

ACBL-wide International Fund #1 • Saturday afternoon • 2/5/11

Bd: 1 ♠ 10
 Dir: North ♥ 7 6 3
 Vul: None ♦ A J 7 4 3 2
 ♣ 4 3 2

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

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

Some Norths will open a carefree weak 2♦. East lacks the values for 2♠, but some will overcall anyway, and West may wheel out Blackwood and subside at 5♠ only when East shows one ace. If East passes over 2♦, South can't act; North-South were already in -500 territory at 2♦. West will reopen with a double, and East can jump to 3♠. West might cuebid 4♦ or try 4NT, but East-West should stop no higher than 5♠. At tables where North passes as dealer, West will often open 1♠, and if East

offers a limit raise to 3♠, West will try for slam with 4♥. (East could hold AJ982,54,A1085,76.) Again, East-West should stop safely. If East is declarer at spades, South will lead a diamond or the ♣A, and East-West will be +450. If West is declarer, North may lead the ♦A, and unless he finds a club shift, West will make six for +480, a top.

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

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

♠ 5
 ♥ 6 5 3
 ♦ Q 9 5 2
 ♣ J 8 7 6 3

If West opens 1♣, some Norths will double, hoping South will be a good partner and respond in a major. Then many Easts will redouble, and some ill-fated Souths will respond 1♦ and play there doubled, down at least two for -500 and a zero. North-South might also meet disaster at 1♥ doubled or 1NT doubled; but at other tables, East may prefer to start looking for his own side's contract by bidding 1♦ over North's double. South will pass with relief, West will try 1♥, East continues with 1♠ and West raises to 2♠. Then if East likes

his strong spades and ♦A enough to try for game with 3♠, West will go on. 4♠ is a desirable contract and can be made if South leads a diamond. But since the cards lie badly for declarer, he'll probably fail with any other lead, and North-South will be +50 for most of the matchpoints.

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

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

♠ 9 2
 ♥ K Q J 9 3
 ♦ A K 3
 ♣ 9 6 2

When South opens 1♥, many Norths will bid 2♥, and East will enter with 2♣. After two passes, North can compete with 3♥ since he has four trumps. After two more passes, West can try 3♠: He has no wasted heart honors that might be useful only on defense. If South leads the ♥K, East will ruff the second heart, draw trumps, ruff dummy's last heart and force out the ♣A. By the time he starts the diamonds, he may infer that South had the A-K for his opening bid, so East can avoid a losing finesse with dummy's ♦8

and make his contract. Some Norths may make it hard for East-West to enter the auction. North may stretch to respond 3♥ (limit) or employ a conventional three-level action to show four-card support. Then East may be shut out, and though best defense beats 3♥, South may take nine tricks in practice for a top.

Bd: 4 ♠ K Q 10 9
 Dir: West ♥ K 7 4
 Vul: Both ♦ A Q 10 9 7
 ♣ 7

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

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

When West opens 1♠, some Norths will pass. If East raises to 2♠ despite a loser-filled hand, West will probably roar into 4♠, doubled for -800, and may have some trenchant comments for his partner in the postmortem. If instead East passes, most Souths will deem their hand too weak to balance, and West will be +80. At other tables, North will overcall 2♦. If East raised to 2♠, West might go -500 at 3♠ doubled; he might compete even though his diamond honors would look worthless. But suppose East

discreetly passes throughout. Over North's 2♦, South might prefer a raise to 3♦ instead of a 2♥ bid since both his hand and his hearts are weak. If South did bid hearts, he might be raised to 4♥, down; but if North plays at a diamond partial, he can come to ten tricks for +130 and a fair matchpoint result.

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

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

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

East has plenty of defensive values to open 2♣, but the playing tricks are lacking. So many Easts will open 1♠, and the auction should die. Other Easts will risk a 2♣ opening, leading to 2♣, 2♦-2♠, 2NT (or a conventional second negative)-3♥, 3♠. Assuming East-West have agreed that 2♣ is not forcing to game, West will pass gratefully. Against 3♠, South will lead the ♦K, and East takes the ace and reaches dummy with the ♠J. Say he leads a heart to his jack next, and South takes the ace and leads the

♦Q. East ruffs, cashes the ♥K and leads a third heart. If the defense tries for a forcing game by leading a third diamond, East can preserve his trump length by throwing a club loser. He wins the club shift, draws trumps and enjoys his good heart, making three. East-West may score 70% of the matchpoints for +140.

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

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

♠ 6 4 3 2
 ♥ K Q 8 3
 ♦ A Q J 4
 ♣ 5

A "Standard" auction will start 1♦-2♣, leaving South with an awkward rebid problem. If in North-South's style a reverse after a 2/1 response does not promise extra values, South can bid 2♥, but many Souths will try 2NT or even 2♦. Then North will show his hearts, South will raise and North-South will usually settle into 4♥. If South does try 2♥ at his second turn, North may have slam aspirations. He may raise to 3♥ (forcing), planning to try again for slam even if South signs off at 4♥. North's best action would

be a "splinter" jump to 3♠, showing a heart fit and spade shortness; South would know all his cards are working. In fact, 6♥ is a fine spot (and can be made at double dummy), but the cruel 4-1 trump break will punish pairs who reach slam. We predict North-South will usually be +450 for about a 65% result.

Bd: 7 ♠ A Q 7
 Dir: South ♥ A J 9 5
 Vul: Both ♦ Q
 ♣ A Q 9 7 4

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

♠ J 9 6
 ♥ 10 7 2
 ♦ A K J 6
 ♣ 8 3 2

After 1♣-1♦, some Norths will jump-shift to 2♥ (a stretch, we think). South will return to 3♣, and North will try 3NT. If instead North settles for 1♥ at his second turn, South can bid 1NT next, not necessarily promising strength in spades. North will raise to 3NT. The play will be complex with variations at every table. "Deep Finesse" tells us that 3NT is always cold for an overtrick, but in practice declarer may struggle to win nine tricks. If West leads a spade against 3NT by South, East can take the king

and return a spade. South can overtake dummy's ♦Q with his king, finesse with the ♣Q, cash the ♠A (a key play, removing West's third spade) and lead a low club. West must make a helpful return. If East leads a spade against 3NT, North can actually make 5NT with best play, but North-South may score above average for +600.

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

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

♠ Q 4 2
 ♥ 9 8 6
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ A Q 10 9 7

A few Wests will open 1NT, pretending they have balanced pattern. North may not be able to bid 2♦ -- it would be conventional --but he may jump to 3♦. Then East can try 3♥, but if East-West have no agreement, West won't be sure whether 3♥ is forcing. At other tables, West will open 1♣. If North preempts with 3♦ and two passes follow, West will have a major headache. He can salvage +50 by passing, but if he acts, East-West will probably land at a major-suit game. It seems East might make 4♥. Say South leads the ♦J, and North takes

two diamonds and leads a club to the ace. If South shifts to a trump, East takes the A-K, ruffs a club and runs the trumps, squeezing South in the black suits. To beat 4♥, North must lead a third diamond to promote a trump trick. We think East-West will do well matchpoint-wise if they can go plus.

Bd: 9 ♠ A Q 6 4
 Dlr: North ♥ A
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q J 9 8 3
 ♣ A J 5

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

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

If East ignored the vulnerability and his deficient club support and risked a takeout double of North's 1♦ opening, East-West might pay out 800 points at 2♣ doubled. But even so, South might ignore the double, as many players would do, and respond 1♥. Then North would rebid 1♠, and North-South would usually reach their normal spade game. If instead East passes discreetly over 1♦, North-South will still reach 4♠ with no difficulty. We expect a routine ten tricks at almost every table: East will

take his high diamonds and score the ♠K later. North has so many winners that the 4-1 trump break won't trouble him. We predict +420 to North-South at most tables, but kudos to North-Souths who find a route to an unlikely 3NT for +430 or +460.

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

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

♠ A Q 8 3 2
 ♥ -----
 ♦ J 9 5
 ♣ Q 9 7 5 3

After 1♥-1♠, some Norths will jump to 4♥. That may be the best spot, and some benefit may accrue if North hides his second suit. Many Norths will rebid 2♦, and South will fear a possible misfit. If North had a weaker, less shapely hand, to pass might be best, and some Norths will be stranded at 2♦ for +130. If South finds a second bid such as 2NT, North can leap to 4♥ next, but the play may prove arduous. A spade opening lead will always beat 4♥, and if East leads the ♣K and shifts to a spade, North

must play double dummy to prevail. He will probably take the ♠A, come to his ♦A and lead the ♥A and ♥Q. West takes the king and returns a club, and North ruffs and cashes the ♥J. When East discards, North takes the ♦K and leads to the ♦J. If West refuses to ruff, North loses control and goes down.

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

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

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

Most Easts will open 1♠. Then some Souths will overcall 2♥, and others will try a Michaels 2♠ cuebid to show hearts and a minor. In either case, North should respect his partner's vulnerable intervention and commit to game. If for instance South overcalls, North can cuebid 2♠, and when South tries 3♣ next, North can jump to 4♥. A few Easts will decline to open due to the vulnerability and the poor long suit. Then South will open 1♥, and if North invites game -- perhaps with a direct limit raise -- South can accept. If

West leads a spade against 4♥, East takes the king and returns a spade. South can win in dummy, pick up the trumps and set up the clubs with a ruff, making five. Barring a defensive lapse, declarer can't manage a second overtrick; but North-South may score 65% of the matchpoints for +650.

Bd: 14 ♠ Q J 10 8
 Dlr: East ♥ A 9 4
 Vul: None ♦ A Q 10 6 5
 ♣ A

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

♠ 3 2
 ♥ K Q 7 6 2
 ♦ J 8 3
 ♣ 8 7 5

With East a passed hand, we expect almost every West to open 3♣. North will double, South will respond 3♥ -- his hand is not quite worth 4♥ -- and North will probably pass: he has already promised a good hand, and South's hand could be much weaker with only four hearts. A few Norths will stretch to try 4♦ next, and South can convert to 4♥. A few Wests will open 1♣, and then North-South will have more room to sort out their values and reach game. If West led a trump or his singleton diamond against 4♥, South

could simply win, draw trumps and force out the ♦K for ten tricks. His task will be harder if West leads the ♣K, but he can still succeed -- for instance, by drawing two rounds of trumps, then attacking the diamonds. North-Souths who reach 4♥ for +420 should score nine matchpoints on a 12 top.

Bd: 11 ♠ Q 2
 Dlr: South ♥ 8 3 2
 Vul: None ♦ 10 8 3
 ♣ A Q 9 6 5

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

♠ K 7
 ♥ Q 9 5 4
 ♦ K 9 6
 ♣ J 10 8 4

This should be a quiet board. Most Easts will open 1NT -- even if playing a range of 16 to 18 points since the East hand has two tens and good high-card structure. West will use Stayman and raise East's 2♠ rebid to 4♠. South will lead the ♣J to North's ace, and the defense will also get a trump and South's ♦K, holding East to his contract. We suppose North-South might contrive some way for declarer to make an overtrick, but we expect +420 to East-West to be a common and average result.

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

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

♠ 7 5
 ♥ Q 9
 ♦ 10 9 5 3 2
 ♣ 7 5 4 2

When West opens 1♠, few Norths will be willing to overcall at the two level, vulnerable against not, with a ratty heart suit. Even if North held his nose and tried 2♥, East wouldn't shelve his massive spade support to try for a penalty. If North passes over 1♠, East can issue a forcing spade raise such as an artificial 2NT response. If West rebids 3♥, conventionally showing a singleton, East must realize that though his ♥A looks good, his ♥J is wasted and so are his ♠QJ. He should settle for 4♠, and West should retire.

North will lead a heart, and even if South fails to play the queen, it will fall under dummy's ace later after West draws trumps. Declarer can pitch two diamonds on the ♥AJ and lose only to the ♦A and the ♣K, making five. We expect a recap sheet full of +450's to East-West.

Bd: 12 ♠ 7
 Dlr: West ♥ K 8 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ A Q J 7 3
 ♣ 8 5 4 3

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

♠ Q 8 6
 ♥ Q J 9 6 2
 ♦ 9 8 5
 ♣ A 10

If North-South are solid citizens, North passes as dealer, and when East opens 1♦, South wants more to overcall 1♥. West responds 1♠, East raises, West passes, and North is unwilling to balance, vulnerable, with diamond values and only three hearts. If North leads the ♣8 against 2♠, South wins and shifts to the ♥Q. West takes the ace, cashes the top trumps and tries to run the clubs. South ruffs in time to cash a heart and hold West to nine tricks. We expect +140 to East-West to be a common result, but at some tables,

North-South will be in the auction. Fearless Souths will overcall 1♥, and North-South may compete to 3♥. East-West could double for +500 but are likely to go to 3♠. Then the North-South bidding may let a few Wests figure out how to play the trumps, and East-West will be +170 for a fine matchpoint result.

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

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

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

When South tries 2♥ over East's 1♠, we think North's values are enough to act, even opposite a non-vulnerable overcall: North can try 2NT. Then East must keep silent -- he could be nailed for -500 at 3♠ doubled -- and South can make a bold decision to raise to 3NT. Against that contract, East will probably attack spades and will watch North win and race off 11 tricks when the clubs obligingly break 2-2. Many Souths will try 3♣ over 2NT, and then North may take a 3♥ preference instead of persisting with

3NT. That would be the right action on some other deal, but if South plays at hearts, the defense can hold him to nine tricks with a spade lead to East's ten and the ♠Q return, inducing West to ruff and shift to a diamond. North-Souths who reach a winning 3NT and score +460 may earn almost all the matchpoints.

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

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

♠ K Q 5
 ♥ 4
 ♦ 6 4 2
 ♣ K Q J 8 6 5

Many Norths will open 2♥, weak. Then if East merely overcalls 3♦, he'll play there and score ten tricks for a peaceful +130 when the trump suit treats him well. We anticipate more action at other tables, where East may try a swashbuckling 3NT over 2♥. If he is allowed to play there, South had better not lead a too-trusting heart, else East will steal off with ten tricks. If instead South relies on the evidence of his hand and leads the ♣K, the result will be down two -- a three-trick difference -- and North-South

will get a top for +100. Some Souths will avoid any opening lead problems by competing with 4♣ over 3NT. They would go down one for -50, but East will surely go to 4♦ and make it. We predict East-West will score slightly above average for +130: any East-West who are +430 will get an icy top.

Bd: 21 ♠ A 5 4 2
 Dlr: North ♥ A K Q 10 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 5
 ♣ A 6

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

♠ K 7 6
 ♥ 8 7 6 4
 ♦ A K 4
 ♣ Q 5 4

When North opens 1♥, South may scrape up a forcing raise -- probably a conventional 2NT response since everyone has abandoned the old-fashioned forcing double-raise and now use limit raises. North will continue with 3♥, leaving room for slam investigation; he would jump to 4♥ with no slam interest. Then South has a crucial call. If he is willing cuebid 4♦, we suspect that wild horses won't keep North out of the losing slam. It's easy to say that 4♦ is "free" below the level of game, but

the reality is that any cuebid will psychologically impel North toward slam. We think since South's values are a dead minimum, he should sign off at 4♥; if North-South have a slam, North can bid again. Pairs who stop safely and register +650 should score well above average.

Bd: 18 ♠ A J 9 3
 Dlr: East ♥ A 7
 Vul: N-S ♦ K Q J
 ♣ A 10 7 3

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

♠ Q 7 2
 ♥ 10 6 5
 ♦ A 6 4 3
 ♣ J 6 4

If North hears three passes, he'll open 1♣ and South will respond 1♦. If North bids only 1♠ next, South may check out; but if North jumps to 2♠ or 2NT, he'll play at 3NT. East will lead the ♥Q, and North will do well to win nine tricks. He can take the ♥A, run the diamonds (guessing to play for a 3-3 break), lead to the ♠J and cash the ♠A to drop West's king. In real life, North may cash the ♦KQJ and then try to reach dummy by leading the ♠J or by leading low to the ♠Q, and he'll wind up going down. At a

few tables, West will try a skinny third-chair 1♣ opening. North-South will reach 3NT again, but if East leads the ♣8, North will take ten tricks without working up a sweat. North-South will get a top for +630.

Bd: 22 ♠ 8 6
 Dlr: East ♥ 7 6 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 2
 ♣ K 7 6 4 3 2

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

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

South will open 1♥, and West will eye the vulnerability edgily. If he overcalls 1♠, North can raise to 2♥, and East will bid 2♠; East might do more with 9742, A102, 964, AQ8, but in his actual hand the ♥Q may be wasted. After two passes, North can compete with 3♣, but East or West can go to 3♠, passed out. North will lead a heart, and West will lose a heart, a trump and two diamonds for +140. Some Wests may start with a Michaels 2♥ cuebid to show spades and a minor. At the vulnerability, North might boost to 3♥;

but East can compete with 3♠, passed out, and if South leads a heart, East will make an overtrick for +170 and a matchpoint top. North-South can get a top if East-West bid too boldly to 4♠, down one, and may also score well if East-West are cowed by the vulnerability and sell out to a North-South heart partial.

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

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

♠ Q 7 6
 ♥ K 6 5 3
 ♦ 6
 ♣ A 9 8 7 6

When North opens 1♠, South's hand is too promising for a 2♠ raise. South has options: a raise to 3♠ despite lacking four-card support; a forcing 1NT response followed by a jump to 3♠; a conventional "Drury" 2♣ to suggest a spade fit and game interest. North has few extra values, so it's uncertain whether North-South will reach 4♠, and indeed, the play would be touch-and-go. Say East leads a trump, which looks good for the defense. North can win in dummy and lead a diamond, and West takes the king and leads a second

trump. North cashes the ♣KA, ruffs a club, ruffs a diamond, ruffs a club, draws trumps and leads a heart to East's ace. The defense can cash only one diamond, and North can reach dummy with the ♥K to take the fifth club for the tenth trick. North-South should score well for +170 and a top for +420.

Bd: 23 ♠ K Q 5
 Dlr: South ♥ 9 6
 Vul: Both ♦ 9 7 6 5 2
 ♣ 9 8 4

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

♠ A 3 2
 ♥ 5 4
 ♦ K Q 8 4
 ♣ 7 6 3 2

When West opens 1♥, East's hand is too heavy to raise to 2♥ (unless, perhaps, East-West play constructive single raises). East has three options: 1NT (forcing), 1♠ or 2♣. Over any response, West can (in Standard methods) jump to 3♥, suggesting about 16 HCP and usually a six-card suit, and East will raise to 4♥, usually passed out. If East responded 1NT or 2♣, North will lead the ♠K, and the defense will cash three spades, holding West to his contract. If East responded 1♠, North may stay off

the spade lead, letting West make a valuable overtrick. A few East-Wests may bid 1♥-1NT, 2NT-3NT, which would doubtless produce the same 11 tricks for +660 and a matchpoint top; but if East's first action is 2♣, some pairs may quest up to 5♥ in search of slam, and they may be defeated one trick, giving a top to North-South.

Bd: 20 ♠ A 5 3
 Dlr: West ♥ A 9 7
 Vul: Both ♦ 10 9 6
 ♣ 9 8 7 6

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

♠ 9 8 7
 ♥ K J 10 5 3
 ♦ 8 7 2
 ♣ A 5

If West opens 1♦, the auction may start 1♦-1♥, 1♠-1NT ... Then West may be tempted to shoot out a pass at matchpoints -- East's hearts could be stronger -- but his shape and lack of aces suggest playing at a suit. West will usually continue with 2♣, and East's 2♦ preference will end the auction. West is missing only three aces, and a few Wests will score +130; but repeated heart leads by the defense will be troublesome and will hold him to at most nine tricks. A few Wests will speculate by opening 1♠; indeed, that suit does look like a five-

bagger. East's raise to 2♠ will be passed out. The defense can win five tricks with a forcing game or by giving South club ruffs, but with benign defense West may take nine or ten tricks for a top. Easts at 1NT will get a bottom when North-South take five hearts plus two aces for +100.

Bd: 24 ♠ K 9 8 7 3
 Dlr: West ♥ J 7 2
 Vul: None ♦ 8 7 6 3
 ♣ J

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

♠ J 10 6 5
 ♥ A K 4
 ♦ A 9 5 4 2
 ♣ 3

The East-West pairs may post some big numbers. West will open 1♣, East will respond "where he lives" with 1♦ and South may climb in with a double. Then West has several possible actions: a quiet 1♥ or 2♣ rebid, expecting more bidding; a jump to 3♣; a devil-may-care leap to 3NT, hoping for seven clubs, a spade and one trick from the card gods. If North led a spade against 3NT, dummy's queen would win, and West could lead the ♦K to South's ace. South could hold West to one overtrick by

cashing his high hearts (to underlead the A-K wouldn't work after South doubled and North showed the ♠K), but if South returned a spade, West would take 12 tricks. Even +490 may not be an East-West top since some pairs will play at 5♣ doubled. If North leads a spade, West can take the queen, ruff out South's ♦A and end with 12 tricks, +650.

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

After two passes, South will open a weak 2♠, and though West's winning action is to overcall 2NT, passed out for +120, he'll double for takeout. East will respond 3♣, and West will try 3♦, showing extra strength. Then East might raise to 4♦ or cuebid 3♠ -- if West had the ♣A instead of the king, 3NT would be cold -- but if all pass, West will manage nine tricks. Some Norths will contest the auction. If North bids 3♠ over West's 3♦, East-West must display hairline judgment to pass for +50 rather than go on. If North bids 3♠ directly over

the double and East and South pass, West may double again. If East responds 4♣, West will convert to 4♦, and East may be tempted to raise to a losing game. We think East-West will do well to get a plus score and will get a top if they're allowed to play at 3♦ for +110.

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

When East opens 1♦, some Wests will respond 1♠. North can double, East will rebid 2♦ and South can compete with 2♥. Then North-South will reach 4♥, and East-West will be put to the necessity of saving at 4♠. North-South could double the save for +200, but neither player has a clear decision, and some North-Souths may push on to 5♥, down one. Note that the Law of Total Tricks is off by one trick here, and one paltry trick can mean a lot at matchpoints. At many tables, West will jump to 3♠, preemptive and descriptive, over 1♦.

(That action won't be available to West if East-West use "splinter" responses, and 3♠ would show a diamond fit and spade shortness. Theorists can debate which method is better.) North may not be willing to act at such a high level, and West will score +140 for a fine matchpoint result.

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

East may start slowly with a 2♦ response to West's 1♥, but when West rebids 2♥, we suspect most Easts will take control with Blackwood -- probably a variation such as Roman Keycard. East can discover that West has the ♥AK but not the queen, so many Easts will settle for a small slam. At matchpoints, East must be careful to bid the slam at notrump since East-West should have enough values to produce 12 tricks on power. Some East-Wests will embark on a slow, scientific auction starting with 1♥-2♦,

2♥-3♥ forcing; they're likely to end at 6NT also. Some Easts may drive to a grand slam, reasoning that 13 tricks will depend on a finesse at worst and may be cold if West has extra values somewhere. When the ♥Q turns up onside, everybody will take 13 tricks. We think East-West will score only average for +1020.

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

After 1♥ by West and two passes, South will reopen with a double. If West tries 2♣ next, North can't act, East will take a 2♥ preference, and South will double again to suggest a sound hand. West must subside; he could be doubled for -300 at 3♥. If North bids 3♦, passed out, he can be +130 for a good matchpoint result; he can set up a second club trick for two spade discards. But many Norths will feel constrained to bid 2♠, and even if South passes that bid, North must play carefully to land eight tricks for

+110. Some case exists for West to pass over South's first double: After East couldn't respond to 1♥, East-West are probably going nowhere. Then whether North responds 1♠ or 2♦, South may show his strength with a 2♥ cuebid, and North-South must exercise discretion to stop at a makable contract.

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

We expect East to open 3♦ in second seat, and West will be tempted to try 3NT. He should resist, though, since reaching the East hand to run the diamonds may prove impossible. A raise to 5♦ by West would be more reasonable; if East's pattern were different, a diamond game might be cold with an overtrick. As it is, a high-heart opening lead by South and a third-round ruff will hold East to ten tricks at diamonds. In theory, East-West should get a good result for +130, but in practice, a few of the Wests

who recklessly try 3NT may be allowed to make it. If North leads the ♥K, he must continue with the ♥8, killing dummy's entry and retaining his A-9 behind declarer's J-6. If instead North cashes the ♥A at the second trick and leads a third heart, West can actually win nine tricks with an inspired series of plays.

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

Every East-West will reach 3NT after most Easts open 1NT, but the play will be taxing. South will lead a spade. If East naturally plays dummy's ten, North's jack covers. East takes the queen and can win nine tricks only if he attacks the clubs in unnatural fashion, cashing the ace and letting the jack ride. If instead he goes to the ♣K and finesses with the jack, or if he leads the ♣AK and a third club, best defense beats him. East makes 3NT if, for whatever reason, he puts up the ♠K at the first trick. He leads a club to

the jack next, and South wins and shifts to a diamond. North takes the ace and leads the ♠J, but East can block the suit by covering with the queen, holding the defenders to four tricks. Complexities in the play are possible. We predict that East-West who manage +400 will post an excellent matchpoint score.

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

We'll see who loves to bid notrump. North must pick a third-seat opening. Many players would open 1NT with 2-5-3-3 pattern to avoid rebid problems after a 1♥ opening. Here, to open 1♠ is appealing: North's suit may take time to establish, and he may be able to handle his rebid problems. Still, North also has tenaces a 1NT opening may protect. If he opens 1NT, East may double for penalty. If all pass, East will lead the ♥J and will eventually set up his hearts; North will do well to go down

only one. North-South might do better if North ran to 2♠ (probably down one undoubled) or if South tried 2♣ (making). If instead North opens 1♠, East must judge whether to overcall 1NT or 2♥. He could make 1NT but should fail at 2♥ when South gets a third-round spade ruff. We think East-West will need +200 for a strong matchpoint result.

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

If East-West use a 15-to-17 1NT range, West will open 1♣, and East will respond 1♥. Then East-West will reach game only if someone takes an aggressive view. If West raises to 3♥, many Easts will pass due to their minimum values and singleton in West's suit. But a few Easts will go on, and some Wests will upgrade -- all their values are prime -- and raise to 4♥. Some Wests will open 1NT, and East may risk a 2♣ Stayman response. When West obliges with 2♥, we suspect East will pass instead of pushing his luck. Say

South leads a spade against 4♥. East takes the ace and leads the ♣10. South would often be right to play low here; but oddly, he can always hold East to ten tricks by grabbing the ♣A while if he ducks, East has a double-dummy route to 11 tricks. We expect East-West may earn an 80% board for +620.