

ACBL Senior Pairs

Analysis by Brian Gunnell, author of Bridge Bites and founder of The Wednesday Game (www.wednesdaygame.com).

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1

♠ J 9	West	North	East	South
♥ 6 2		Pass?	2♠	Pass
♦ 10 6 2	3♥	Pass	3NT	Pass
♣ K Q 10 7 5 3	4♦	Pass	5♦	All Pass

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

♠ K 5 4 2
♥ K Q 10 8 3
♦ J
♣ J 8 2

Dlr North
None Vul

Many Norths will open 3♣, but either way let's assume that E-W are in 5♦ and North's opening lead is the ♠K. How does Declarer make 11 tricks? **Plan A** is to set up the Spades: win the ♠A; cash ♠A; ruff a Spade, etc. That line requires 2-2 Diamonds and 3-3 Spades. If both suits break evenly then it's 13 tricks, but when they don't it's only 10.

Plan B is to go after the Hearts and is far superior. Dummy ♠A wins Trick 1; ♠A is cashed; Club ruff; ♥A is cashed; Heart ruff; back to the ♠A. Now, another Heart is led and North has no good choice ... he can ruff with the ♦10 and return a trump but Dummy still gets a second Heart ruff and Declarer eventually scores a long Heart ... or North can decline to ruff and let Dummy get three Heart ruffs. Either way it is 11 tricks.

Post Script: Because of North's doubleton ♠J9, the surprising play of losing a Spade at Trick 2 brings home 12 tricks!

2

♠ Q 10 3	West	North	East	South
♥ K Q 10 6		Pass	Pass	Pass
♦ 9 8 4	1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
♣ J 9 8	1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass

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

♠ 9 6 5 2
♥ 3 2
♦ K Q 5
♣ A 6 5 3

Dlr East
N-S Vul

Here's another complicated play hand. We expect North to lead a Spade after this auction, giving Declarer a cheap trick. There is still work to do, and he'll eventually get up to 8 tricks by finessing the ♠10 and by setting up the 13th Diamond (the best way to do that is to duck a couple of Diamonds first in order to preserve communications). P.S. That 2♣ was New Minor Forcing.

3

♠ 9 7 2	South	West	North	East
♥ 6 5	1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♠
♦ 7 5 4 2	Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT
♣ J 8 6 5	All Pass			

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

♠ K 10 8 6 5 3
♥ A 10 7 3
♦ Q 9
♣ K

Dlr South
E-W Vul

East could have guessed to bid 4♥ or 3NT directly but sensibly chose instead to temporize with a cue-bid, eventually arriving at the best contract of 3NT. South leads a low Spade won by Dummy's Queen. Declarer can be reasonably certain (from the bidding) that South has the ♠K, ♥A and ♠K, and probably the ♦Q. Declarer plays on Hearts first, leading the ♥K. If South ducks Hearts twice it will be 11 tricks. If South does not duck she must guess how to exit ... a major suit exit and Declarer has 12 tricks ... a minor suit exit and Declarer is held to just 11 tricks.

4

♠ K 4 2	West	North	East	South
♥ 8 5	1♠?	Pass	2♥	Pass
♦ Q 8 7 6 3 2	4♥	Pass	6♥	All Pass
♣ 6 4				

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

♠ A 8 7 6 5
♥ 6
♦ K J 9 4
♣ Q 10 9

Dlr West
Both Vul

How do you like West's opening bid of 1♠? There are only 10 HCP and the hand fails the Rule of 20 test, but we like the Spade fillers and the singleton. We'd open, thousands wouldn't. After East's 2♥, West's rebid will depend on the partnership methods ... if 2♥ is game-forcing then West can bid 4♥ (fast arrival to show a minimum) or maybe even a splinter of 4♦ ... if 2♥ is not game-forcing then West bids a non-forcing 3♥. But, either way, we'd expect East to push on to slam, making 12 tricks when there is a Club to be lost.

5

♠ A 5 3	West	North	East	South
♥ 10 9 5 2		Pass	2♥?	Dbl
♦ J 5 2	Pass	2♠	All Pass	
♣ 8 7 5				

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

♠ 10 8 6 2
♥ Q 8
♦ K Q 9 4
♣ A K Q

Dlr North
N-S Vul

On the previous board it was a 10-point opening bid, this time it is a 5-card Weak Two! East's 2♥ has a couple of good things going for it ... it's a valuable lead-director ... and the vulnerability is perfect for preempting (even if being in second seat is not). On the actual board, the 5-card preempt works like a charm, pushing the opponents into the inferior contract of 2♠ which is destined for down two and the dreaded -200 for N-S. But look how comfortable things are if East tamely passes: South opens 1NT and now it is E-W who are going minus, either by defending 1NT or by competing at the two-level.

6

♠ J 5 4	West	North	East	South
♥ K Q 6 4		Pass	1♦	Pass?
♦ 8 4 2	2NT	All Pass		
♣ K 7 2				

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

♠ Q 8 7 6
♥ 8 7 5
♦ 6
♣ A Q J 8 3

Dlr East
E-W Vul

E-W continue their light bidding spree when East opens his 11-count. But we don't foresee many objections to this one, it passes the Rule of 20 and is positively overflowing with lovely fillers. East's 2NT shows 11-12 HCP and denies a 4-card major. North may well lead a disastrous low Heart and Declarer claims 9 tricks and +150 (beating the E-W pairs who scored 10 tricks in a Diamond part-score).

The Real Culprit: It was North who found the tragic low Heart lead (a Spade would have been no better), but South was the guilty party! At White vs Red, she could have stretched a little and thrown in a 2♣ bid, don't you think? Sure, she's a point or two shy of a sound two-level overcall, but Partner needs to know about those lovely Clubs. A 2♣ overcall by North steers E-W into the lower-scoring Diamond part-score.

7

♠ A K 3	South	West	North	East
♥ A K 7 5	Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
♦ K 8 3	3NT	All Pass		
♣ K 4 2				

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

♠ 8 4
♥ J 6
♦ A J 7 6 4
♣ J 9 8 5

Dlr South
Both Vul

The play is tricky, but assuming that the defense discards accurately, and that Declarer plays Diamonds normally, 3NT looks to be down one. Here's one line: ♠J ducked; then ♠A wins; losing Diamond finesse; win Spade return; run Diamonds. In the 5-card ending, Declarer will come down to ♥AK7 ♠K4 but will be unable to score a 9th trick if East comes down to ♠10 ♥Q9 ♠A10 and West keeps

♥1083 ♠Q7. But there is plenty of room for defensive error, and we expect 9 tricks at some tables.

8

♠ J 6	West	North	East	South
♥ A K Q 10	Pass?	1♦	Pass	1♠
♦ A K J 5	2♠	Dbl	Pass	2♥
♣ 10 6 5	Pass	4♥	All Pass	

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

♠ A Q 10 4 2
♥ 9 7 5 4
♦ 6 3
♣ 9 2

Dlr West
None Vul

Here's yet another hand where the rules might be stretched in order to get a good suit into the auction (see also Boards 5 and 6). West does not quite have an opening bid, but (after passing) he will have a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach if East ends up on lead against 3NT.

The Play in 4♥: West leads Clubs and Declarer ruffs the third round. Best play is to draw two rounds of trumps and then lead the ♠J ... if East covers then Declarer takes the Ace, and plays the remaining trumps, hoping for 3-3 Spades or a Spade-Diamond squeeze ... if East declines to cover, the line of play is similar, though this time it is accompanied by a silent prayer that West has not cunningly ducked the ♠K! +650 for N-S.

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

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

♠ Q
♥ 8 5
♦ A K Q 9 5
♣ A J 7 6 4

Dlr North
E-W Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♥	2♦
2♥	Pass	2♠	3♣
4♠	5♣	All Pass	

The auction is hard to predict but we can say with confidence that most tables will get at least to the 5-level (by either or both sides) and that there will be doubled overtricks on the score-sheet. A few points from the auction above: (a) At this vulnerability North might try a slightly outlandish 3♣ opening (we'd be tempted!); (b) South decided her hand was not

suitable for the Unusual 2NT (many pairs use this with weak or very strong hands, this one may not be quite strong enough); (c) West did well to raise with only 2 HCP (the void counts for a lot, of course); (d) East's 2♠ was a natural game try.

The Play in Clubs: Could be 10 tricks (Heart lead, Club misguess), or 13 tricks (Spade lead, correct Club guess), or somewhere in between.

The Play in Spades: 10 tricks will be made if Declarer guesses the Spades correctly, but that seems unlikely.

10 ♠ ♠ 10 9 5 3
♥ 9 6 2
♦ A 8 7 5 3 2

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

♠ 10 9 3 2
♥ Q 8 7 6
♦ A K J
♣ Q 4

Dlr East
Both Vul

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

South does not have the values to bid 3♥ here, Partner would expect a hand with extras and not this mangy specimen. On the other hand, South would like to compete for the part-score in the known Heart fit. There is a gadget for South's situation: bid 3♥ here holding a hand with extras, but bid 2NT (a lebensohl-style relay to 3♣) when merely competing. You can google "good-bad 2NT" for further

information on this useful convention. Regardless of the N-S methods, we'd expect E-W to compete to 3♣, scoring 9 tricks with careful play.

11 ♠ 9
♥ A Q 10 7 5
♦ 10 3
♣ A Q 9 5 3

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

♠ A 8
♥ K 9
♦ K J 8 7 4
♣ K 10 7 4

Dlr South
None Vul

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

Here is a high-tech auction which reaches a so-so slam: (a) 3♠ was a splinter, showing Spade shortness, Club support, and game-going values; (b) 4♣ was Minorwood, an economical way of using Roman Key Card in minor suit auctions; (c) 4NT showed "two Key Cards with the ♠Q".

Lead Problem: Against 6♣, what would you lead as West? It's not much of a problem really, more of a no-brainer. North is short in Spades and is unlikely also to be short in Diamonds. South has 5 or 6 Diamonds, so it can hardly be wrong to lay down the ♠A, hoping to give Partner a second round ruff. Down one!

Research Opportunity: If you aspire to reach these so-so minor suit slams (and some good ones too) then try googling "minorwood redwood".

12 ♠ 2
♥ 10 9 7 5 4
♦ 10 8 5 4
♣ Q 9 8

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

♠ A Q J 8 4
♥ J
♦ A J 9 7 3
♣ A 5

Dlr West
N-S Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1♥	??

There are 3 reasonable plans here: (a) **Overcall 2NT:** Some like to play this as weak or very strong (see also Board 9), but not somewhere in the middle. Perhaps this hand just about qualifies as strong, so the plan might be to bid 2NT and then later to take another call (perhaps a Double). (b) **Overcall 1♠:** For some the hand is too strong for an overcall, we would consider it border-line. (c) **Double:** If you think it's too strong for an overcall then you'll want to double, planning to bid Spades later.

Anyway, whichever method of competition that South chooses, we'd expect N-S to end up declaring 3♦ or 4♦, making 10 tricks with the aid of the ruffing Spade finesse.

13 ♠ 5
♥ 9 8 3
♦ K Q 10 8 4
♣ K 10 4 2

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

♠ K J 10 4 2
♥ A 5 4
♦ 9 5 3
♣ 6 3

Dlr North
Both Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♥	1♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Rdbl	Pass	2♦
Dbl	All Pass		

If South makes a marginal 1♠ vulnerable overcall, she may suffer dire consequences! Over 1♠, West lurks in wait for a reopening Double from East, and then makes a Penalty Pass. The play in 1♠ doubled will be lots of fun for the defense, they should score +800. However, North may bail out with an SOS Redouble (as shown) in which case it will be 2♦ doubled. This is a bit less painful for N-S, probably 500. That's a good E-W score, though, as they cannot make 3NT and are unlikely to reach the only making game of 4♥.

14 ♠ A 7 3
♥ K Q
♦ A 7 6
♣ K Q 6 5 4

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

♠ K Q 5 4 2
♥ 6
♦ K 10 9 3
♣ J 3 2

Dlr East
None Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		2♥?	Pass
4♥	Dbl	Pass	4♠
5♥	Dbl	All Pass	

Our protagonists have been free and easy with their Weak Twos (see also 5, 24) and here is another one that won't meet with universal approval, on account of the alarming (to some people) absence of high Hearts. But those E-W pairs who say "Phooey" to such trivial objections have a chance of finding the fine sacrifice of 5♥.

The Play in 5♥: There are 4 obvious losers but are there 9 tricks? If South leads the ♠K (likely) then Dummy scores 3 Club ruffs and that will do it. A trump lead is more problematic but Declarer can still wriggle out for down two by winning the ♥A and leading a low Diamond at Trick 2 ... if North hops up she hands Declarer a trick ... and, if North ducks, the Ace is ruffed out. Either way, down two.

15 ♠ J 10 8
♥ Q 9 4
♦ Q 9 4
♣ J 10 8 4

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

♠ A 9 6
♥ 5 3
♦ A J 7
♣ A Q 9 7 5

Dlr South
N-S Vul

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Let's say that the defense cashes four Hearts ending in East. On the run of the Hearts, Dummy can spare a Club but what should Declarer pitch? Not a Club winner ... and pitching two Spades would allow the defense to set up three tricks in that suit ... so Declarer pitches Diamonds, hoping that Dummy's Q94 will provide a second stopper. After the last Heart, East shifts to a Diamond taken by Declarer's Ace. Then ♠A, a Club to

West's King, ♦K, Spade shift, for down one. When in with the ♠K it won't help West to shift to a low Diamond ... if Declarer guesses wrong and plays the Nine from Dummy it is still down only one (the Diamonds are blocked) ... and if Declarer guesses to put up the ♦Q she has 7 tricks!

16 ♠ Q 6
♥ A K J 9 8 4 2
♦ 8 7
♣ 8 5

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

♠ J 9 3
♥ 10 3
♦ A K J 9 4
♣ K 7 4

Dlr West
E-W Vul

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♦	4♥	All Pass	

With 7 Hearts many Norths will overcall 3♥. But it's White vs Red and that is often used (reasonably so) as an excuse to preempt one level higher. As it happens, North would probably buy the contract by bidding only 3♥, so the success or otherwise of 4♥ depends upon East's opening lead. Some will lead Partner's suit (thereby minimizing the chances of getting shouted at in the post mortem) and that allows 4♥ to squeak home (East never gets in again and eventually a Spade becomes the 10th trick). If East is made of sterner stuff, he'll lead the ♠Q (probably) down one.

Exotic Variation: Suppose that the ♠Q wins the first trick, and that the second Club is covered by the King and Ace. West plays the ♠K next and East should give count, allowing the defense to cash out correctly. But West may mistakenly try to cash another Club instead. Declarer ruffs that, rattles off all her trumps and catches West in a Spade-Diamond squeeze. 10 tricks the exotic way!

17 ♠ A J 7 5
♥ J 4
♦ A Q 9 7 2
♣ A 5

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

♠ 4
Dlr North ♥ K Q 5 2
None Vul ♦ K 10 3
♣ K J 8 6 2

the proceedings Declarer can count 11 tricks (she assumes the ♠9 is with East), and that becomes 12 when the final Diamond squeezes East in the black suits. And we are sure you noticed that if West plays low at Trick 1 there is no squeeze and Declarer has 11 tricks only. East would have done better with the ♠K opening lead, now 11 tricks are the maximum (in practice, it will be just 10 as Declarer will take the losing Club finesse).

18 ♠ K Q 5 4
♥ Q 4
♦ Q 9 3 2
♣ Q 10 9

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

♠ A 6 3
Dlr East ♥ A 10 8 6
N-S Vul ♦ 10 8 6 4
♣ K 6

(b) South might have doubled, but we don't think it's quite good enough.
(c) North's Double is questionable, and perhaps even that is being polite. Minimum values, no Aces, too many Queens.
(d) South's 1NT is an underbid, for sure, but a reasonable one playing matchpoints (if E-W were to bid again then South could double to show a max). However, the mere fact that even 1NT may be too high for N-S is strong evidence that North has overbid her hand.

The Play in No Trump: West politely leads Partner's Club suit and 1NT is down one. Well, maybe! If East plays the Jack (or Ace) at Trick 1, then Declarer has a Club entry and can use it to set up a Heart for his 7th trick. The winning (and difficult) defense is for East to play *low* on the first trick.

19 ♠ Q J 9 2
♥ K 7 4 3
♦ 8 2
♣ A 7 5

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

♠ 5 4
Dlr South ♥ Q J
E-W Vul ♦ A 7 5
♣ K 10 9 6 4 2

makes it a N-S hand. 9 N-S tricks in Clubs, only 8 for E-W in Diamonds.

20 ♠ J 8
♥ K 6 4 3
♦ 10
♣ J 8 6 5 4 3

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

♠ 9 7 6 3
Dlr West ♥ 10 9 7
Both Vul ♦ K 9 8 5 2
♣ 10

suits! That was nicely done, but we'd expect only 11 tricks at most tables, and doubt whether many E-W pairs will bid and make slam.

West *North* *East* *South*
1NT Pass 2♣ 3NT
Pass 2♠ Pass

All Pass
Most Norths will open an off-shape 1NT. That gets North as Declarer in 3NT and the auction might persuade East to lead a Club rather than a Spade. Unlucky choice! The play may go: ♠10 covered by Jack, Queen, Ace; ♥J won by the Ace; belated ♠K shift to the Ace; ♦A (unblocking the ♠10 in case West has ♦Jxxx); ♦K; ♥K; ♥Q; run the Diamonds. At this point in

West *North* *East* *South*
1♥ Dbl? Pass 1NT?

All Pass
Yes, indeed, we have a few questionable bids in this auction, but don't blame the participants, it's just that kind of deal.

(a) East did not have to open 1♣. His hand passes the Rule of 20, but you will have noticed the sad shortage of intermediate cards and also the concentration of HCP in a doubleton (HCP are more effective in long suits).

21 ♠ K Q 10 8
♥ A 7
♦ 6 4
♣ J 10 7 6 5

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

♠ A J
Dlr North ♥ K 6 2
N-S Vul ♦ A Q 10 9
♣ A 9 3 2

probabilities, Declarer wins the ♥A and finesses the Club Nine. West wins and continues Hearts, and when the Clubs behave it is 11 tricks.

Playing a Team Game (with less emphasis on overtricks), Declarer does better to finesse the Clubs once and then cash the ♠A. Now, if the Clubs do not oblige, Declarer has the timing to fall back on the Diamond finesse for 9 tricks. That would also be reasonable at matchpoints, giving up a mere 6% in Clubs for an extra chance to make the contract. But it's somewhat academic on the actual layout, all lines of play work.

22 ♠ Q 10 5 2
♥ Q J 3
♦ A 7 5 4
♣ 9 8

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

♠ A
Dlr East ♥ A 10 8 6 5 4
E-W Vul ♦ 3
♣ A K J 7 5

things up by ruffing the second Club and now, although Dummy can ruff one Club, there are still two losers remaining. 10 tricks only! The route to 11 tricks won't happen in real life ... Declarer draws three rounds of trumps then plays ♠A and a low Club, making sure of three Club tricks.

23 ♠ 10 8 5
♥ J 9 8 7
♦ A K 9
♣ 10 8 6

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

♠ J 4
Dlr South ♥ K Q 6 4 2
Both Vul ♦ 10 6 5 2
♣ 3 2

else concede a ruff and discard. That will be 10 tricks regardless of the location of the ♠A and ♠K. The computer chose to put both Diamond honors in the same hand so those Declarers who did not spot the elimination play will not be punished for their oversight.

24 ♠ J 10 7 5
♥ A J 8 5
♦ Q 5
♣ K 4 3

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

♠ 4
Dlr West ♥ Q 9 7 4 2
None Vul ♦ K 10 9
♣ A Q 7 6

passed she no doubt reasoned that her ♠K was probably wasted and that, anyway, E-W appeared to be in a strong auction. So, perhaps North and South were both a tad timid, but neither criminally so, sometimes the auction just works out badly. It pays to preempt!

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

West leads a Heart which is won in Dummy. Now, what is the percentage play in Clubs for one loser? This is what the mathematicians tell us:

(a) Cash the Ace first – that works 66% of the time

(b) Finesse on the first round and then cash the Ace – that one is 70%

(c) Finesse twice – that's worth 76%

So, armed with her knowledge of the

West *North* *East* *South*
Pass 2♥ Pass 1♥
Pass Pass Pass 4♥

All Pass
Playing in Hearts, South can always make 11 tricks, but many Declarers will try for 13 and end up with 10! West leads a Diamond to the Ace, the ♥Q is run around, then a Heart to the Ten. Now, all that is needed for 13 tricks is a 3-3 Club break, so Declarer plays ♣A and ♠K, planning to ruff a Club, get back to hand, draw the last trump and claim. But East messes

up by ruffing the second Club and now, although Dummy can ruff one Club, there are still two losers remaining. 10 tricks only! The route to 11 tricks won't happen in real life ... Declarer draws three rounds of trumps then plays ♠A and a low Club, making sure of three Club tricks.

South *West* *North* *East*
Pass Pass Pass 1NT
Pass 2♣ Pass 2♠
Pass 4♠ All Pass

Let's say that South leads the ♥K against 4♣. Declarer wins and plays on trumps. When they turn out to be 3-2, do you see how to guarantee the contract? Yes, of course, after drawing trumps you will cash the Clubs and exit with a Heart. Now there is no possibility of losing three Diamonds as the defense must either break open the suit themselves or else concede a ruff and discard. That will be 10 tricks regardless of the location of the ♠A and ♠K. The computer chose to put both Diamond honors in the same hand so those Declarers who did not spot the elimination play will not be punished for their oversight.

West *North* *East* *South*
2♦? Pass? 2♠ Pass?
3♠ All Pass

Here's another of those Weak Twos which you either like or you don't. This one allows E-W to steal the pot by playing in 3♠ (down two) when N-S are cold for 4♥. Which of our N-S pair dropped the ball? North might have made a Takeout Double, fortified by the possession of two 4-card majors. But, on the other hand, she does have only 11 HCP (including the dubious doubleton ♠Q). When South

25 ♠ 6 4
♥ A Q 7 4
♦ Q J 4 3 2
♣ 9 6

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

after raising the suit (it's a lead that won't be mistaken for a doubleton). If E-W have this agreement then, at Trick 2, West will find the deadly shift of a low Spade! East of course plays small to this trick (otherwise all of Declarer's Heart losers go away), and now when West gets in with the ♦K he can underlead his high Clubs, getting East in with the Jack for a Spade return. Sound agreements and mutual trust produce a delightful defense!

26 ♠ Q 8 6 5 4
♥ J
♦ A K 8 6 5 4
♣ 10

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

doubleton ♥K. If East perpetrates that adventurous re-opening Double and West plays in 4♠, then N-S will need to beat this by two tricks to get a good board. Perhaps they won't: North leads ♦A; two Hearts are cashed; South shifts to the ♠K. Dummy wins, draws trumps, ruffs a Heart and ruffs a Diamond, then exits a Spade. South wins the ♠J, but with only Hearts left she must concede a ruff and discard, and Declarer's second Spade loser disappears in a puff of smoke! Down only one.

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

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

Playing in 2NT, the opening lead will be a Heart and the play could get complicated especially if West plays the ♥10 on the first trick. But the bottom line is that Declarer must guess the Clubs to make 8 tricks.

28 ♠ A 6
♥ A 7
♦ 10 7
♣ A K Q J 8 5 4

♠ Q J 8 2 ♠ K 7 5 4
♥ Q 9 5 ♥ J 10 8 3
♦ J 8 2 ♦ A Q 9 4 3
♠ 10 9 3 ♣
 ♠ 10 9 3
Dlr West ♥ K 6 4 2
N-S Vul ♦ K 6 5
 ♣ 7 6 2

when the Ace turns out to be onside (but risking disaster if it isn't). Declarer counts 16 missing HCP and the bidding suggests that East has about 10 or 11 and that West has 5 or 6. So playing the ♦K at Trick 1 is no sure thing, but it is favorite to succeed (only at matchpoints!).

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

E-W will make 3♣ with the help of the onside ♦A and the favorable Hearts, so North does well to push on to 3♣. Against 3♦, East leads a low Club, won by West's Queen. Now, if E-W are on the same wavelength, they have the chance to beat 3♦ with some pretty defense. West will know that East has the ♠J as it's customary to lead top-of-nothing from three small

29 ♠ K 2
♥ J 8 6 4 2
♦ J 8 5
♣ 10 7 6

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

Heart to the King and West's Ace; Diamond won in Dummy; Heart Nine run around to East's Ten; Diamond won in Dummy. After the Heart misguess, Declarer's only chance is to cross to the Spade King and lead up to the ♠K. When West's Ace wins the trick, Declarer's misery is complete as the defense cashes the ♥Q, three more Clubs, and the 13th Diamond. Down 4! That was unlucky guessing by Declarer, if instead she plays the ♥J on the second round of the suit she has 10 tricks (and 11 if West neglects to grab his ♠A pronto).

30 ♠ J 4 3
♥ 8 7 6 5 2
♦ 7 4 3
♣ J 10

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

(c) West doubles 1NT, North transfers (most pairs play "systems on" after the Double), and East competes to 3♣ (3NT would be optimistic, but would work on a good day). Making 10 tricks and +130 for E-W.

31 ♠ 9 8 3 2
♥ K J
♦ A Q
♣ A 9 8 5 3

♠ J 10 7 ♠ Q 5
♥ 7 4 3 ♥ A Q 8 6 2
♦ 9 6 2 ♦ 10 8 7 5
♠ K J 7 2 ♣ 10 4
 ♠ A K 6 4
Dlr South ♥ 10 9 5
N-S Vul ♦ K J 4 3
 ♣ Q 6

that will be down one if West finds a Heart lead (which he presumably will, considering the auction). This board is not a triumph for modern bidding!

32 ♠ K 7 4
♥ K J 5 4 3
♦ Q 10
♣ A Q 6

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

(with silent opponents) there is no reason why she should. But will Declarer be down one or two? The route to down only one is to play low from hand on the Club, win the return, cash two top trumps and then play on Spades. Playing the ♠Q on the first round will result in two undertricks. **Bidding Footnote:** Suppose that North's response to the Stayman inquiry had been 2♦. What next? Many play that 2♠ here is game-invitational, showing 5 Spades and 4 Hearts. Just what South has!

West *North* *East* *South*
 Pass **1NT?** **Pass** **1♠**
All Pass **Pass** **Pass** **3NT**

North might have passed, but that's no fun at all, Declarer making 8 or 9 tricks easily enough. But, by bidding 1NT, North plays a more challenging 3NT. East might find the unfortunate Diamond opening lead, but even when the Jack wins the trick and when the Spades break, Declarer still has work to do. The play might go: Diamond won by Declarer's Jack;

West *North* *East* *South*
 ?? **Pass** **1NT**

Some of the possibilities are:
(a) West passes (perhaps he does not think the hand is worth a strength-showing Double, or perhaps he is playing DONT), North transfers to Hearts and Declarer goes down 3 against best defense. +150 for E-W.
(b) West is a DONT addict and cannot resist bidding 2♥ (showing Hearts and Spades). 2♠ limps home with a lucky 9 tricks. That's +140 for E-W.

South *West* *North* *East*
1♦ **Pass** **2♣** **Pass**
2♠ **Pass** **4♠** **All Pass**

Some pairs play that South's 2♠ rebid shows extras and so they will be forced to rebid 2NT instead. That's not such a popular treatment nowadays but it would certainly work well on this deal! Those "old-fashioned" pairs will bid 1♦ 2♣, 2NT 3♠, 4♠, getting 4♠ played from the right side. The more "modern" bidders will suffer the grisly fate of playing 4♠ from the South side, and

West *North* *East* *South*
Pass? **1NT** **Pass** **2♣**
Pass **2♥** **Pass** **3♥**
Pass **4♥** **All Pass**

Perhaps it was rather timid of West not to try a Weak Two with such a lovely 5-card suit, no doubt his excuse was the vulnerability. After West's tame Pass, N-S stagger into 4♥ and East leads a Diamond anyway, for want of better. West wins and shifts to a Club at Trick 2, after which Declarer is down unless she can guess the trump situation, and