricks. If declarer is forced to rely on spades, the 3-3 break sees him home. Where West plays 3NT on a blind auction in which spades have not been bid, he may receive a spade lead and might be allowed to set up diamonds for 10 tricks.

Board 20West Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 9 8 5 4
♥ A 9
♦ 8 5 3 2
♣ 7 3

♠ Q 7
♥ Q J 5 3
♦ A 9 7 4
♣ A Q 2



♠ K 6 2
♥ K 7 2
♦ K Q J 10
♣ K J 5

♠ J 10 3
♥ 10 8 6 4
♦ 6
♣ 10 9 8 6 4

North may not have the world's finest strong notrump, but few will find an alternative action. East will pass, and South doesn't have a clear-cut call, does he? Stayman might work, I suppose (perhaps planning to bid 2♥ over 2♦ then re-correct 2♠ to 3♣?). Most Souths will pass, after which West may balance if he can show spades and a minor. 1NT by North should be held to just four tricks on normal defense, while 4♠ by West has an easy 10 tricks – unless the defenders can find their diamond ruffs.

Board 21North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 6 5 4 3
♥ A 9 7 6
♦ 8 7 6
♣ K 7

♠ K Q J 10 9
♥ 8 2
♦ 4
♣ A J 10 4 3



♠ —
♥ K Q J 10 5 4 3
♦ A 5 2
♣ 9 6 2

♠ A 8 7 2
♥ —
♦ K Q J 10 9 3
♣ Q 8 5

N/S may find it very hard to find the right level at which to declare spades here, whether East overcalls 2♥ or 4♥. Can N/S work out that, despite being off two aces, they rate to have good play for 6♠ without needing the club finesse since diamonds will set up for discards? In fact, the bad trump break means declarer will need the ♣K onside, but today his luck is in. Of course, E/W do have a save, of sorts, in hearts. The problem is that even 'escaping' for 800 may score poorly for the sacrificers, because so many N/S pairs will stop in game.

Board 22East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10 6 5 3
♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ A 2
♣ A 8 3

♠ K J 7 4 2
♥ K
♦ K Q J 9
♣ J 10 7



♠ A Q 9 8
♥ A 5 3 2
♦ 7 3
♣ 9 5 2

♠ —
♥ J 10 9 8
♦ 10 8 6 5 4
♣ K Q 6 4

At most tables, North will find himself able to open in fourth chair. After all, no one else seems to have a clear-cut call, do they? When North opens 1♠ then rebids 2♦ over 1NT, this is likely to be passed back to West, whose weak spade length argues against re-opening. Even if he does double, E/W will locate their heart fit, but N/S can bid on to 3♦, which figures to end the auction. Declarer can take a ruffing finesse against the ♥Q to hold his losers to the three aces. Meanwhile, E/W can play hearts and come to eight tricks painlessly enough.

Board 23South Deals
Both Vul

♠ K J 10
♥ 9 8 6
♦ Q 8 6 3
♣ A 9 3

♠ —
♥ A J 10 7 4
♦ 9 2
♣ Q J 8 6 5 2



♠ Q 9 8 7 6 5 4
♥ K Q
♦ K
♣ K 10 7

♠ A 3 2
♥ 5 3 2
♦ A J 10 7 5 4
♣ 4

Despite his playability in both majors, South's strong diamonds should encourage him to open 2♦. Does North now pass, raise or introduce one of his suits? It is hard to say, but he knows E/W are about to play spades, probably in game, so he might try to prepare the defense by introducing his hearts. Whatever North does, East is sure to bid spades; but will E/W get to game? Though they are missing three aces, they have excellent prospects of 10 tricks – until clubs turn out to be 6-1, and the defenders have the communications to take their ruff.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

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

Some Wests will preempt to 4♥, others will prefer a one-level opener. If West goes low, you'd imagine E/W will climb to 4♥ in the face of spade bids from South. After North leads a spade, there are many variations in the play and defense, but declarer should come to 10 tricks unless he allows a defensive ruff. If West opens 4♥, one could not blame South for balancing with 4♠, after which he is likely to be doubled. On accurate defense, E/W can take four top winners and three club ruffs for 800 (so long as East ruffs his partner's heart winner to generate the extra entry).

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

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

North has a normal maximum 2♥ opener, raised to 3♥ by South. Does West have too much to bid 3♠? I'd say so, though I can see the argument for that call. But if West doubles 3♥, he may end up in 4♠ or somewhere else equally ugly. If he bids 3♠, he will play there and will struggle to find a way to more than eight tricks after a top heart lead. One route is to win ♥A, advance the ♠K, ducked, then shift to clubs, conceding the ruff in order to be able to play diamonds to best advantage. And yes, 4♥ is cold today.

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

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

Some Easts will find a bid here, though the controls really do not make up for the flat shape. If East and South pass, West will be able to show a balanced minimum opener at his first or second turn, allowing East to leave his partner safely in 1NT. There is, after all, a great deal to be said for trying to go plus at pairs. After a heart lead from North, declarer should duck and win the second heart in hand, then advance the ♣K. If North ducks, West will be unable to come to more than seven tricks and might not manage even that.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

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

It may be just an 11-count, but West's additional shape would argue to some for opening 1♦. This appears necessary if E/W are going to reach 6♦, but will it be sufficient to achieve that? If East finds extra shape in a minimum hand opposite, after an inverted-minor sequence, the key would be if he is prepared to go past 3NT to disclose his singleton club. In 6♦, declarer can arrange to ruff two clubs in East, while setting up spades for a heart discard. Note that 3NT goes down on a club lead, so anyone playing 5♦ ought to score respectably enough.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 9 7
♥ Q 4
♦ 10 9 7 6
♣ J 7 6 5

♠ A Q 10
♥ A 7 3 2
♦ 8 3 2
♣ A 9 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 8 6 5
♥ K 10 6 5
♦ K
♣ K Q 8 4

♠ 4 3 2
♥ J 9 8
♦ A Q J 5 4
♣ 10 3

North cannot quite stretch to open 1NT, so he will open 1♣ and rebid 1NT if his partner's 1♦ call tends to deny a major. That leaves East a choice of leads against 1NT. Declarer will win the likely heart lead in hand to play a diamond up. It looks logical to clear diamonds, planning to use hearts as a re-entry to dummy. E/W should now get clubs going before North establishes his extra winners to hold him to +120. While there will be a multiplicity of final contracts on this deal, achieving a plus score ought to score nicely enough for either side.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul

♠ A J 2
♥ 10 7 2
♦ J 9 5
♣ 9 7 4 2

♠ 6
♥ 8 6 5
♦ A Q 10 7 4 3
♣ A J 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 10 8 7 3
♥ Q
♦ K 8 6 2
♣ Q 8 3

♠ K 9 5 4
♥ A K J 9 4 3
♦ —
♣ K 10 5

You'd imagine North would open 1♦ here, rather than pass or preempt. Now, whether East overcalls in spades or not, South rates to play 4♥ at the vast majority of tables. If West heeds his partner's overcall (be careful of what you wish for!) and leads ♠A, declarer should come to 12 tricks by ruffing two spades in dummy. Only a small trump lead defeats the slam, killing the spade ruffs in dummy. In fact even 11 tricks appears to be a struggle now.

Board 30East Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 7 6
♥ A 8 7 3
♦ 10 8 7 6
♣ 9 3

♠ K Q J 8 3
♥ 10 6 5 4 2
♦ Q
♣ A J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 5 2
♥ K
♦ 9 5 3
♣ K 10 8 7 6 5

♠ 10 4
♥ Q J 9
♦ A K J 4 2
♣ Q 4 2

N/S have a choice of three playable games, of which 4♥ looks easiest. The 4-1 trump break means that after a diamond lead, declarer must take care to pitch his club loser early. By contrast, 4♠ only has a chance to make because of the heart blockage. 3NT by North has four spade tricks, three diamonds and two club winners. But repeated club leads defeat 3NT by South; East simply ducks one spade and wins the next to clear clubs. He still has his heart entry to cash the clubs, and South cannot cross back and forth in diamonds to take his winners.

Board 31

South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q J 9 2
♥ A 6
♦ K Q 10
♣ A Q 7 5

♠ A 10 8 7
♥ J 10 7 3
♦ A J 9
♣ J 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 5
♥ 9 4
♦ 7 6 5 3 2
♣ K 9 8 6 3

♠ K 6 4 3
♥ K Q 8 5 2
♦ 8 4
♣ 4 2

When West opens 1♣, will East raise to 3♣, meaning it as preemptive (0-5 HCP) rather than a mixed raise (4-8 HCP)? A lot depends on partnership agreement, but if West passes 3♣, he may tempt North into balancing with a double. West could saw off his opponents in 3♥ and collect +200 for a great result. However, since 3♣ produces a painless +110, if West elects to pass out 3♥, then +100 may not score his side too well. Meanwhile, any E/W who bid to 3NT or 4♣ will regret their optimism.

Board 32

West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 5
♥ K 10 6 5 3
♦ A K J 9 8 3
♣ —

♠ J 10 9 4 3 2
♥ 2
♦ Q 7
♣ Q J 8 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 7
♥ A 7 4
♦ 10 6 4 2
♣ A 10 9 7

♠ K 8 6
♥ Q J 9 8
♦ 5
♣ K 6 5 4 2

Whether West opens 1♦ or 1♥, North is likely to overcall 2♠, leaving E/W with quite a struggle to reach their highest-scoring contract. While 6♦ is simple enough to play, 6♥ is quite a different story on a spade lead. West must fly up with ♠A and cash the ♣A to pitch his spade loser, then will have to guess how to tackle trumps. The winning move is to lead out a low trump from East, covering South's card. But that is far from obvious, and declarer might well instead try the trump ace and another trump, after which South can defeat the slam by splitting his honors.

Board 33

North Deals
None Vul

♠ K 10 7 4
♥ 7
♦ 9 8 6 5
♣ A 8 6 5

♠ Q 3
♥ 10 9 8 5 2
♦ K J 3
♣ K 9 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 8 5 2
♥ A K 6
♦ 10 7
♣ Q 3 2

♠ 9 6
♥ Q J 4 3
♦ A Q 4 2
♣ J 10 7

When East opens 1♠, some Wests will make a limit raise, some a simple raise, while others may opt for a Bergen sequence. All of these calls have their merits, but if West invites game with a limit raise, then East will surely accept. However, if West shows constructive values, be it via Bergen or a simple raise, East rates to settle for a partscore. 4♠ is an uninspiring contract, which needs ♠Q to behave and for declarer to hold his losers in clubs to one trick. Today, the cards cooperate nicely, so the field will take at least 10 tricks, whether in partscore or game.

Board 34

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 2	♠ A 10	♠ K J 8									
♥ 9 8 7 3	♥ K J 5 2	♥ A Q 10									
♦ A K J 7 4 2	♦ Q 8	♦ 9 5 3									
♣ A 2	♣ J 10 8 7 6	♣ Q 9 5 4									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 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		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 9 7 6 5 4 3										
	♥ 6 4										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ K 3										

When East opens 1♣, as most will, South's overcall of 2♠ gives West the problem of whether to bid diamonds or double. All routes should result in East playing 3NT, though. After a spade lead and continuation, East may well cover North's ♠10 with the jack. If South wins and clears spades, might East finesse diamonds into the safe hand? As against that, South could shift to either hearts or clubs at trick three. While declarer can bring in both red suits for no losers, in practice it will be hard for him to take more than 10 tricks. And many might settle for +400.

Board 35

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K J 7 4	♠ A 10 5	♠ Q 9 8 2									
♥ 3	♥ J 7 2	♥ K Q 10 9 8 4									
♦ 8 7 4 2	♦ A 10 6 3	♦ —									
♣ 10 8 4 2	♣ A K 6	♣ Q 5 3									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 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		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 6 3										
	♥ A 6 5										
	♦ K Q J 9 5										
	♣ J 9 7										

N/S have the values to play 3NT, with no realistic chance of game or slam in diamonds. You'd imagine that whether South judges his cards as worth an opening bid, and whether East gets his heart suit into play or not, N/S will end up in 3NT, probably from the North seat. After a top heart lead from East, North does best to duck. He can then give up one spade, win the next, and run the diamonds. East will now be forced to discard his spades or unguard his ♣Q. Accordingly, declarer can establish a 10th trick by force.

Board 36

West Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 9 7 2	♠ Q 10 8 4	♠ 5									
♥ A Q 2	♥ K J 7 3	♥ 10 8 6									
♦ A Q J 4 3	♦ 7 5	♦ K 6									
♣ 4	♣ 8 5 3	♣ A K Q 9 7 6 2									
	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 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		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K J 6 3										
	♥ 9 5 4										
	♦ 10 9 8 2										
	♣ J 10										

A spectacular note to finish on, although there is nothing to the play of this deal at all. With clubs and diamonds behaving, there are 14 top tricks for E/W, but reaching the grand slam with a combined 29 HCP is quite another matter. If you use a sequence such as 1♦ - 2♣ - 2♠ - 3♣ - 4NT to be quantitative and approximately these values, then East is quite likely to jump to slam in either clubs or notrump. You'd assume that reaching 6NT will generate a reasonable matchpoint result, while 6♣ would be close to an average, but one never knows.