

ACBL-wide International Fund #1 ***Saturday afternoon, February 6, 2010***

Frank Stewart, who commented on this set of deals, is one of the world's most prolific bridge journalists. He is the author of 20 books and hundreds of magazine articles, and his syndicated column "Daily Bridge Club" appears worldwide. Frank co-edited the ACBL's Bridge Bulletin from 1984 to 1989. He has been an analyst for ACBL-wide events since 1980.

— Analyses by Frank Stewart



Be on the Lookout for

ACBL-wide
International Fund Game #2
May 13, 2010
Thursday Afternoon

AND

ACBL-wide
International Fund Game #3
July 23, 2010
Friday Evening

Bd: 1 ♠ K 2
 Dir: North ♥ Q 8 5 4
 Vul: None ♦ 10 9 4
 ♣ J 10 8 2
 ♠ 8 6 5 ♠ A Q
 ♥ K 7 ♥ A 10 6 3
 ♦ Q J 3 2 ♦ A 7 6 5
 ♣ A 6 5 4 ♣ K 7 3
 ♠ J 10 9 7 4 3
 ♥ J 9 2
 ♦ K 8
 ♣ Q 9

When East opens 1NT, South has too many losers to intervene with a 2♠ overcall. (He could be -500 for a zero.) After West's routine raise to 3NT, South will lead the ♠J to the king and ace. East will continue with the ♦A and another diamond, and South will take the king to continue spades. East has nine tricks and has a double-dummy route to an overtrick. East can cash two diamonds. If North discards a club, East can establish a third club trick; if North discards a heart, East can manage the hearts to set up a third heart trick without letting

South get in. North's best discard is the ♥Q, but then East can take the ♣AK and the ♥K and toss South in with dummy's last spade to lead from the ♥J at the end! In real life, East will score +400 at almost every table.

Bd: 5 ♠ Q 10 6 5 4 3
 Dir: North ♥ J
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 10 5
 ♣ 6 5 2
 ♠ K 9 2 ♠ 8 7
 ♥ A K 2 ♥ Q 10 8 6 4
 ♦ A 9 8 2 ♦ 7 6 3
 ♣ Q 10 9 ♣ A 8 7
 ♠ A J
 ♥ 9 7 5 3
 ♦ Q J 4
 ♣ K J 4 3

Many Souths will dredge up a 1♣ opening in third seat, and West has a better 1NT overcall than on Deal 3. North can compete with 2♠ — non-forcing since he'd double for penalty or bid more with a better hand. East can try 3♥ (or perhaps start with a conventional 2NT, preparing to sign off at 3♥). The vulnerability will discourage North-South from acting again. At a few tables, South won't open, West will start with 1NT, and East will transfer to hearts and pass West's conversion. At hearts East-West can take nine tricks, off a club, a spade and

two diamonds. Few East-Wests will diagnose that not even a spade opening lead and continuation will stop the same nine tricks at notrump, so East-Wests who are +150 will score well, losing only to pairs who are +200 against an ill-fated North-South spade partial.

Bd: 2 ♠ J
 Dir: East ♥ A 8 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ A 9 8 4
 ♣ Q 10 8 7 4
 ♠ 10 9 7 4 2 ♠ 8 3
 ♥ Q 10 7 6 5 2 ♥ K J 4
 ♦ 10 ♦ K Q 5 3 2
 ♣ A ♣ 6 3 2
 ♠ A K Q 6 5
 ♥ 9
 ♦ J 7 6
 ♣ K J 9 5

When South opens 1♠, most Wests will want more to bid hearts at any level. North responds 2♣, South raises to 3♣, North tries 3NT and South will pass reluctantly since North could hold ♠J3 ♥K83 ♦Q105 ♣AQ874. If East leads a diamond, North's percentage play from dummy is low. He captures West's ten and forces out the ♣A for ten tricks. At some tables, active Wests will overcall 2♥, maybe hoping East won't hold many spades and will produce heart support. North can make a negative double, East raises to 3♥ and South can try 4♣. North

will usually bid 5♣, passed out, but a few pairs may stretch to 6♣. Alas, the fair slam can't quite come home. Declarer can't both ruff two hearts in dummy and enjoy his spade tricks, and the 5-1 spade break leaves him a trick short. North-South will score well over average for +630.

Bd: 6 ♠ Q 8 7 5
 Dir: East ♥ Q 10 9
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 9 7 6
 ♣ J 8
 ♠ A 9 ♠ J 10 6 3 2
 ♥ K 7 6 4 ♥ J
 ♦ 10 8 ♦ A Q J 5 3
 ♣ 9 7 6 4 3 ♣ 10 2
 ♠ K 4
 ♥ A 8 5 3 2
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A K Q 5

After 1♥-Pass-2♥... East, a passed hand, may try 2♠, fearful that West won't be able to balance if South passes. South will like the positional value of his ♠K but not the texture of his heart suit. If he settles for a try for game, he might bid 3♣ (in which case North might bid 3NT); but South's best game-try is a simple re-raise to 3♥, asking North to take a hard look at the quality of his trump support. Then North is likely to pass, and South must struggle to make even 3♥. West will lead the ♠A and shift to the ♦10.

After three rounds of diamonds, South can get home if he ruffs with the ♥8 and guesses to lead a trump to dummy's queen next. North-South should earn a matchpoint top for +140, since many North-Souths will go minus at a heart contract. Norths who play at 3NT should be down a lot for a zero.

Bd: 3 ♠ A 7 5 2
 Dir: South ♥ 10 9 8 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q 4
 ♣ K 10 9
 ♠ Q 8 4 ♠ J 9 6 3
 ♥ A 6 5 ♥ A J 3
 ♦ A K 10 7 ♦ J 3
 ♣ Q 4 2 ♣ J 8 7 5 3
 ♠ K 10
 ♥ K Q 7 2
 ♦ 9 8 6 5 2
 ♣ A 6

South has good high-card structure and may open 1♦, though he'd prefer a better suit. If West notices the vulnerability and passes, North will respond 1♥. South's raise to 2♥ will end the auction. North has only three top losers but should end with only nine winners: he can't take three ruffs in dummy profitably or set up a long diamond. Plus 140 to North-South may be a common result, but some Wests will try a lightish 1NT overcall. That action would be endorsed by many capable matchpoint players but looks shaky. North can double for

penalty, and East will usually pass even if he could bid a natural 2♣. Even if North leads the ♦Q, the defenders have time to set up three hearts plus four top tricks in the black suits for down one. In fact, North-South will need +500 for a strong matchpoint result.

Bd: 7 ♠ 10 9 3
 Dir: South ♥ 10 3
 Vul: Both ♦ Q J 7 6 5 4
 ♣ Q 8
 ♠ 4 ♠ K 8 5
 ♥ 4 2 ♥ A K Q 8 7 6
 ♦ 8 3 ♦ 10 9
 ♣ A K J 10 9 4 3 2 ♣ 7 6
 ♠ A Q J 7 6 2
 ♥ J 9 5
 ♦ A K 2
 ♣ 5

We don't know what the computer had for breakfast, but West holds one of three eight-card suits in this set. Over South's 1♠, many Wests will preempt with 4♣; at favorable vulnerability they might try 5♣. After two passes, South will face a tough decision; a bid of 4♠ would work, but South really lacks the values to bid game on his own. Perhaps he might risk a double, and then North might convert to 4♠. If West plays 4♣, North will lead the ♠10, and South will do well to overtake to cash his ♦AK, holding West to his contract.

Souths at 4♠ can be +620 by ruffing West's second high club and leading a heart, setting up a heart ruff in dummy as an entry to finesse in trumps. There will be game contracts, making, in both directions, but few tables will achieve the "par" result: 5♣ doubled by West, down one.

Bd: 4 ♠ 8
 Dir: West ♥ K 10 9 8 3
 Vul: Both ♦ A J 8
 ♣ 10 9 5 2
 ♠ K Q J 7 5 ♠ 9 3 2
 ♥ A 4 ♥ Q 7 6
 ♦ 9 7 3 ♦ K Q 10 6 2
 ♣ 8 6 3 ♣ 7 4
 ♠ A 10 6 4
 ♥ J 5 2
 ♦ 5 4
 ♣ A K Q J

After three passes, many Souths will open 1NT. If North responds 2♦ as a transfer, East may double to suggest a lead. If South accepts the transfer, North may continue with 2NT or 3♥. (As most pairs play, a bid of 3♣ would be forcing; we like to treat a new-suit bid after a transfer as invitational.) If North tries for game, South may go to 4♥ since all his values seem to be working. If West leads a diamond, South wins the second diamond, ruffs dummy's last diamond and starts the trumps, losing two trumps and a diamond. But a club opening lead

or early shift by the defenders will threaten South with a defensive ruff if he loses a trump finesse to East's queen. And if West's opening lead is the ♠K, a forcing defense will put the game at risk. North-South should score 75% of the matchpoints for +620.

Bd: 8 ♠ 10
 Dir: West ♥ A 3 2
 Vul: None ♦ 7 6 3 2
 ♣ K Q J 5 4
 ♠ A Q J 9 3 ♠ 8 6 4
 ♥ Q ♥ K 9 8 5
 ♦ A J 5 ♦ K Q 9 8 4
 ♣ A 10 3 2 ♣ 7
 ♠ K 7 5 2
 ♥ J 10 7 6 4
 ♦ 10
 ♣ 9 8 6

When West opens 1♠, some Norths will try 2♣. That action has little pre-emptive value, and North-South may be unable to compete successfully in clubs even if South has support, but North's bid does have possible lead-directing benefit. East's hand is too good to raise to 2♠; he might start with a negative double or upgrade slightly to a 2♦ response. After that, many results are possible. West might pass a negative double for penalty; he would collect +300. He might instead jump to 3NT, and East would go to

4♠. If East has shown his diamonds, West might like his hand enough to drive to 6♦ despite no encouragement from East. In fact, East could make 6♦, but 6NT would go down on a club lead, and 6♠ would fail on almost any lead. 4♠ will be a prosaic contract at most tables, and +450 to East-West should score about average.

Bd: 9 ♠ 10 8 6
 Dir: North ♥ 4 3 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ 10 7
 ♣ Q 10 7 5 3
 ♠ J 7 5 ♠ 9 4 3
 ♥ 7 ♥ A Q J 8 6 5
 ♦ A J 9 8 6 3 ♦ Q 4
 ♣ K 9 8 ♣ 4 2
 ♠ A K Q 2
 ♥ K 10 9
 ♦ K 5 2
 ♣ A J 6

This is a trappy deal for South. If East opens 2♥, most Souths will double to look for a spade fit. If North responds 3♣, South may try 3NT hopefully; he has no room for investigation and must assume that North has a few values, else North-South may miss a good game. The lead of either red suit will mean down three. At some tables, North will respond to the double with a conventional bid of 2NT, asking South to bid 3♣ and intending to pass. As it happens, South couldn't make 3♣ but take it upon himself to insist on 3NT again. If North is declarer, East may

lead the ♥Q. North can take the king and lead the ♣J. West must duck to shut out the clubs, and if North diagnoses the position, he can cash four spades and the ♣A and exit with a club, forcing West to give dummy the ♦K for down one and a good matchpoint score.

Bd: 10 ♠ 10 8 5
 Dir: East ♥ Q 8 6 5
 Vul: Both ♦ J 5
 ♣ K 10 8 2
 ♠ K Q J 7 3 ♠ 6
 ♥ A K 3 ♥ 10 9 7 2
 ♦ Q 4 3 2 ♦ 9 8 7 6
 ♣ 4 ♣ Q 9 6 5
 ♠ A 9 4 2
 ♥ J 4
 ♦ A K 10
 ♣ A J 7 3

When South opens 1NT, West faces the type of decision that determines who wins events. To bid is tempting; if West could make 2♠ for +110, he would beat East-West who might defend 1NT and beat it one trick for +100. Still, the West hand looks suited to defense. As it happens, if West overcalls 2♠ or shows his hand with some conventional gadget, he will probably concede -200 at 2♠ or 3♦. West may do best (this time) to defend. Against 1NT he leads the ♠K. Say South wins and goes right in clubs by leading to the ♣K and returning the ten. If East

covers, South wins and exits with a spade, but West can take the ♥AK before clearing the spades, holding South to seven tricks. South may take eight tricks if, remarkably, he misguesses by leading the ♣A and a club to dummy's ten! North-South will score poorly for +90.

Bd: 11 ♠ K Q 10
 Dir: South ♥ A 10 8 4
 Vul: None ♦ J 10 7 5 4
 ♣ K
 ♠ 8 7 6 5 ♠ A J 2
 ♥ K J 6 ♥ Q 5
 ♦ 9 2 ♦ A Q 8 3
 ♣ 10 8 3 2 ♣ A Q 9 6
 ♠ 9 4 3
 ♥ 9 7 3 2
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ J 7 5 4

If North opens 1♦, East's hand is too promising to overcall 1NT. East can double, and when West responds 1♠, 1NT by East will suggest a hand slightly too strong for a direct 1NT bid. At matchpoint scoring, West will pass instead of continuing with 2♣ to look for a possible 4-4 fit. This is one of many deals in the set that will involve complex play, with guesses for both sides. It takes a heart opening lead by South to beat 3NT, given best play and defense. If instead South leads the ♦K, East can take the ace, cash the ♣A and continue clubs to set up three

tricks there. Since the spades also lie well for declarer, North-South should wind up with only one trick in each suit. A heart lead will give the defense time to get the hearts going, and North-South may score well above average if they are -120.

Bd: 12 ♠ A J
 Dir: West ♥ K 6 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ A K J 9 4
 ♣ Q 9 5
 ♠ K 8 7 6 5 ♠ Q 9 4 2
 ♥ J 10 9 5 3 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ — ♦ 7 6 5 3 2
 ♣ K J 4 ♣ 3 2
 ♠ 10 3
 ♥ A 8 7
 ♦ Q 10 8
 ♣ A 10 8 7 6

North's hand is too heavy to open 1NT even with a range of 16 to 18 HCP. If North opens 1♦, South has options: if he is willing and able to respond 2♣, North will jump to 3NT; if South responds 1NT, North may raise to 3NT; if South conservatively raises 1♦ to 2♦ (as a standard single raise), North-South should still land at 3NT. Against 3NT by North, most Easts will find the spade lead that holds North to nine tricks; against 3NT by South, some Wests may lead the ♥J. If South wins in dummy and plans to take two club finesses, he'll be at risk of going

down. (South might test diamonds early; when he sees West's void, he'll be less likely to go wrong in clubs and may make three overtricks.) Many Wests will enter the auction, and a few East-West pairs will get a top when they play at 4♠ doubled for -300 or -100.

Bd: 13 ♠ K J 10 3
 Dir: North ♥ 7 2
 Vul: Both ♦ 7 4 2
 ♣ A J 4 2
 ♠ Q 9 6 4 ♠ A 5 2
 ♥ 10 3 ♥ A Q J 9
 ♦ K Q 10 9 ♦ 8 3
 ♣ K Q 9 ♣ 10 8 7 5
 ♠ 8 7
 ♥ K 8 6 5 4
 ♦ A J 6 5
 ♣ 6 3

If East were to open the bidding with his 2 1/2 defensive tricks, East-West would get to 3NT and almost surely take a minus. Suppose, however, East prefers a disciplined pass. Then West opens 1♦ in fourth position, East responds 1♥ and West tries 1♠. East has a close decision. A bid of 2♣, though it isn't forcing by a passed hand, may appeal to some Easts. Others will try boldly for game with 2NT or settle for 1NT to preserve a plus score. This will be a difficult deal to play and defend at a notrump partial. If East is declarer, a black-suit lead will surely

hold him to seven tricks, and only six are quite likely. After a red-suit lead, East must still thread his way through the play to take eight tricks. East-West should do well in the matchpoint column if they emerge with any plus score.

Bd: 14 ♠ 10 9
 Dir: East ♥ J 3
 Vul: None ♦ K J 9 7 4
 ♣ K J 8 3
 ♠ 6 5 3 ♠ K Q J 7
 ♥ K 8 7 6 2 ♥ Q 10 5
 ♦ A 10 ♦ Q 8 6 5
 ♣ 10 9 2 ♣ 7 4
 ♠ A 8 4 2
 ♥ A 9 4
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ A Q 6 5

If South opens 1♣ and North responds 1♦, South rebids 1♠, and North takes a 2♣ preference. After two passes, West may reopen fearlessly with 2♥, but North-South will go on to 3♣. East has a dull hand and mustn't punish West for balancing. If West leads a trump against 3♣, South will win and lead a diamond. If West has bid, South may guess right by putting up the king. West wins the next diamond with the ace and leads another trump, and South draws trumps and lets the ♦J ride for a ruffing finesse (paying off if West falsecarded with

A-Q-10). South will take ten tricks: four trumps, a ruff, three diamonds and two major-suit aces. North-South will score well for +130 since some Souths will misguess in diamonds for +110, and a few North-Souths will sell out to an undoubled East-West heart partial for +50 or +100.

Bd: 15 ♠ —
 Dir: South ♥ 10 7
 Vul: N-S ♦ A J 10 6
 ♣ A J 9 8 7 5 3
 ♠ A Q 10 8 ♠ J 7 6 5 4
 ♥ Q 9 3 ♥ A J
 ♦ K Q 9 5 2 ♦ 7 4 3
 ♣ 6 ♣ K 10 4
 ♠ K 9 3 2
 ♥ K 8 6 5 4 2
 ♦ 8
 ♣ Q 2

When West opens 1♦, some Norths will preempt with 3♣. East doesn't have quite enough to act, but West will reopen with a double, and then some Easts may jump to 4♠. At other tables, North will overcall 2♣. East will feel like doing something — his ♣K looks like a winner — but no call is attractive: the suit and the high-card values are skimpy to bid 2♠. Some Easts will try a negative double, intending to correct 2♥ by West to 2NT or 3♦, and East-West will find their spade fit and may bid game. East-Wests at spades will be held to nine tricks. Even if the

defenders don't get two diamond ruffs, declarer must lose four tricks. East-West will score well if they stop at 3♠ for +140. At a few tables, the auction will begin 1♦-2♣-Pass-2♥, Pass-3♣-All Pass ... and East-West will be -110 for a zero.

Bd: 16 ♠ A 10 8 7 6
 Dir: West ♥ A K 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ 6
 ♣ J 10 9 4
 ♠ J 5 3 2 ♠ K 9 4
 ♥ J 10 6 ♥ Q 9 8 7 4
 ♦ K 9 8 ♦ J 10 7
 ♣ 7 3 2 ♣ K 8
 ♠ Q
 ♥ 3 2
 ♦ A Q 5 4 3 2
 ♣ A Q 6 5

This deal may tax matchpoint players, who shun minor-suit games for more lucrative notrump games. If the auction starts 1♠-2♦, 2♠-3♣, North will be tempted to try 3NT with his concentrated values in hearts; but his hand is well oriented to a club contract, with A-K-A in the majors to cover South's losers there. If North raises to 4♣ or tries 3♥, North-South will get to 5♣ — and may reach 6♣ on the presumption that they won't score well at five of a minor. In fact, 6♣ is cold. If West leads the ♥J, South can set up the diamonds with ruffs, finesse

in trumps and win 13 tricks. Only a trump opening lead removes a vital entry to the South hand and beats a grand slam. Meanwhile, Norths at 3NT must struggle. The contract is makable, but many Norths will fail, giving East-West a good matchpoint score.

Bd: 17 ♠ 8 5 3
 Dir: North ♥ 7
 Vul: None ♦ A 7 3 2
 ♣ A K Q 7 4
 ♠ J 9 7 ♠ Q 6 4
 ♥ A K 9 ♥ Q 5 3 2
 ♦ K J 6 ♦ 10 9 5 4
 ♣ 9 6 3 2 ♣ J 5
 ♠ A K 10 2
 ♥ J 10 8 6 4
 ♦ Q 8
 ♣ 10 8

There is an easy route to a winning North-South contract. When North opens 1♦, South responds 1♠(!), treating his spades as a five-card suit. North raises to 2♠, and South takes a timid view and passes — and scrambles home with nine tricks for +140. Back to reality. South will respond 1♥, and most Norths will rebid 2♣. Then some Souths will pass while others will try boldly for game with 2NT. North may raise to 3NT, hoping his clubs will run. A few Norths will rebid 1NT, and if South scrapes up a raise, North-South may reach game again. 3NT should

fail: even with benign defense, declarer shouldn't be able to avoid at least five losers. At 2♣ North can win at least eight tricks by ruffing hearts in his hand, and North-South may score well for +90, bolstering the theory that it's wrong to bid pushy games at matchpoints.

Bd: 18 ♠ 8 7 6 3
 Dir: East ♥ K Q J 10 8 6 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ —
 ♣ 5 4
 ♠ K 2 ♠ 10 4
 ♥ 9 7 4 ♥ A 3
 ♦ K 5 4 ♦ Q 10 9 8 7 6
 ♣ Q 10 9 8 6 ♣ A 7 2
 ♠ A Q J 9 5
 ♥ 5
 ♦ A J 3 2
 ♣ K J 3

East will often open 2♦, though he has four times as many high-card points outside his suit as in it. South can overcall 2♠, and West might raise gently to 3♦. North should bid 4♥. His suit is solid, and (unless South is void in hearts) little advantage is likely to come from playing at spades. East-West have a paying sacrifice at 5♦ in theory, but in practice neither player has enough shape to make a save attractive. If East leads the ♦10 against 4♥, North can ditch a club on dummy's ace and start the trumps. If East wins and gambles by

underleading the ♣A next, North can put up the king and make an overtrick for +650 and a top. Some Souths will play at 4♠. They might come to grief if the trumps broke 3-1, but as it is, they should emerge with ten tricks. Plus 620 to North-South will score about average.

Bd: 19 ♠ J 5 2
 Dir: South ♥ A 10 7 6 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ A
 ♣ J 7 6 2
 ♠ A Q 10 8 7 ♠ 9
 ♥ J 5 ♥ K 8
 ♦ 9 6 ♦ K Q 10 8 7 5 4 2
 ♣ 9 8 5 4 ♣ K Q
 ♠ K 6 4 3
 ♥ Q 9 4 2
 ♦ J 3
 ♣ A 10 3

There will be three passes to East at most tables; none of the other players has reason to open. If East had a hand with running diamonds and a few side values, he might open 3♦ in fourth position — both to invite West to bid 3NT and to make it harder for North-South to come in. The actual East hand is too wild for that action, and many Easts will start with 1♦. South might throw in a passed-hand takeout double, West can try 1♠ and North is worth a jump to 3♥. Then we expect East to compete with 4♦, passed out. He'll make four on the nose, losing three

aces, and East-West should score reasonably well for +130. Few North-South pairs will compete to 4♥, where they could get out for -100 even if doubled.

Bd: 20 ♠ 10 9 5 3
 Dir: West ♥ K 9
 Vul: Both ♦ K 7
 ♣ Q J 10 4 3
 ♠ A J 6 ♠ Q 8 4
 ♥ A J 4 2 ♥ Q 8 6 5 3
 ♦ 10 8 6 5 4 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ 8 ♣ A 5 2
 ♠ K 7 2
 ♥ 10 7
 ♦ A Q J 3
 ♣ K 9 7 6

East-West are cold for 4♥ but may not enter the auction. Much will depend on South's choice of an opening bid. If South opens 1♣, West can double. Since the double suggests spade length, and the auction may become competitive, North may suppress his spades. He may bid 2NT — a limit raise — to give South a general picture of his hand. East can compete with 3♥, where he could score +170, and if North-South go to 4♣, East-West might risk a double and collect +200. At most tables, South will open 1♦, silencing West. If North responds 1♠, South has an awkward rebid: he might

try 1NT or raise to 2♠, leading to a minus score. A 2♣ rebid should promise longer diamonds, but it would work well, since North would raise to 3♣, perhaps passed out for +110 and a North-South top.

Bd: 21 ♠ Q 4
 Dir: North ♥ 8 4 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 9 3
 ♣ A K Q J 4
 ♠ K J 9 8 2 ♠ 5
 ♥ K 3 ♥ Q J 10 6 5
 ♦ K 6 ♦ J 10 8 7 4 2
 ♣ 9 8 7 3 ♣ 10
 ♠ A 10 7 6 3
 ♥ A 9 7
 ♦ A 5
 ♣ 6 5 2

Some tables will see a peaceful auction: 1♣-1♠, 1NT-3NT. East can hold North to nine tricks by leading a diamond. West takes the king and returns a diamond to the ace. Declarer can't win a second spade trick by leading toward his queen since West can grab his king and shift to the ♥K, killing dummy's entry; nor can North make an overtrick with an endplay, as long as West dumps his ♥K under the ace. If East's opening lead is the ♥Q (or if South is declarer at 3NT), however, the timing is different, and ten tricks are possible with best play. Some Easts

will trade on the vulnerability to act over 1♣ with an "Unusual" jump to 2NT, showing the red suits. South can double, and East will run to 3♦. North-South will probably go ahead and bid their no-trump game, but if they misjudge by doubling 3♦, they'll be +100 for a zero.

Bd: 22 ♠ Q 3
 Dir: East ♥ Q 8 6 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ K Q J 10 9
 ♣ A 9
 ♠ A 9 6 5 2 ♠ K 7
 ♥ 9 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ 8 7 5 4 ♦ A 6 3 2
 ♣ K 8 7 ♣ J 6 5 4 3
 ♠ J 10 8 4
 ♥ A K J 10 5 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q 10 2

When South opens 1♥, some Norths will issue a forcing raise such as a conventional 2NT response. South may bid 3♦ next to show shortness (a jump to 4♦ would show a second suit), and North will be discouraged and will sign off at 4♥. West may see no need to get busy, but if his opening lead is a "safe" diamond, South can ruff East's ace, pitch four spades on dummy's diamonds and lose one club for +480. At other tables, Norths will respond 2♦ and raise South's 2♥ rebid to 4♥. If North has shown a diamond suit, West won't like his

diamond holding and will choose an aggressive lead, fearing that the diamonds will give declarer discards. West's winning lead is the ♠A, but if he reasonably tries an ill-fated club, South can take 13 tricks for +510 and a top by bravely playing low from dummy and later ruffing out the ♦A.

Bd: 23 ♠ K 10 8 3
 Dir: South ♥ 5 3
 Vul: Both ♦ A 8 6
 ♣ K Q 10 4
 ♠ A 9 6 2 ♠ Q 7
 ♥ A 10 9 ♥ J 6
 ♦ K J 5 4 ♦ Q 9 7
 ♣ A 6 ♣ J 9 8 7 5 2
 ♠ J 5 4
 ♥ K Q 8 7 4 2
 ♦ 10 3 2
 ♣ 3

System and judgment will create a variety of results. A few Souths will ignore the vulnerability and open 2♥, and then some Wests will overcall 2NT, passed out. Other Wests will double, and some Easts will respond 2NT, conventionally asking West to bid 3♣, which East will pass. If East instead responds 3♣, West may shrug and have a shot at 3NT even though East may have a poor hand. At tables where South notices his poor heart intermediates and passes as dealer, West will open 1NT. He'll often play

there, but after two passes, South may reopen with 2♥, giving East the last guess. East-West at 3♣ will be held to eight tricks by the unfriendly lie of the clubs. West can take the same eight tricks at 2NT, and East-West will score well for +120. East-West tops will go to pairs who defend well against a North-South heart partial for +200.

Bd: 24 ♠ K 8
 Dir: West ♥ 8 5 4
 Vul: None ♦ 10 7 6 3
 ♣ Q 6 5 4
 ♠ 6 5 ♠ 10 7 3 2
 ♥ A Q J 7 6 ♥ K 9 3
 ♦ K 8 5 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ K 9 8 ♣ A 10 7 3
 ♠ A Q J 9 4
 ♥ 10 2
 ♦ A Q J 4
 ♣ J 2

This is a bad deal for the Law of Total Tricks (which is really only a statistical oddity). At low levels, the "Law" is often accurate within one trick, but East-West have eight hearts and North-South have seven spades — 15 total trumps — and the total tricks amount to 17. After 1♥-Pass-2♥, South will come in with 2♠. West has a dull minimum and no reason to act, and after two passes, East may judge to defend since he has spade length. The play may be taxing at either 2♠ or 3♥. If the defenders against 2♠ start

with three rounds of hearts, South can succeed only by ruffing and starting the diamonds without cashing the ace — a tough order. At 3♥, West can ruff the third spade high and has various ways to get home. No contracts are obvious, but East-West still may need +140 to avoid a mediocre matchpoint score.

Bd: 25 ♠ J 9 5
 Dir: North ♥ Q J 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ 10 9 8 3
 ♣ 10 6 4
 ♠ 4 3 ♠ K Q 10 7 6
 ♥ A 7 6 2 ♥ K 10 9 3
 ♦ K 4 2 ♦ A 7
 ♣ Q 9 7 3 ♣ K 8
 ♠ A 8 2
 ♥ 8 4
 ♦ Q J 6 5
 ♣ A J 5 2

After 1♠, 1NT-2♥ ... West must judge. Since East might have as many as 18 points, game is possible, and West has a maximum for his 1NT and can raise to 3♥ without overstating his values. But East might also have a weak hand, and 3♥ might be too high. We think most West will raise. East has some prime values, but his ♠KQ will often face a singleton. To bid 4♥ is reasonable but not clear. As it happens, game is a good shot, and the cards lie well. If South leads the ♦Q, East can win in dummy and lead to the ♠K. South takes the ace

and leads another diamond, and East wins and might lead the ♣8. If dummy's queen wins, East can take the ♥AK, cash the ♠Q and ruff a spade, setting up the spades and losing only three tricks in all. Most East-Wests will get to game, so +620 should score slightly above average.

Bd: 26 ♠ J 10 4
 Dir: East ♥ 9 8
 Vul: Both ♦ A J 6 5
 ♣ Q 10 6 5
 ♠ A 7 3 ♠ K 9 8
 ♥ A 6 2 ♥ K Q 10 4 3
 ♦ 10 9 7 4 ♦ K
 ♣ 8 3 2 ♣ A J 9 4
 ♠ Q 6 5 2
 ♥ J 7 5
 ♦ Q 8 3 2
 ♣ K 7

After 1♥, 2♥ ... East can try 3♣, asking West to bid game with a maximum raise or with a fair raise with helpful values in East's second suit. If a double fit exists, East-West may make game with fewer than 26 points; if West had ♠Q6 ♥J62 ♦109754 ♣KQ2, 4♥ would be a fair spot. As it is, West has two aces, but his club holding should induce him to sign off at 3♥. If South leads a spade, East may win in dummy and lead a club to his nine — the best percentage play for three club tricks. He wins South's spade return, takes

the ♥KA, leads to the ♣J and tries to cash the ♠A. South ruffs and cashes a spade, and North gets the ♦A to hold East to nine tricks. East-West should score above average for +140; few Easts will be allowed to take ten tricks. How to reach the cold 3NT? If you found a way, you earned your top.

Bd: 27 ♠ Q 8 6 3
 Dir: South ♥ Q
 Vul: None ♦ Q 9 3
 ♣ A K 5 3 2
 ♠ K 10 ♠ A J 9 7 4
 ♥ 10 ♥ K 9 7 6
 ♦ A J 10 8 6 5 4 2 ♦ K
 ♣ J 9 ♣ 7 6 4
 ♠ 5 2
 ♥ A J 8 5 4 3 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ Q 10 8

Here comes another eight-card suit. Many Souths will open 3♥, and West should pass. A 4♦ bid would promise more high-card values — East might well bid something and get way too high — and a jump to 5♦ would show an even better hand, not a preempt. (Most theorists reject the idea of "preempts over preempts.") After North passes, East may be tempted to balance with 3♠ since West won't have many hearts and may therefore have some spades. If East does act, West can run to 4♦, passed out. In fact, 4♦ may prove hard to beat: the

defenders must cash a heart as well as two clubs, else declarer can finesse in spades to pitch a loser. Souths who are left to play at 3♥ will probably go down two (eight tricks are possible at double-dummy), so East-Wests who get a plus score will win plenty of matchpoints.

Bd: 28 ♠ A 8
 Dir: West ♥ J 10 8 6 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ —
 ♣ Q 10 9 8 6 5
 ♠ K J 7 3 ♠ Q 9 5 2
 ♥ Q 5 3 ♥ A K 9
 ♦ Q 10 7 ♦ A K 8 2
 ♣ 7 4 2 ♣ A 3
 ♠ 10 6 4
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ J 9 6 5 4 3
 ♣ K J

Barring any strange preemptive efforts by North, East will open 2NT. If West raises to 3NT, declining to use Stayman with his flat pattern and secondary values, South will lead a diamond, and East can win cheaply, force out North's ♠A and claim 11 tricks. East-West may get a top for +460 since some Wests will locate the 4-4 spade fit — to their cost. If South leads a diamond again, North will ruff and shift to clubs, setting up a third trick for the defense. North-South may do even better at one or two tables when North tries a questionable

lead-directing double of West's 3♣ Stayman response. If South leads the ♠K against 4♠, East wins and leads a trump to the king and ace. North cashes the ♣Q and leads another club, and if East ruffs with the nine, South can overruff and give North a diamond ruff for a surprising down one.

Bd: 29 ♠ K J 9 5
 Dir: North ♥ Q 10 5
 Vul: Both ♦ K J 4
 ♣ Q 4 2
 ♠ A Q 6 2 ♠ 10 8 7 4 3
 ♥ K J 8 6 ♥ A 9 7 3
 ♦ A 2 ♦ 8
 ♣ 8 6 5 ♣ J 10 7
 ♠ —
 ♥ 4 2
 ♦ Q 10 9 7 6 5 3
 ♣ A K 9 3

We know about the current tendency to open light, shapely hands, but we will argue with anyone who thinks North has an opening bid in any style. The hand is a barren assortment of high cards with only one defensive trick. (If North did open, a likely result would be 5♦ doubled by South, -200, giving North-South a zero.) If North and East pass, many Souths will open 3♦, taking some liberties since North is a passed hand. West's hand is borderline for a double; he'd rather hold AQ62,KJ86,2,A865. If he passes soberly, South will play at 3♦ for +130.

If West does stretch to double 3♦, he'll be punished. East will respond 3♠, and North may sell out with his fistful of losers. East will inevitably lose six tricks for -200, giving North-South a fine matchpoint result.

Bd: 30 ♠ K 3 2
 Dir: East ♥ Q 9 8 5 4
 Vul: None ♦ 7 3 2
 ♣ 3 2
 ♠ Q 8 5 ♠ A 10 4
 ♥ 10 7 2 ♥ K J 6
 ♦ J 6 ♦ A Q 10 9 4
 ♣ A 10 9 8 5 ♣ 6 4
 ♠ J 9 7 6
 ♥ A 3
 ♦ K 8 5
 ♣ K Q J 7

South has 14 good points, but when East opens 1♦, most Souths will pass. A double with ♥A3 isn't appealing. West will respond 1NT, and after two passes, South will have to pass again. North has a normal heart lead, but that lead will help declarer. South can take the ♥A, and whether he returns a passive heart or shifts to the ♣K, declarer can assemble nine tricks. After a non-heart lead — even a spade, riding to the queen — best defense will hold West to eight tricks and +120. At a few tables, South will

try to force the issue with a skinny 1NT overcall. We would like to suggest that South will get what's coming to him, but North will transfer to hearts, and South's 2♥ acceptance may be passed out. The result will probably be down two, but North-South may score most of the matchpoints for -100.

Bd: 31 ♠ 9 8 3
 Dir: South ♥ 9 6 5 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ —
 ♣ K Q J 9 8 2
 ♠ 7 6 2 ♠ A J 10 5
 ♥ Q J 10 8 2 ♥ 7
 ♦ A K 8 6 ♦ Q 9 7 5 2
 ♣ A ♣ 7 6 3
 ♠ K Q 4
 ♥ A K 3
 ♦ J 10 4 3
 ♣ 10 5 4

South's 1♦ opening will pick off East-West's nine-card fit and make it hard for them to reach a diamond partial that would be worth +130. Instead, West will overcall 1♥ and may be marooned there: North may be reluctant to try 2♣ with only 6 high-card points, East has no attractive action, and South has no reason to reopen with balanced pattern and heart strength. A spade opening lead would beat 1♥, but when North leads the ♣K, West can win and lead the ♥Q. The defenders can force him to

ruff clubs and lose control, but after North takes some club tricks late in the play, West will have seven winners for +80. Eccentric decisions in the bidding might work well. If East mentions his spades, East-West might play at 2♠ or back into diamonds. And if North is willing to bid clubs, he might play carefully at a club partial for +130 and a top.

Bd: 32 ♠ J 9 8 7
 Dir: West ♥ 7
 Vul: E-W ♦ J 5 4
 ♣ K Q J 8 7
 ♠ A K 4 2 ♠ 10 5 3
 ♥ A K 8 ♥ Q 9 4 2
 ♦ K 7 3 ♦ A Q 6 2
 ♣ 10 9 4 ♣ 6 5
 ♠ Q 6
 ♥ J 10 6 5 3
 ♦ 10 9 8
 ♣ A 3 2

When West opens 1NT, the fate of the deal will depend on whether East judges to try for game. If East responds 2♣, West will bid 2♠, and when East goes to 2NT, West will bid game. 3NT is not a bad contract — West has nine winners, and it's not as if the defense must always race off five club tricks — but after North leads the ♣K, the result should be down one. South will follow to the first club with the three, but North may note that the deuce is missing. (Pairs who use "upside-down" attitude signals will have an easier time.) North should take

care to lead the ♣J at the second trick; if he leads the ♣Q, South may fear that North started with K-Q-x. (Granted, that gives West four spades and five clubs for his 1NT opening.) Easts who pass 1NT conservatively will earn a plus score and a bunch of matchpoints.

Bd: 33 ♠ A 10 3
 Dlr: North ♥ J 10 9 8 4
 Vul: None ♦ K 9 7
 ♣ A 4

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

♠ 6 2
 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ A J 10 8 3 2
 ♣ K J 9

This is the hardest deal of the set to analyze. Much depends on the players' temperaments, methods and judgments, and there will be as many different auctions and results as tables in the game. North can open 1♥; he'd prefer more honors in his long suit but does have good spots. Then some Easts will pass, some will overcall 1♠, and some will try a hungry 2♥ "Michaels" cuebid, showing spades and a minor. Many actions are possible for South: 1NT or 2♦ if East has kept silent; 2♦ or a "one-suit" negative double if East bids 1♠; 3♦, not forcing,

if East cuebids 2♥. We'll go out on a limb and predict a likely contract of 4♦, making four for +130 to North-South. We think some East-Wests will play at 3♠, down one or two. We don't expect many North-Souths to find a route to the icy-cold 3NT, which would yield an ACBL-wide top.

Bd: 34 ♠ 10 8
 Dlr: East ♥ A Q 9 8 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ 9 6 5 2
 ♣ Q J

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

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

East has length in both majors plus adequate defensive values and will often open 1♣. Some Wests will respond 2NT, and East will raise to 3NT. Other Wests will start with 1♦, and the auction may develop complications: 1♣, 1♦-1♥, 1♠ (fourth suit)-2♠, 3♣ ... and if East is reluctant to try 3NT opposite possible heart shortness, East-West may land at 4♠. Against 3NT by West, North will lead the ♥8, and West can take the king, saving J-x-x in dummy as a second stopper. He leads a spade to dummy and returns a diamond, and good guessing

will produce three diamond tricks and ten tricks in all. If East plays 3NT, South may lead the ♣10, but East should find himself winning ten tricks in any case. East-West should score only a little above average for +430. Pairs at 4♠ will be +420 for a deservedly poor score.

Bd: 35 ♠ A J 8
 Dlr: South ♥ Q 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ A K 10 4 3
 ♣ A 10 8

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

♠ K 4 3 2
 ♥ 9 8 7 6
 ♦ Q J 8 5
 ♣ 5

As on Board 12, North has too much potential for a 1NT opening. If he starts with 1♦, South responds 1♥. The vulnerability will usually silence West, North can jump to 2NT and South will try 3♦. Then many Norths will insist on 3NT, passed out. A club or heart lead would beat the contract, but if East tries a spade, North will be +430 for a top. Other Norths will heed the warning of South's 3♦ bid and will continue with 3♠ or 4♦, and North-South may reach 5♦. That game looks to be down one unless East leads from the ♠Q, but say East leads a trump.

North can, in theory, ruff his club losers in dummy, concede two hearts, ruff a third heart and run his trumps, squeezing East in the majors. In the real world, most North-Souths will fail at some game, and pairs with a plus score will win most of the matchpoints.

Bd: 36 ♠ J 3
 Dlr: West ♥ A Q J 8 3 2
 Vul: Both ♦ 6
 ♣ K 8 7 4

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

♠ 10 9 5 4
 ♥ 6 5 4
 ♦ K 5
 ♣ 9 6 3 2

West will open 1♦, and North will overcall 1♥. East can respond 2♣, cuebid 2♥ to suggest a good (or better) hand with diamond support, or jump to 3♥ as a splinter bid to show a singleton heart and a diamond fit. West will show his spades next, and East-West will arrive at 5♦ or 6♦, depending on whether someone is in an optimistic mood or is in need of a good result. 6♦ is a reasonable undertaking — depending on a finesse through an opponent who bid, vulnerable. But with the ♦K offside, the likely lead of

the ♥A will doom the slam. If North instead leads a club, West might take the ♣A and cash the ♦A, winning if the king falls or if spades break 3-3, but down one will still result. We predict 5♦, making five, at most tables; East-West should score about a 65% board for +600.