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Analyses 7M69

Royal Viking Pairs

by Richard Pavlicek

The 36 deals in this collection were played September 22, 1988 in the second annual “Instant Matchpoint” Pairs, a continent-wide event conducted by the American Contract Bridge League, and sponsored by Royal Viking Cruise Lines. The analyses were written by Richard Pavlicek and originally published in a souvenir booklet given to each participant after the game.

Regardless of whether you played in this event, these analyses provide instructive reading with many tips on bidding and play. To benefit even further, prepare these deals in duplicate boards (or have someone else do it) and *play them*. Determine your matchpoint scores from the tables (top is 100) then compare your bidding and play with my write-up.

North Deals **Board 1** None Vul

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

♠ 9 3
 ♥ Q J 8 6 5 3
 ♦ Q 7 6 3
 ♣ A

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ K 8
 ♥ K 7
 ♦ A K 4 2
 ♣ J 9 7 6 5

After two passes South has a choice of openings: 1♣ is the normal call, intending to rebid 1NT after a major-suit response; 1♦ is desirable as a lead director; and a few may shade a point and open 1NT (15-17) as a tactical move. None of these choices, however, will quiet West. A common sequence will be:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♣
1♥	1♠	2♥	Pass
Pass	2♠?	Pass	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

North's 2♠ bid is unsightly (a competitive double is better if available), but some action is necessary to avoid a poor score. Three hearts is routinely down one.

Two spades can be made with careful timing, as clubs can be developed for a diamond discard.

Three clubs might be made. After a heart lead and the ♦9 switch, declarer can succeed by winning the ♦A; ♠K; ♠A; ♥K; club, and West is endplayed... but this is tainted by hindsight. With less inspired play, declarer cannot escape the loss of two diamond tricks, provided East leads diamonds when in with the ♥A and ♣Q.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 1

.....100	..... 71	-140..... 7
+300.....100	+50..... 61	-150..... 4
.....98	..... 51	..... 2
+140.....98	-50..... 41	-200..... 0
.....96	..... 31	..... 0
+110.....91	-100..... 21	
+100.....79	-110..... 9	
+90.....73	..... 9	

East Deals **Board 2** N-S Vul

♠ 9 8
 ♥ A Q 10 9 8
 ♦ 7 3 2
 ♣ K 7 4

♠ 10 5 2
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A K 9 4
 ♣ A Q J 8 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 4 3
 ♥ J 7
 ♦ Q J 6
 ♣ 10 9 3 2

♠ K Q 7 6
 ♥ K 6 5 4 2
 ♦ 10 8 5
 ♣ 6

West has a similar opening-bid problem to South's on the previous deal: how to bid with four diamonds, five clubs and insufficient strength for a reverse. I prefer to open 1♣ unless the high cards are extremely lopsided, such as ♦A-K-Q-x ♣Q-x-x-x-x. The occasional rebid problem is minimized if one takes a practical view — for example, I would rebid 2♣ after a 1♥ response, but raise a 1♠ response to 2♠.

As usual, the bidding never goes as expected:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♣	1♥	Dbl*	3♥
?			

*negative

West will be tempted to compete (3♠ is a reasonable gamble), but he does better to pass and get a plus score. Double is also plausible if *competitive*, though a penalty double might win the man-of-the-year award.

East-West can win only nine tricks in clubs, as long as North leads a spade at some point (else South can be endplayed for a 10th trick).

North-South Matchpoints — Board 2

.....100	..... 53	..... 9
+300.....99	-100..... 50	-500..... 5
.....96	-110..... 39	..... 2
+150.....95	..... 31	-530..... 0
.....93	-130..... 30	..... 0
+100.....89	-140..... 26	
.....82	..... 24	
+50.....68	-200..... 16	

South Deals **Board 3** E-W Vul

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

After a 1♠ opening by West in second seat, point-count fanatics may consider the East hand too strong for 2♠; but secondary honors (queens and jacks) are over-valued for suit play, so the single raise is adequate. West should make a game try with 3♥, and East should raise to 4♥ to give West a choice of contracts.

Four hearts is a tenuous contract with the 4-1 trump break. After a likely club lead to the jack and ace, declarer should start spades — low to the queen being the normal play. If South wins the ace, he should shift to a *trump*; else declarer can pursue a successful crossruff. Better yet is for South to *duck* the ♠Q (and the next round too), which virtually assures that North will score the jack. Perfect defense should prevail unless declarer guesses spades.

Four spades plays more easily, but might be defeated if declarer suffers a heart ruff and misguesses trumps.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 3		
.....100	..... 76	..... 0
+400.....100	-500..... 75	
.....98	..... 73	
+200.....96	-620..... 56	
.....93	..... 38	
+100.....90	-650..... 19	
.....84	..... 2	
-170.....81	-1100..... 0	

West Deals **Board 4** Both Vul

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

East-West can make 5♦, their eight-card fit, but *not* 5♣, their nine-card fit, because of the lurking diamond ruff. Could the computer be trying to tell us something? In any case, those who reach diamonds instead of clubs can attribute their success only to blind luck.

After 1♥ by West, most North players will overcall 1♠, and East will often bid 2♦ — though a negative double to show *both* minors is preferable. South should leap to 4♠ as a preemptive measure — it might make on a lucky day — and this puts West on the spot. I would pass (forcing) if East had bid 2♦, after which East has a close decision whether to bid 5♣ or double. After a negative double, however, I would bid 5♣ with the West hand. (I'm glad I didn't get to play this deal.)

East-West pairs who double 4♠ will collect 200 for a good score, thanks to the elusiveness of 5♦.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 4			
.....100	..... 64	..... 31	..... 0
+730.....98	-130..... 60	-500..... 30	
.....93	..... 56	..... 29	
+300.....93	-150..... 48	-600..... 17	
.....91	..... 40	..... 7	
+200.....85	-170..... 39	-620..... 5	
.....78	..... 38	..... 4	
+100.....72	-200..... 34	-750..... 1	

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

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



North's hand should qualify as a weak two-bid, even for the strictest disciplinarian, and South must judge the chances for game. This is best done by picturing some possible maximums:

- A. ♠ x ♥ A-Q-x-x-x-x ♦ x-x-x ♣ A-x-x
- B. ♠ x-x ♥ A-Q-x-x-x-x ♦ x-x-x ♣ A-x
- C. ♠ x ♥ A-Q-x-x-x-x ♦ A-x-x ♣ x-x-x
- D. ♠ x-x ♥ A-Q-x-x-x-x ♦ A-x-x ♣ x-x

Game is excellent opposite Hand A; good opposite B or C; and fair opposite D. This suggests that the two most important assets are a singleton spade and the ♣ A.

A few South players may have methods to locate a singleton, but most will bid 2NT to ask for a feature. North should rebid 3♦ (most consider Q-J-x a feature), and South should be content with 3♥.

Four hearts, of course, has no play unless East-West find the inspired defense (make that *perspired* defense) of king and another spade, followed by a third spade to send their ♣ A to bed.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 5

.....100	..... 76	..... 0
+650.....100	+170..... 74	
.....98	..... 71	
+620.....90	+140..... 64	
.....80	..... 56	
+600.....79	0..... 55	
.....78	..... 43	
+500.....77	-100..... 26	

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

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



Attention! All East players who opened 1♥ or 2♥, please return to your cages.

South will normally open the bidding, and the vulnerability should quiet West. Those who play 1NT forcing will usually start this way:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
Pass	?		

North must then decide whether to bid conservatively with 2♠ or aggressively with 2NT; over the latter South may rebid his anemic suit, ending in game. Traditional bidders who respond 2♦ as North are also likely to reach game.

Ten tricks can be won in spades by conceding two trump tricks — declarer must resist trying for a heart ruff — then ducking a diamond to establish the suit, *unless* West leads a diamond from the go. Continued diamond leads prevent declarer, lacking a side entry to dummy, from using that suit; after which perfect defense holds him to nine tricks.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 6

.....100	..... 58	..... 27	..... 7
+800.....99	+400..... 57	+140..... 23	-50..... 5
.....96	..... 56	+130..... 18	..... 4
+500.....82	+300..... 53	..... 18	-100..... 2
.....67	..... 51	+110..... 14	..... 2
+450.....66	+200..... 45	+100..... 9	-300..... 0
.....64	..... 40	..... 9	..... 0
+420.....61	+170..... 33	0..... 7	

South Deals **Board 7** Both Vul

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

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

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

An off-shape weak two-bid by South would make things difficult, but most will pass and allow East-West a free run for their laydown slam. Using the strong, artificial 2♣ opening, I like this auction:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
2♣	Pass	2♦	Dbl
3♣	Pass	4♣	Pass
6♣	All Pass		

East's raise to 4♣ shows useful values (typically 5-7 points), since otherwise he would bid 3♦ as a second jump to 4♦ over 3♣. West's final bid of 6♣ appears chancy, but it is based on sound matchpoint strategy. You won't win any ribbons playing five of a minor when 3NT is likely to make, so the gamble has much more to gain than to lose.

Those who play 3NT with a diamond lead have 10 top tricks and can win 11 if they guess to take the heart finesse. A few may be set if they try the spade finesse early on.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 7

.....100	..... 87	-1370..... 35
+500.....100	-600..... 86	..... 2
.....98	..... 84	-1440..... 0
+400.....96	-620..... 83	..... 0
.....93	-630..... 79	
+300.....93	..... 78	
.....91	-660..... 74	
+100.....90	..... 69	

West Deals **Board 8** None Vul

♠ K 10 6
 ♥ 8
 ♦ 9 5 4 2
 ♣ A 9 7 5 4

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

♠ A 9 7
 ♥ A K J 3 2
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ K 6 3

Some East players may make a frisky weak 2♦ bid in third seat — don't laugh; these bids are often effective and difficult to penalize — but most will pass and hear this auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Against 3NT East will usually lead the ♦K, and declarer must duck the first round — else West can *unblock* the jack to enable the suit to run. The problem is to develop the club suit without letting East gain the lead. As the cards lie, declarer cannot go wrong, but the best play is to lead toward the ♣A (duck only if West plays the queen) then lead toward the king. If East plays the *lowest* outstanding club, duck; otherwise, win the king and clear the suit. This succeeds if East has Q-8-2, J-8-2, 10-8-2 or any doubleton.

After running the clubs, declarer can win a 10th trick if he diagnoses the end position. West can be endplayed in spades to lead into dummy's heart tenace.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 8

.....100	..... 62	+110..... 32
+1100..100	+400..... 53	..... 31
.....98	..... 44	-50..... 18
+800.....98	+180..... 42	..... 7
.....96	..... 40	-100..... 2
+460.....94	+150..... 39	..... 0
.....91	+140..... 35	
+430.....77	..... 33	

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

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



After South opens 1♥ in third seat, West must decide how to describe his powerhouse. One possibility:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1♥
Dbl	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♠	All Pass		

East should resist the impulse to pass 1♥ doubled (likely down four for 800) as his trumps seem slightly inadequate. With ♥Q-J-10-9-7 I'd go for it.

West needs little besides the trump fit for slam, so the final stab is justified, though it may have been wiser to offer a choice with 6♦ in case East has something like ♠x-x-x ♥K-x-x ♦J-x-x-x ♣x-x-x.

Those who use the Michaels cue-bid may employ that gadget and reach 6♠ from the East side, but that is of little consequence. One trump trick must be lost, and only the most egregious line of play would fail to bring home 12 tricks.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 9

.....100	.....84	-710.....35
-130.....100	-630.....84	.....34
.....98	.....82	-800.....27
-150.....98	-650.....82	.....22
.....96	-660.....79	-1430.....14
-230.....92	.....78	.....2
.....87	-680.....57	-1460.....0
-600.....86	.....36	.....0

East Deals **Board 10** Both Vul

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



After two passes West should open 2♥. I know, the suit is disgusting, but the 6-4 shape and the strategic advantage of a third-seat preempt compensate. If you pass with hands like this, your opponents will have few problems.

Speaking of problems: How do you get to 5♣ (or 6♣ for all the marbles) after 2♥? It is unattractive to double with a singleton spade; but with so many points, that seems the best start. South will bid spades (assuming East passed) and there you are. Don't tell me you'd bid clubs; I know you would bid 3NT.

Three notrump can be made after a heart lead: seven, jack, king, ace; but it requires double-dummy play. On the run of the clubs, East must discard three spades (if he throws two spades and a diamond, declarer concedes a diamond) then a *spade* is led. West wins and returns a heart; but declarer refuses the finesse and exits with a heart to Bath-coup East in diamonds. Yeah, sure.

Five clubs is easy and 6♣ is makable by taking the heart finesse (note the ♣9 entry) to shed a diamond; then declarer establishes the last diamond.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 10

.....100	.....84	.....33	-110.....7
+1540..100	+620.....84	+150.....26	.....7
.....98	.....82	.....20	-200.....4
+1370...98	+600.....64	+130.....18	.....2
.....96	.....44	.....18	-300.....0
+910.....95	+500.....43	+110.....16	.....0
.....93	.....42	.....16	.....0
+750.....90	+170.....38	-100.....11	.....0

South Deals **Board 11** None Vul

♠ A 4
 ♥ K 9 6 4
 ♦ 9 6 4
 ♣ A J 3 2

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ 9 7 6 3 2
 ♥ Q 7 2
 ♦ 2
 ♣ K 7 5 4

You don't see many minor-suit partscore contests, but this is likely to be one. A probable auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♣	1 ♦	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	Pass	3 ♣
3 ♦	All Pass		

South perhaps is walking on thin ice, but who wants to sell out for 2 ♦? East-West hold the clear majority of points, but they have no better contract than a diamond partscore.

The success of 3 ♦ hinges entirely on the play of the heart suit. If declarer plays the suit early, he can be defeated, but it should be routine to eliminate the black suits first. Then the ♥J is passed to North, who is endplayed (South cannot gain by covering) — even so, declarer could go wrong if he plays North for K-Q instead of K-9.

In notrump East-West can win only seven tricks, but some will steal eight when North-South fail to lead hearts before the ♠A is dislodged.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 11

.....100	..... 73	-200..... 2
+170.....100	-90..... 72	..... 2
.....98	-100..... 68	-800..... 0
+100.....95	-110..... 41	..... 0
.....91	-120..... 11	
+50.....85	..... 9	
.....78	-150..... 6	
-50.....76	..... 4	

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

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

♠ K 3
 ♥ 8 2
 ♦ K J 8 7 5 2
 ♣ A J 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ 9 7 4
 ♥ Q 6 3
 ♦ 10 9 4 3
 ♣ Q 7 5

After 1 ♦ by West, Michaels cue-bidders will have a field day with this one. North will cue-bid 2 ♦ to show both majors, then insist on game after eliciting a heart preference from South.

Standard bidders have a harder time. It is reasonable to overcall 1 ♥ or 1 ♠, double, or cue-bid 2 ♦; but each of these actions has drawbacks. Lacking Michaels, my choice is to cue-bid anyway and hope for the best.

After a diamond (or trump) lead, declarer can win 12 tricks in hearts by using the ♥Q entry to take *one* spade finesse; but this requires the ♠K doubleton. Alternatively, and probably better at matchpoints, is to enter the South hand with a third heart (did you remember to unblock?) to repeat the spade finesse. This is the best play for 11 tricks.

East-West have a great sacrifice in 5 ♦. With a correct club guess declarer is down one if North cashes out; down two if North *underleads* in hearts. But if North cashes two hearts and leads a club... hallelujah!

North-South Matchpoints — Board 12

.....100	..... 89	..... 44	.....22	-500.....2
+1660..100	+850..... 85	+500..... 43	+50.....16	.....2
.....98	..... 80	..... 42	.....11	-550.....0
+1190...98	+680..... 78	+300..... 39	-100..... 9	.....0
.....96	..... 76	..... 36	-110..... 7	
+1050...94	+650..... 61	+200..... 34	..... 7	
.....91	..... 47	..... 33	-400..... 5	
+990.....91	+620..... 45	+100..... 27	..... 4	

North Deals **Board 13** Both Vul

♠ Q 3
 ♥ Q 3
 ♦ 10 7 6 2
 ♣ A Q 10 9 2

♠ A K J 10 5
 ♥ J 9 8
 ♦ 9
 ♣ K J 8 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 6 4
 ♥ A K 2
 ♦ A Q J 8 5 3
 ♣ 7 4

♠ 9 8 7 2
 ♥ 10 7 6 5 4
 ♦ K 4
 ♣ 6 3

Most East-West pairs will begin with this sequence:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
3♣	Dbl	?	

East's next call normally would be 3NT, but the lead-directing double makes this undesirable. Better is 3♥ to show a stopper, after which West can bid 3NT to protect his club holding.

North has no attractive lead against 3NT. After a club lead, declarer wins and finesses the ♦Q; club through and North clears the suit; ♠A; ♥A-K, and when the queen drops, declarer has nine tricks — unless he gets greedy and takes the spade finesse.

After the ♥Q lead, declarer should finesse the ♠J, win the heart return with the jack, finesse the ♦J, and North can win only two clubs tricks before declarer takes nine.

Easts who declare 3NT should fail unless they make a double-dummy play in spades or diamonds — hold your cards back!

North-South Matchpoints — Board 13

.....100	..... 73	-660..... 6
+500.....100	+100..... 65	..... 2
.....98	..... 56	-1100..... 0
+400.....98	-600..... 43	..... 0
.....96	..... 31	
+300.....94	-620..... 28	
.....91	-630..... 18	
+200.....83	..... 11	

East Deals **Board 14** None Vul

♠ A Q 10 8 2
 ♥ A J 5 3
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ Q 7

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 6 5 4
 ♥ 9 8 7
 ♦ 8 2
 ♣ K J 8 6

♠ K J 9 3
 ♥ K Q 10 4 2
 ♦ 9 5
 ♣ 4 2

Here's a cute one. Each side can win 11 tricks, yet only West has extreme distribution. How many diamonds did you bid as West in third seat?

Opening 5♦ is a standout — not just resultwise, but based on the exceptional playing strength and shortness in the majors — after which North will double (optional as most experts play). South's hand seems too balanced to remove the double, so West is headed for an excellent score, unless he misguesses clubs.

If West opens anything less than 5♦, North-South will surely bid to 4♥ or 4♠; then if West bids further, they will be more likely to compete to the five level.

The play in spades is routine for 11 tricks, irrespective of the lead, but in hearts, declarer is in danger of a spade ruff. This ruff is unlikely to be found, so West does best to bid one more for the road.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 14

.....100	..... 38
+690.....100	-400..... 36
.....98	..... 36
+450.....75	-550..... 18
.....51	..... 2
+100.....47	-610..... 0
.....42	..... 0
-50.....40	

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

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

East-West can make a grand slam in hearts, but this should elude all but a few after a highly competitive auction. Here's one possibility:

West	North	East	South
			1 ♣
1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♠	4 ♠
Pass	Pass	5 ♣	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥	All Pass

North-South are slowed by the vulnerability, but some pairs will take the sacrifice in 6 ♠ or 7 ♣, either of which is profitable. But this may tempt East to bid 7 ♥, after which North-South must bid 7 ♠ to salvage any kind of score.

In spades it appears that declarer will lose just two trumps and a diamond, but the defense can do better: Lead a heart to tap South, then if declarer leads: (1) the ♠ K, duck; (2) low to the ♠ Q, win and continue hearts; (3) a diamond, continue diamonds to tap North; (4) a club, don't ruff. After any of these starts, proper defense can win at least four tricks.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 15

.....100	..... 89	-800..... 35	-1310..... 5
+790.....100	-200..... 78	..... 33	..... 2
..... 98	..... 67	-1010..... 25	-1530..... 0
+620..... 98	-440..... 64	..... 18	..... 0
..... 96	..... 60	-1100..... 15	
+50..... 95	-500..... 52	..... 13	
..... 93	-510..... 41	-1190..... 10	
-100..... 92	..... 38	..... 9	

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

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

Most East-West pairs will duplicate this auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All Pass		

But some West players may forgo Stayman and raise immediately to 2 NT or 3 NT, which is not a bad idea with scattered, aceless values.

Four hearts is makable against any defense, but the play is tenuous and many will fail. Assume South starts a low diamond to the 10, ace; and North returns the suit. It is premature to draw trumps, so I would lead a spade to the king; South wins and probably returns a spade — the old scare tactic. Anyway, declarer doesn't need the finesse, so ♠ Q; heart to the ace; ♦ Q; spade ruff; ♣ A; ♣ K; club ruff with the ♥ 9 (don't send a boy). South can overruff, but declarer wins the rest with routine play.

The key to success was not leading a second round of trumps after the ominous 10 appeared.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 16

.....100	..... 29
+200..... 93	-620..... 16
..... 84	-630..... 2
+100..... 65	..... 2
..... 44	-790..... 0
-140..... 43	..... 0
..... 42	
-600..... 35	

North Deals **Board 17** None Vul

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

Most North-South pairs will begin:

West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦
Pass	1 NT	Pass	?

Whether South's hand is worth a raise to 2 NT is moot. If North could have 15 HCP, the raise is correct; but if his maximum is 14 (as it would be if playing 15-17 notrumps), I favor the pass. In any event, it is right to pass *this time*.

East has no outstanding lead; in fact, any of the four suits might be chosen. The ♥ Q turns out to be the killer; a low spade is about neutral; a low club helps declarer; and a diamond... well, the manure pile.

After the ♥ Q lead, declarer does well to win seven tricks. Hold up to discover the heart lie; test diamonds (oops); knock out the ♠ A; then guess clubs correctly — the odds favor East to have the ♣ A if West passed with K-J-8-x-x in hearts. Declarer has an easier time with other leads and could win as many as 10 tricks with misdefense.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 17

.....100	..... 87	-50..... 22
+590.....100	+150..... 82	..... 13
.....98	..... 76	-100..... 7
+430.....98	+120..... 64	..... 2
.....96	+110..... 50	-150..... 0
+300.....95	+100..... 48	..... 0
.....93	+90..... 39	
+180.....91	..... 31	

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

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

Some West players, persuaded no doubt by the vulnerability, will open 1♥ in third seat. North will double, then a raise to 2♥ puts South on the spot. I would overbid slightly with 2NT (it's hard to ignore three stoppers) and North probably would bid 3NT — a little high, but with chances.

If West passes originally, North will open 1♣ and South will respond 1NT, which should go undisturbed.

Well, let's see if West was smart to open. Can 3NT be made? Assuming a heart lead (don't tell me you wouldn't), declarer can develop nine tricks by leading a spade to the jack; ♦ A; ♦ Q (ducked); diamond. Win the heart return, cash the last diamond *and the last heart* (else you can be locked out of it), then lead a spade.

The preceding works nicely but has a double-dummy tinge. It is also reasonable — arguably better — to run the ♦ J at trick two, after which communication issues prevent declarer from succeeding.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 18

.....100	..... 87	+90..... 24
+670.....100	+200..... 85	..... 18
.....98	..... 82	+50..... 15
+600.....96	+150..... 78	..... 13
.....93	..... 73	-100..... 7
+500.....93	+120..... 60	..... 2
.....91	+110..... 42	-200..... 0
+300.....90	+100..... 34	..... 0

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

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



Some South players may open 1♦, but most will opt for 2♣ (strong and artificial). I like this auction:

West	North	East	South
			2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♦*	Pass	3♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	*Jacoby transfer

Hands with 5-4-2-2 shape are best treated as balanced when both doubletons include stoppers; hence, the 2NT rebid. North offers a choice between 3NT and 4♥, and South prefers notrump.

After the obvious club lead, declarer has 11 easy tricks and is well advised to take them for an above-average score.

Did you notice how diabolical a diamond would be? If declarer wins in hand (saving the ♦J as an entry) and unblocks hearts, he can be *defeated* — East wins the first spade and leads a club through to establish West's suit before declarer can win nine tricks. Ten tricks can be made by running the diamonds first, unblocking hearts, then leading either black suit.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 19

.....100	+420	18	-100.....	1
+490.....	100	.....	16	.....
+480.....	96	+170	14	
.....	93	.....	13	
+460.....	62	+110	10	
+450.....	30	.....	9	
.....	29	-50	6	
+430.....	25	.....	4	

West Deals **Board 20** Both Vul

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



Point-count zealots may pass the West hand, but three quick tricks, a five-card suit and a couple of tens should persuade most to open. A probable one-sided auction:

West	North	East	South
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Or if South, disguised as Clark Kent, interjects a 1♠ overcall, West will pass, North will raise, and East should take a stab at the same game.

Four hearts is a sound contract, basically requiring the ♦A onside, but it is destined to go down, unless South inexplicably leads a diamond. The defenders can end it quickly with a spade lead and a diamond shift, but most will start passively with a club or a trump. Nevertheless, analysis shows that 4♥ can always be defeated — even with double-dummy play — but North has some painful discards to make if declarer runs trumps.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 20

.....100	-170	44	-600.....	21	-800.....	0
+200.....	99	.....	38	.....	20	.....
.....	96	-200	33	-620.....	16	
+110.....	93	.....	29	.....	13	
+100.....	82	-230	26	-650.....	8	
.....	73	.....	24	.....	4	
-140.....	62	-500	23	-730.....	2	
.....	51	.....	22	.....	2	

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

♠ 6 5
 ♥ J 9 7 5 4 2
 ♦ J 8 4 2
 ♣ A

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 7
 ♥ 10
 ♦ K 9 6
 ♣ Q J 9 6 4 3

♠ 8 3 2
 ♥ 6 3
 ♦ A 10 7 5 3
 ♣ K 7 5

A few desperadoes may open the North hand with 2♥ — causing the late, great Howard Schenken to turn in his grave — but let's get back to bridge. Most East-West pairs will duplicate this auction:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

A few Easts may raise spades directly with A-K-x, ready with the "I owe you a spade" line when they lay down the dummy.

Four spades is routinely down one if North leads the ♣A, then shifts to a diamond so South can win the ♣K and give North a ruff. Any other defense, of course, gives declarer a cakewalk.

How do you reach the laydown 3NT? I see no logical sequence unless... Yes, of course! If North opens 2♥, it might go 3♣, pass, 3NT — 10 tricks with a heart lead. And who said there's no justice in this game?

North-South Matchpoints — Board 21

.....100	..... 69
+100.....98	-420..... 47
.....93	-430..... 21
+50.....85	..... 18
.....76	-450..... 8
-200.....75	..... 0
.....73	
-400.....72	

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

♠ J 5 4
 ♥ J 6 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ A K Q J 9 6

♠ 3 2
 ♥ A 8 7 5 4
 ♦ A Q J 3
 ♣ 7 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Using negative doubles, the bidding should begin:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♥	2♣	Dbl	Pass
2♦	?		

North might compete to 3♣ — "nonvulnerable" to some means *invulnerable* — but East will raise to 3♦, which should become the final contract.

Against 3♦ North will cash two clubs; then he should shift to a trump, else declarer can make 10 tricks with a well-timed crossruff. Even so, declarer has a clever counter: Win the ♦J; ♥A; ruff a heart, and lead the ♣10 to *pitch a spade* (South cannot gain by ruffing) — North then has no trump to return, so the crossruff is back in town.

Can 3♦ be held to nine tricks? Yes, but even one round of clubs is too many. It takes an *opening* trump lead; then South can gain the lead in spades to lead a second trump before declarer can execute the avoidance maneuver in clubs.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 22

.....100	..... 78	-110..... 45
+200.....99	+90..... 75	..... 36
.....96	..... 71	-130..... 19
+180.....95	0..... 70	..... 4
.....93	..... 69	-150..... 1
+130.....87	-50..... 65	..... 0
.....80	..... 60	
+110.....79	-100..... 58	

South Deals **Board 23** Both Vul

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



Some Wests will open 2♦ — poor tactics holding seven major-suit cards. Failing that, a few Norths will open a third-seat 1♥ — not bad if that's your style. But most East-West pairs will replicate this auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

Against 3NT South does best to lead a spade, after which declarer may be held to nine tricks. Ten tricks can be won by leading a heart from dummy (after holding up in spades and before cashing clubs); but this risks going down if South holds the ace. Note that declarer should put up the *king*, as the only chance to gain is that North has the ace.

If South leads a club originally, 11 tricks are routine.

Those who play 5♦ will make it on the nose for the expected below-average score — though it beats those who play 6♦, or any other number of diamonds.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 23

.....100	..... 69
+300.....100	-630..... 56
.....98	..... 42
+200.....98	-660..... 24
.....96	..... 7
+100.....92	-690..... 2
.....87	..... 0
-600.....78	

West Deals **Board 24** None Vul

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



In second seat some Norths will open a sickly weak two-bid — we've all done worse things — but three passes to South is the norm. I like this auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT (AP)

The best contract (considering North-South only) is 5♦, which requires little more than a 3-2 trump break; but it's a tough commitment at matchpoints — witness Board 23. In the long run it pays to play 3NT if there's a reasonable chance; you may be set more often, but the rewards are worth it.

After a spade lead, declarer cannot succeed by finessing and running clubs; the only chance is to find the ♣Q doubleton or singleton. Win the ♠A and lead the ♣J (bait) to your ace. If East covers, you can win 12 tricks; otherwise you must settle for 10. (Note the ♣8 entry.) Bridge is such an easy game — when you're lucky.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 24

.....100	+460..... 82	+240..... 32	+130..... 9
+920.....99	..... 80	..... 31	..... 9
.....96	+440..... 79	+190..... 30	-50..... 5
+520.....95	+430..... 61	..... 29	..... 2
.....93	+420..... 42	+170..... 25	-100..... 0
+500.....93	..... 40	..... 22	..... 0
+490.....87	+400..... 36	+150..... 16	
.....82	..... 33	..... 11	

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

♠ 10 8 7 3
 ♥ Q 6 5
 ♦ 9 8 2
 ♣ K 5 2

♠ Q 6 5
 ♥ A J 9 8
 ♦ J 10 7
 ♣ A Q 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

♠ 9
 ♥ 7 3 2
 ♦ A K Q 5 4 3
 ♣ 9 8 6

Many tables will begin with this sequence:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♦
Dbl	Pass	?	

East has an awkward rebid after the negative double. I would bid 2♥, willing to play a 4-3 fit, rather than venture to the three level in clubs or (worse yet) rebid 2♠ and be left in a 5-1 fit. This may lead to 4♥ instead of the normal 4♠, but either game should come home as the cards lie.

In 4♠ declarer ruffs the second diamond; ♠A; ♠J; ♣10 to king; diamond ruff; ♣A; ♣Q; ♥A; ♥J. If North covers you make an overtrick, but I wouldn't risk the finesse: ♥K; club ruff, and that makes 10 tricks.

In 4♥ declarer can succeed in a number of ways. Simplest is to ruff the second diamond and run the ♥10 to North, who had better return a trump — else declarer can win 11 tricks, and 99 percent of the matchpoints.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 25

.....100	..... 4
+200.....100	-650..... 1
.....98	..... 0
+100.....82	
.....64	
-140.....64	
.....62	
-620.....33	

East Deals **Board 26** Both Vul

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

♠ 10 8 7 5
 ♥ K Q 9 4 2
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 9
 ♥ 10 6 5
 ♦ A 8 2
 ♣ Q J 5 2

♠ A J 6 3 2
 ♥ J
 ♦ K Q 4 3
 ♣ A 7 6

Assuming East passes his 12-point hand, standard North-South bidders will begin:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	?

South has an attractive hand — sound values, good controls — so it is reasonable to continue. Three notrump would be poor judgment, not because of the singleton heart but because of the likelihood North has a singleton spade. Where will the tricks come from? I like 4♣, after which North should appreciate the location of his high cards and cue-bid 4♥; then 5♦ ends the bidding.

The play in diamonds should net 11 tricks. Declarer can capitalize on the lucky spade lie (only chance after a trump lead) or try this route: ♥A; ♠A; spade ruff; heart ruff; spade ruff; heart ruff; spade ruff. If East overruffs and returns a trump, declarer draws trumps; otherwise, he takes his clubs and ruffs the last spade.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 26

.....100	..... 84	..... 7
+630.....100	+150..... 70	-100..... 2
.....98	+140..... 53	..... 0
+600.....95	+130..... 44	
.....91	+120..... 33	
+300.....90	+110..... 21	
.....87	+100..... 11	
+200.....86	+90..... 8	

South Deals **Board 27** None Vul

♠ J 3 2
 ♥ 8 5 4
 ♦ Q 10 7 6
 ♣ 9 6 2

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 6 4
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A 5 3 2
 ♣ J 10 8 7 3

♠ K Q
 ♥ Q J 6 3 2
 ♦ K 9
 ♣ A K Q 5

South will not appreciate being outbid with his strong hand, but he can be punished if he competes to the three level. Here is one possibility:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
1♠	Pass	2♠	Dbl
Rdbl!	3♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

Some Souths will escape the double, but none will escape the loss of four trump tricks and two aces. West's enterprising action nets 300 for a good score.

The play in spades is routine for eight tricks, but declarer can win nine with accurate play after a heart lead: Win the ♥A and start clubs, low to the seven; win the spade return; heart ruff (do not cash the ♥K); ♣J, covered, ruff; heart ruff; ♣10, covered, ruff; then exit with a spade. South now must shift to a diamond, else declarer makes an incredible 10 tricks and an unlisted score of 170.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 27

.....100	+80	83	.....36	.....0
+500.....100	.....80	-140.....	32	
.....98	+50	73	.....29	
+300.....98	.....64	-300.....	22	
.....96	-50	60	.....16	
+110.....95	.....56	-500.....	8	
+100.....90	-100	49	.....2	
.....84	-110	39	-530.....	0

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

♠ A J 9 5 2
 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ K Q J
 ♣ A 8 7

♠ 10 4
 ♥ A 7 6
 ♦ A 9 8 4 3 2
 ♣ 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 8
 ♥ K J 4 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ K Q J 10 5 2

♠ Q 7 6 3
 ♥ 10 9 8 3
 ♦ 10 6 5
 ♣ 9 4

West has an acceptable nonvulnerable weak two-bid, over which North may bid 2♠ or 2NT. East usually will bid 3♣, although it would be clever to double 2NT (or simply pass and collect 400). Even if North-South escape to 3♠, they can be doubled and set two tricks with a diamond lead.

If West passes originally, North has a similar problem in what to open. This auction should be common:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♣	All Pass

If North instead opens 1NT (my choice), a lot will depend on the East-West methods, but most will reach the same contract.

The play in clubs is clear-cut for 10 tricks. Declarer lacks the entries to establish and use the diamonds, so there's no way to avoid a heart loser, unless South comes to the rescue with a careless discard.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 28

.....100	-100	75	-200.....	34	.....11	.....2
+140.....100	.....69	.....29	-550.....	9	-2000.....	0
.....98	-130	66	-300.....	26	.....9	.....0
+110.....98	.....62	.....24	-590.....	7		
+100.....92	-150	53	-400.....	23	.....7	
.....87	.....44	.....22	-610.....	5		
+50.....84	-170	42	-500.....	19	.....4	
.....80	.....40	-510.....	14	-770.....	2	

North Deals **Board 29** Both Vul

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

The fireworks should begin:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	4 ♥
Pass	Pass	?	

The expert call by East is 4NT to show both minors, obviously with longer clubs. (4NT could not logically be Blackwood or natural.) This elicits 5♦ from West, which North will double.

Five diamonds is untouchable despite the 5-0 trump break. Regardless of the lead, declarer can win the ♦K to get the bad news, cash the ♥A and three top clubs, then ruff a club low. The rest is a merry crossruff, while North is helpless.

Five clubs can be beaten outright with a spade lead and diamond ruff, but should be made after a heart lead with routine play. Win two top clubs; ♦J; heart ruff; all the diamonds; heart ruff, and exit with a spade...

Some South players will push to 5♥, which has no chance after continued club leads. After a diamond lead it makes, as long as declarer leads the first heart from dummy.

.....100	..... 80	..... 47	..... 20	..... 0
+1150.....100	+650..... 79	+100..... 36	-200..... 17	
..... 98	..... 78	..... 27	..... 16	
+990..... 96	+500..... 75	-100..... 25	-660..... 14	
..... 93	..... 71	..... 24	..... 13	
+850..... 93	+200..... 60	-130..... 23	-750..... 7	
..... 91	..... 49	..... 22	..... 2	
+790..... 86	+170..... 48	-150..... 21	-1400..... 0	

East Deals **Board 30** None Vul

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

The computer seems to have a fetish for weak two-bids (both real and provocative) on this set of deals. I suppose a prude could find argument with the East hand — some disapprove of three cards in the other major — but if you don't bid with this hand, you may as well glue a "pass" sign on your forehead.

After 2♥ by East, most Souths will climb in with 2♠ — not a thing of beauty, but who likes to be shut out — and North will end the bidding with 3NT.

Declarer has eight sure tricks in notrump with the favorable minor-suit position, and routine play should develop nine. After the ♥K lead, win the ace and run the ♠9 to West's queen. Win the club return in dummy (hopefully without wasting the jack), then pound away with spades. East-West can win only three spades and a heart — and if East fails to cash the ♥Q, you wind up with an overtrick.

.....100	+200..... 55 27
+500..... 99 53	+50..... 24
..... 96	+150..... 49 22
+430..... 93 44	-50..... 13
..... 89	+130..... 43 4
+400..... 74	+120..... 41	-100..... 1
..... 58	+110..... 39 0
+210..... 57	+100..... 32	

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

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



North should declare 4 ♠ after a routine auction:

West	North	East	South
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠ (AP)

Even if South deems his hand worth only 3 ♠, North should carry on to game with his excellent club fit.

In spades, declarer will win nine, 10 or 11 tricks. After a heart lead (most annoying), the first order of business is to avoid a heart loser, so lead the ♦ K to West's ace. Win the heart return, take your discard, and run the ♠ Q. At this point there is no standout play, mainly because it is awkward to establish clubs by the normal percentage play (two finesses through East).

The winning line is to draw trumps ending in hand and run the ♣ 10 (or any high club) — 11 tricks. Another possibility is to lead a low club from dummy, which nets 10 tricks, assuming declarer takes the club finesse later. If declarer goes wrong in clubs (ace and another), he can be defeated whether he draws trumps or not.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 31

.....100	+500	..... 32
+650	.....79	..... 31
.....58	+110	..... 30
+630	.....57	..... 29
+62045	-100 15
.....36	..... 2	
+60034	-200 0
.....33	..... 0	

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

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



Many East-West pairs will bid to the reasonable spade slam. Here's a good auction:

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
6 ♠	All Pass		

The raise to 5 ♠ asks for control in the unbid suit, which East carefully arranged with his 3 ♥ bid. Lacking club control, West would pass 5 ♠.

To finesse or not to finesse; that is the question. The normal play with 11 cards is to try to drop the king — odds are 52:48 — so with no other clue, declarer should go down. Of course, it costs nothing to lead the ♠ Q from dummy, as some Souths will foolishly cover.

The logic for a spade finesse might arise if an active North player, savoring the vulnerability, makes a weak jump overcall of 3 ♥. I won't admit it in writing, but...

North-South Matchpoints — Board 32

.....100	-690	..... 45	..... 0
+100	.....92	..... 44	
.....82	-710	..... 43	
-230	.....82	..... 42	
.....80	-1100	..... 41	
-650	.....75	..... 40	
.....69	-1400	..... 39	
-680	.....58	-1430	..... 18

North Deals **Board 33** None Vul

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

Many North-South pairs will reach 3 NT after a competitive auction such as:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♣
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Dbl
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	3 NT	All Pass	

South's 3 ♠ cue-bid is aggressive perhaps, but well within reason. Aside from chances for 3 NT, North may have a hand like ♠ x-x-x ♥ Q-x-x ♦ Q-x-x-x-x ♣ x, which offers an excellent play for 5 ♦.

In 3 NT declarer should win the ♠ K when offered (holding up would be an error) and take the first-round club finesse. Why not? It *works*, doesn't it? Seriously, of course, declarer should play clubs from the top, after which he must fail (accurate defense nets down three). Unfortunately for North-South, this is another deal of the successful-operation, dead-patient genre.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 33

.....100	.....82	.....67	.....0
+800.....100	+400.....79	+130.....60	
.....98	.....76	.....53	
+550.....98	+300.....74	+110.....41	
.....96	.....71	.....29	
+500.....94	+200.....70	-50.....17	
.....91	.....69	.....7	
+430.....87	+150.....68	-100.....2	

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

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

After 1 ♦ by East and 1 ♠ by South, West will be torn between bidding notrump and raising diamonds. Much depends on system. West has the values to reach game; so if 2 NT or 3 ♦ would be a limit bid (nonforcing), he must commit himself with 3 NT or temporize with 2 ♣. I vote for 3 NT.

In any event, 3 NT by West will be a popular contract. After the ♠ Q lead to the king, declarer has only eight tricks, so the club suit must be broached at some stage. A losing finesse into North would be disastrous (spade through); but a losing finesse into South would be OK as long as South has the ♥ A, which is likely on the bidding. Therefore, declarer should guess clubs.

Accurate play brings home 11 tricks: Win no more than *three* top diamonds, then lead a club to the king and back for the finesse; finish the diamonds (discarding a heart); finish the clubs, and exit with a heart. South must give you another trick with the ♥ K or the ♠ J.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 34

.....100	.....78	.....18	.....0
+140.....100	-150.....66	-460.....13	
.....98	.....53	.....9	
+100.....98	-200.....49	-500.....7	
.....96	.....44	.....7	
+50.....90	-400.....34	-550.....5	
.....82	.....24	.....4	
-110.....81	-430.....21	-650.....1	

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

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

Some Souths will open 1 ♣, which is reasonable at the vulnerability, but most will pass. Here's one scenario:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Rdbl	2 ♣	2 ♦	3 ♣
?			

West would do well to double the frisky 3 ♣ bid — probably down two — but the possibility of getting only 100 is unappealing. Further, there is some chance of a vulnerable game.

Can East-West make a game? Three notrump has no chance with a club lead. Five diamonds looks makable, but the lack of communication will haunt declarer. Even at double-dummy: ♣ A; ♦ A-Q; ♥ Q (South *ducks*); heart to nine, king; club ruff, and declarer can win only 10 tricks.

You want a game? OK, 4 ♥ can be made: ♣ A; heart to nine, king; club ruff (♥ Q); heart to jack; spade to king; diamond to king; spade to ace. Declarer *discards* on the club return, then he can win the rest.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 35

.....100	-150 31	-620..... 4
+100.....91	..... 23	..... 3
.....80	-170 21	-660..... 1
-100.....79	..... 20	..... 0
-110.....77	-200 18	
-120.....75	..... 17	
-130.....58	-600 11	
-140.....41	..... 7	

West Deals **Board 36** Both Vul

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

East should open 1 ♦ (good tactics) in third seat, after which everyone will partake. I like this auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 ♦	1 ♠
Dbl*	Pass	2 ♥	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All Pass			*negative

The key bid is North's raise to 3 ♠, which falls under the heading: Believe your *partner*, not the opponents.

If East passes in third seat, South will open, and the same contract should be reached with East-West silent: 1 ♠ 1 NT; 3 ♠ 4 ♠. Here the key decision is made by South, whose primary values suggest the borderline jump rebid.

Four spades should make easily, and some will score an overtrick when East-West fail to cash their red tricks. But I once saw a guy go down on this swindle: ♥ K to ace; club to ace; ♠ J, low, low, *nine*; spade to 10...

North-South Matchpoints — Board 36

.....100	..... 13
+650.....94	+140 9
.....87	..... 7
+620.....77	-100 4
.....67	..... 3
+200.....52	-200 1
.....37	..... 0
+170.....24	