

IMG

**A NEW SPIN ON A
SPECIAL GAME**

SUMMER 2024
INSTANT MATCHPOINT GAME

Tuesday afternoon, July 9

Written analysis for the ACBL Instant Matchpoint Game by Gavin Wolpert and Rob Barrington with help from a legendary panel of experts.



Rob Barrington is a bridge teacher who has built a following online. His YouTube channel, TheBridgeTeacher, has 13,000 subscribers and over 3 million views. He hosts a weekly lesson with Wolpert.



Gavin Wolpert is a Florida-based professional bridge player and a Grand Life Master with 7 NABC titles. Originally from Canada, he began learning bridge at age 7 and trained with the Canadian junior bridge program. He was King of Bridge in 2000.



Board 1

North Deals

None Vul

♠ Q J 10 8 6 3 2

♥ J 9 6

♦ 5

♣ K 2

♠ A 7 5 4

♥ A Q 10 7 4 3

♦ 10 6

♣ Q



♠ K 9

♥ K 8 5

♦ J 9 4 3 2

♣ A 8 6

♠ —

♥ 2

♦ A K Q 8 7

♣ J 10 9 7 5 4 3

West

North

East

South

West

North

East

South

3 ♠

Pass

Pass

Pass

3 ♠ by North

This hand can go many directions after north's normal 3♠ opening. We asked the panel about two key decisions:

South's decision:

3♠ - P - ?

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUJ	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
5 ♣	5 ♣	5 ♣	P	5 ♣	5 ♣	5 ♣	P

Now West:

3♠ - P - P - ?

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	MARTY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
P	P	4 ♥	4 ♥	4 ♥	4 ♥	4 ♥	4 ♥

Board 2

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 2

♥ K J 10 8 6 5 3

♦ J 3

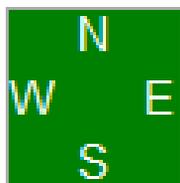
♣ A 10 4

♠ Q 10 7

♥ A 7

♦ A Q 9 2

♣ Q J 6 2



♠ K 9 5 3

♥ 9 2

♦ 10 8 7 6 5

♣ K 7

♠ A J 8 6 4

♥ Q 4

♦ K 4

♣ 9 8 5 3

West

West

1 NT

Pass

3 ♥ by North

North

North

2 ♥

Pass

East

East

Pass

Dbl

Pass

South

South

Pass

3 ♥

Board 2 showcases the need to play the standard “negative” double after a 1NT opening bid. This has become completely standard at the expert level and is slowly trickling down to the rest of the bridge world.

While some norths might choose preemptive action, these colors dictate a bit of caution. After 2♥, East has a typical hand for these auctions. We believe strongly that “stolen bid” agreements are sub par, other than when they interfere with 2♣. East needs the ability to compete with hands like these. They know it is a “split deck” (each side has 20 points) and the opponents seem to have found a good place to play. With 4 spades and 5 diamonds, east need's west's input to know where to compete. This is perfect for a negative double. South, confident that partner is going to be disciplined with their overcalls, has a raise to lock up the 3♥ contract.

Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ K 10
 ♥ A 8 5 2
 ♦ 10 9 6
 ♣ K 8 6 5

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



♠ Q 9 6
 ♥ K
 ♦ K Q J 8 5 2
 ♣ A 3 2

♠ 7 4 3
 ♥ Q 6 4
 ♦ A
 ♣ Q J 10 9 7 4

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♦	2 ♣
Dbl	3 ♣	3 ♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		
3 ♦ by East			

First question on this hand is for south. Do they open 3♣? Here's what our panel thought;

South's opening?:

GRUE	MOSS	MARTY	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
P	3♣	P	P	P	P	P	3♣

Some passers talked about opening 1♣, but almost all thought 3♣ had many issues. After south passes initially they may choose to overcall or preempt on their second turn. If south does overcall, west should double because they aren't strong enough to bid out.

On a club lead in 3♦, declarer should ruff in dummy. Keep the ace of clubs as a stopper for later. This is a common theme when you have a void opposite an ace. It is usually right to ruff and keep your stopper.

Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ 8 7 5

♥ Q 10 3 2

♦ A 2

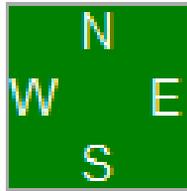
♣ K 9 8 6

♠ 4 2

♥ A J 7 5 4

♦ K Q J 8

♣ J 2



♠ Q 10 6 3

♥ K

♦ 10 9 7 6 4 3

♣ 5 3

♠ A K J 9

♥ 9 8 6

♦ 5

♣ A Q 10 7 4

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♠

2 ♣

2 ♦

3 ♣

3 ♦

Pass

Pass

Pass

3 ♦ by West

Many players sitting east are likely to pass with only 5 points. It's important to bid with these marginal but shapely hands at the one level. This is especially important when partner opens a minor and you are relatively short in that suit. Here it's not because of the shortness in the major, it's just worthy of a response with this shape. South has only one choice with this hand and 2C seems normal. The question here will be what will west do? It's a close choice so we brought in the panel;

West's choice to rebid**2♦ or to P on 2nd bid.**

Passing will lead to 3♣ by N-S,

bidding will lead to ♦ by E-W

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	MARTY
P	P	P	P	2♦	P	2♦	2♦

Board 5

North Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A K 5
 ♥ K J 8 5 2
 ♦ K 7 4
 ♣ 5 2

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



♠ 10 9 7 4 2
 ♥ Q 9 7 4
 ♦ A J 6
 ♣ K

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

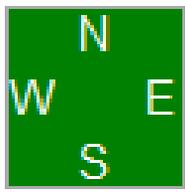
West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 NT	Pass	2 NT
Dbl	3 ♦	4 ♦	Dbl
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
4 ♠ by West			

One of our themes in this set of deals is upgrading “good 14’s” to 1NT opening bids. That’s what we’ve done with the north hand here. And then the insanity ensues. South has a crazy hand and certainly wants to steer clear of any NT contracts. In the above auction our 2NT bid was a transfer to diamonds. If you don't have a way to transfer to diamonds, you have to find a way to sign off with one or both minors. You certainly don't want to play in 1NT!

After 2NT showing diamonds, west can make a takeout double (of diamonds) and then it may be possible to find their juicy spade fit. East has a nice fitting hand for partner's takeout double and should be aggressive and jump to game. Partner has short diamonds and a good opening hand.

If E-W remain silent, N-S get to steal with their 3♦ contract.

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



West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		2 ♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	
3 ♠ by South			

A good look at a preemptive opening and then a nice find of spades by N-S. North has a very normal double in the balancing seat and south's jump response shows their values nicely. North has nowhere to go after showing their hand well already.

*Note for players who play **Lebensohl** over weak twos:
 You have an extra tool in your toolbox. You have two ways to bid 3♠. You can bid it directly as shown above, or you can go through 2NT and then bid 3♠. The standard way to differentiate these two is by using the direct 3♠ to show 5 spades, while going through 2NT and bidding 3♠ would show only 4. Thus, your auction on this hand after the double should be 2N-3♣-3♠.

Board 7

South Deals

Both Vul

♠ K
 ♥ A K Q J 8 6 2
 ♦ K 7
 ♣ Q 8 7

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



♠ Q J 7 6 3
 ♥ 7
 ♦ A 6
 ♣ A K 9 5 3

♠ 9 8 5 4 2
 ♥ 9 5 4
 ♦ 2
 ♣ J 10 6 4

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
4 ♦	4 ♥	5 ♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		
5 ♦ by West			

Another crazy hand here but, we feel this auction may be duplicated frequently. West has a pretty automatic 4♦ opening and north's 4♥ bid is also normal. It's east choice that may get interesting. From east's perspective, N-S may just be making 4♥ so double is risky and 5♦ might just make. Bidding 5♦ is a win for E-W. North has two ways to go wrong from here, double and 5♥. If north does choose to bid, east will be ready with a more confident penalty double. 5♥ will go down 3 doubled for -800, even worse than -750 for 5♦ doubled making.

In 5♦ all roads lead to making 5. The quickest path for north to secure two tricks is to start by leading AK of hearts. This will force dummy to ruff and ensure a diamond trick. If north shifts to the king of spades, declarer will have a chance to make 12 tricks by taking a diamond finesse.

Board 8

West Deals

None Vul

♠ 10 8 7 3

♥ 9 4 3

♦ —

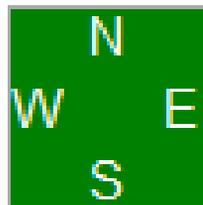
♣ Q 10 8 6 4 3

♠ A 6 5

♥ A 10 8 5

♦ J 8 4 2

♣ A K



♠ Q 9 2

♥ Q 6 2

♦ A 10 5 3

♣ 9 7 2

♠ K J 4

♥ K J 7

♦ K Q 9 7 6

♣ J 5

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

1 NT

Pass

Pass

Pass

1 NT by West

A very normal auction after some crazy deals in this set. West has a normal strong 1NT opening and east with only 8 points and 4-3-3-3 shape has a clear pass. At this vulnerability, south may feel the urge to balance.

This could be the right thing to do if you have an easy way to show diamonds at the two level. On the actual deal you catch the worst possible hand from partner. That doesn't mean you made a terrible bid.

It turns out 1NT is quite a painful contract on a club lead. The declarer has 5 tricks on top and must choose which suit to attack. Diamonds may look appealing for most, but the heart suit turns out to be the best suit to attack on this deal. To make this contract, declarer will need to start on hearts. By playing a low heart towards the queen, they give themselves two chances. After the king loses and they return a club, now declarer can head to dummy's ace of diamonds and finesse south for the jack of hearts. 1NT is the toughest contract to declarer. This one fits that description.

Board 9
 North Deals
 E-W Vul

♠ 10 9
 ♥ A J 8 7 4 3
 ♦ Q J 9 2
 ♣ A

♠ Q 6 5
 ♥ Q 10 6 5 2
 ♦ 5 4 3
 ♣ J 9



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

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

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♥	1 ♠	3 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	
3 ♣ by South			

Some easts may consider the “power double”. The 5-3-3-2 shape makes this hand a tiny bit too weak for that path. If N-S have agreed to play the standard, weak jump shifts in competition south has a terrific bid here to stop the action.

The 3♣ bid denies West of their ability to show a fit with partner. This produces a painful second bid for East with their 17 count. When partner doesn't raise to 3♠, they are either too weak, or they do not have a fit. East doesn't have any security at all re-entering the auction. They have no choice but to pass.

The defense's best bet is to lead 3 rounds of spades, forcing dummy to ruff with the ace of clubs. This promotes a second club trick and beats the contract. If you allow declarer to discard a spade on the ace of hearts, they will make 3.

Board 10

East Deals

Both Vul

♠ A 10 9 8 4

♥ 8 7 6 5 3

♦ 3 2

♣ J

♠ Q J 6

♥ Q J 4

♦ Q 6 5

♣ K Q 6 5



♠ K 7 5 3 2

♥ —

♦ A K J 10 4

♣ A 9 8

♠ —

♥ A K 10 9 2

♦ 9 8 7

♣ 10 7 4 3 2

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

2 ♣

Pass

2 ♦

Pass

4 ♠

Pass

Pass

Pass

4 ♠ by East

South has a tough choice that the panel also struggled with. Many of our pros chose the 2♠ Michaels bid by south (and hated it), many others passed (and hated it). Kranyak noted that he would pass $\frac{3}{4}$ of the time and bid 2♠ $\frac{1}{4}$ of the time. Sounds like a bridge player who has played a lot of poker. E-W will likely find their way to 4♠ on either choice by south. Will north double 4♠? Interesting choice, if south did make the Michaels bid, north has a tough decision whether to defend 4♠, double, or sacrifice in 5♥. This depends on your style for Michaels

South's decision:

1♠ - ?

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
2♠	P	2♠	2♥	P	P/2♠	2♠	P

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ Q 6 4
 ♥ J 9 3
 ♦ K Q 8 7 6
 ♣ K J

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



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

♠ 9 8 3 2
 ♥ K 7
 ♦ 9 5 2
 ♣ A Q 7 6

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

North has a chance to practice their support double mastery but unfortunately this will likely lead to N-S playing the likely 4-3 spade fit at the 2 level. This is the cost of doing business with support doubles. South has no other options but to settle for this ugly 4-3 fit. East will be delighted to defend! East has a good hand with a heart fit and should feel a little uncomfortable defending 2S undoubled. They are expecting to go +110 in 2♥ and the opponents are not vulnerable. An aggressive east could double 2♠ for penalty and earn themselves a really good result on this board.

On a normal heart lead in 2♠, south can actually escape with a reasonable number of tricks. 3 clubs, the king of hearts, a heart ruff and eventually a diamond trick. -100 is actually a pretty good score on these cards as EW makes 2H.

Board 12

West Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 2

♥ 10 9 4

♦ A K 7 5 4 2

♣ K 8 6

♠ 3

♥ 8 6 5 3 2

♦ Q 10

♣ J 10 7 5 3



♠ Q J 10 6 5

♥ A Q J 7

♦ J 9 6 3

♣ —

♠ A K 9 8 7 4

♥ K

♦ 8

♣ A Q 9 4 2

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

Pass

2 ♦

2 ♠

Dbl

Rdbl

Pass

3 ♥

Pass

Pass

Pass

3 ♥ by East

Panic in the West chair! What a crazy hand we have here. Many good rules at play. First, after a preemptive opening bid, all doubles are penalty from that side. So, when East makes the normal choice of overcalling 2♠, south gets to double for penalty! West's redouble is what's called an SOS redouble. It says, "pick anything else partner!" East has only one choice and it's a nice nine card fit to fall into. What does South do? Weeping is always an option. They will likely go to bed thinking "if I just kept my mouth shut I would have gotten to defend 2♠".

North could consider doubling 3♥ for penalty. They have an unusual amount of defense for a weak two bidder and have 3 cards in hearts, so the opponents likely don't have a 10 card fit. It was even lucky that they had 9.

Board 13
 North Deals
 Both Vul

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

♠ K
 ♥ A J 9 7 4 3
 ♦ Q 9 2
 ♣ 9 7 5



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

♠ Q 7 5
 ♥ 6 5 2
 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ A 10 8 3 2

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		
3 NT by West			

It's possible that E-W may be better off in 4♠ on this misfitting hand but 3NT has a lot going for it as well. Notice east's jump shift to 3♣. This is the way we show our strong unbalanced hands as opener. This bid is game forcing and natural(ish). West has an automatic bid of 3♥ and east has the uncomfortable choice of bidding 3NT with a void.

North should lead the king of hearts at trick one to help partner know the situation. Declarer will be best served to duck. Now north must watch their partner's signal to know it is not safe to lead another heart. Instead, they shift to a diamond and declarer should cross to the king of spades and lead a club to the king. Now on a heart back, declarer should try the 9 losing to the ten. North can't play another heart, so they play diamonds again. Now declarer can set up the spades to make their contract.

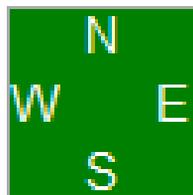
Board 14

East Deals

None Vul

♠ Q
 ♥ 8 7 6 4 2
 ♦ 8 6
 ♣ A 10 4 3 2

♠ 9 7 6 4 3
 ♥ J 5
 ♦ Q 9 7
 ♣ Q 9 8



♠ K J 10 5
 ♥ A K 10 3
 ♦ K J 5 3
 ♣ K

♠ A 8 2
 ♥ Q 9
 ♦ A 10 4 2
 ♣ J 7 6 5

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		
3 ♠ by West			

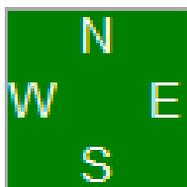
Another good example of “stretching” to respond as the west player here. Only a 5 count but you have a 5 card major and are non-vul. These bids can also have the effect of blocking out our left hand opponent. East should evaluate this hand to 18 points choose just 3♠ (don't double count shortness points + the high card points in clubs).

West should be very happy that they have improved the contract from 1♦ to their 9 card spade fit. After a normal heart lead, declarer lacks entries to their hand. Their best plan is to trump a heart back and then finesse the spade. With the spade finesse working and the heart queen dropping, declarer can find their way to 10 tricks.

Board 15
 South Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ K J 8 5 4
 ♥ Q 10 8
 ♦ 9 6
 ♣ 8 5 2

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



♠ A 2
 ♥ J 7 3
 ♦ A Q J 5
 ♣ K 9 7 4

♠ Q 7
 ♥ K 9 6
 ♦ K 8 3 2
 ♣ Q 10 6 3

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

Very normal auction here. The problem with this hand lies in south. What lead should we make with this hand? We asked our experts again and we had voters for all four suits! Here's what they chose;

Make your Lead:

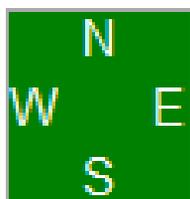
GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUJ	MARTY	KRAN	HURD	KB
3 ♣	Q ♠	3 ♣	3 ♣	2 ♦	3 ♣	6 ♥	3 ♣

Most of the experts like a club lead but also expressed the diamond lead as a decent option as well. Moss and Hurd chose to step outside the box a bit and both may find reward on this hand with those leads.

Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10
♥ A 10 6 3 2
♦ 9
♣ K Q 9 8 5 4

♠ 8 7
♥ Q 9 7 4
♦ J 6 4
♣ J 10 7 2



♠ A K Q 4 3 2
♥ J 8 5
♦ 7 5 2
♣ 3

♠ J 9 6 5
♥ K
♦ A K Q 10 8 3
♣ A 6

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

North has an interesting hand in 2nd chair here. We asked our experts what they would do in this situation and here's what they chose;

Your Bid 2nd seat:

MARTY	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
1 ♥	P	P	1 ♣	P	1 ♣	1 ♣	1 ♥

There were some stipulations with these bids. Hurd mentioned that 1 ♣ would be his choice with an expert partner, but 1 ♥ or pass would be his choice with a less experienced partner. Most passers mentioned the advantage of showing this hand later in the auction. South will likely steer this towards No-Trump on most auctions.

Board 17
 North Deals
 None Vul

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

♠ A 7 5
 ♥ J 10 9 8
 ♦ A 4
 ♣ K J 7 2



♠ Q J 9
 ♥ 7 5 3
 ♦ J 9 8 3 2
 ♣ Q 8

♠ 8 6 2
 ♥ K 6 4 2
 ♦ Q 7
 ♣ A 6 5 3

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1 NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1 NT by South

Finally, a “normal” auction. This will lead to a potentially challenging 1NT contract for both sides. First choice will be what to lead from west. Will it be the J of hearts or a 4th best club? It is normally right to lead the unbid suit, but JT98 is just too perfect of a sequence to pass up.

Most declarers will win the heart and play a diamond towards their queen, losing to the ace. Now when the defense plays a second heart, declarer must work on establishing a black suit. To have a chance at making 7 tricks on this layout, declarer would need to play a spade from dummy. Now if the defense err and play a 3rd heart, declarer can lead a spade towards dummy and find 7 tricks, 2 spades, 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club.

This only works looking at all four hands with some defensive help. Down one will be a normal result.

Board 18

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ 9 7 6 4

♥ K 8 5 3

♦ A Q 9

♣ J 6

♠ J 2

♥ 7 6 4 2

♦ J 7 6 2

♣ A K 8



♠ K 10 3

♥ Q J 10 9

♦ K 8

♣ 10 5 4 2

♠ A Q 8 5

♥ A

♦ 10 5 4 3

♣ Q 9 7 3

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

Pass

1 ♥

Pass

1 ♦

Pass

2 ♠

Pass

Pass

Pass

2 ♠ by South

After the standard opening and rebid by south, north is too strong to pass 1♠. By raising the non-forcing 1♠ bid to 2♠, north expresses a decent hand of 7-10 points. Some North's may jump to 3♠ to show an invite, but matchpoints is a game of plus scores. You don't need to push to aggressive game contracts.

After the ace of clubs lead, declarer will be in good shape. The plan is to lose 2 clubs and take a finesse in each of the diamond suit and spade suit. The key will be the order of operation. It's very important you do not give the defense the opportunity to draw a 3rd round of trump. This means declarer's priority should be to knock out king of clubs (the defense may do this for the declarer at trick 2). After the club king is out, declarer just needs to take their finesses.

Board 19

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ A K 6 5

♥ A 8 5

♦ A J 6

♣ 10 6 5

♠ Q 3

♥ K Q J 7 2

♦ K 8 4

♣ Q J 4



♠ 10 9 8 4 2

♥ 10 9 3

♦ 9 7

♣ A K 9

♠ J 7

♥ 6 4

♦ Q 10 5 3 2

♣ 8 7 3 2

West

West

1 ♥

Pass

2 ♥ by West

North

North

1 NT

Pass

East

East

2 ♥

South

South

Pass

Pass

This feels like a normal auction to us, but we were interested in what our panel thought with the north player's cards. Here were their choices after the 1 heart opening by West;

North's decision: 1H - ?

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTY	KRAN	HURD	KB
1N	X	1N	1N	X	1N	1N	1N

East will very likely make their heart raise after either action by north.

In 2♥ declarer can make 3 by setting up dummy's spades to use for diamond discards and keeping south off of lead. The normal ace of spades lead will make this hand much simpler. Note: The 1NT bid marks the diamond ace.

Board 20

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ 6

♥ J 8 6 3

♦ J 9 8 5 4

♣ Q 8 4

♠ 9 7 4

♥ 2

♦ K 3 2

♣ K 10 9 5 3 2



♠ K Q J 2

♥ Q 9 4

♦ A Q 10

♣ A 7 6

♠ A 10 8 5 3

♥ A K 10 7 5

♦ 7 6

♣ J

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

Pass

Pass

1 ♣

2 ♣

3 ♣

3 ♥

3 NT

Pass

Pass

Pass

3 NT by East

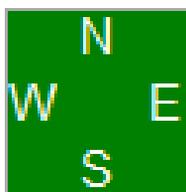
West shouldn't be considering a 3♣ opening at this vulnerability. So, the auction is likely to start with 1♣ opening by east and then a classic **Michaels Cue-Bid** by south showing 5x5 in the major suits. West and North both use the law of total tricks as a guide for their correct bids and east shouldn't be able to resist a 3NT bid with their cards.

With AK of hearts in south, and no easy entry to north, the defense cannot quickly beat 3NT. The key to making this hand is in the club suit. Normally we play 8 ever 9 never and cash our top honors. The Michaels bid helps tilt the math in favor of finessing north. The declarer should cash two rounds of diamonds before making their decision. Once south shows up with 2 diamonds and 5-5, they are marked with a singleton club.

Board 21
 North Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ J 8
 ♥ A 7 4 2
 ♦ K 8
 ♣ Q 10 6 3 2

♠ Q 10 7 6
 ♥ 9 5 3
 ♦ Q J 3
 ♣ K 5 4



♠ K 5 3
 ♥ Q 6
 ♦ A 5 4
 ♣ A J 9 8 7

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

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

So, we firmly believe that east can upgrade their hand and open 1NT... after that, wow it's tough. Let's check with the panel for both south and north's choices. Depending on the choices you could see a lot of variance.

South's decision:

1N - ? (we let them choose between showing both majors or 4M longer minor)

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUJ	MARTY	KRAN	HURD	KB
Maj	Maj	Maj	P	P	P	P	P

North's decision, would you balance?:

P - 1N - P - P - ? (we let them choose 2C = C+M or X = 4M 5+minor)

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	MARTY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
Yes	NO	NO	NO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Board 22

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

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



♠ K 9 6 5 2
 ♥ K 8 6 5 4 3
 ♦ 5
 ♣ 8

♠ A J 7
 ♥ A
 ♦ J 7 6 3 2
 ♣ Q 9 5 4

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

After not bidding to start the auction east is likely unable to resist some action on their second turn. 1♠ is their only choice. This should produce a strong response from west, who must keep in mind that east is a passed hand.

North wants to bid their clubs, but a direct 3♣ bid after the cue-bid might come across as a stronger hand. It is better to wait until the opponents pass out 2♠ before balancing with 3♣. Now when west competes to 3♠, south should compete to 4♣ with the nice 4 card fit. If north bids 3♣ the first time, there is a chance that NS may get to the aggressive 5♣ game.

This exciting hand could end with either side in game, possibly doubled.

Board 23
 South Deals
 Both Vul

♠ Q 5
 ♥ Q J 3
 ♦ Q 8 7
 ♣ K Q 8 6 2

♠ K J 10 9 3
 ♥ A 9
 ♦ K 10 4
 ♣ 10 4 3



♠ 8
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ A J 6 5 3 2
 ♣ J 9 5

♠ A 7 6 4 2
 ♥ K 10 7 4 2
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A 7

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			
			4 ♥ by South

North's decision:

1♠ - P - ? (Would you game force?)

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No

Grue made the distinction of not game forcing non-vul because his partner is more likely light there. As it turns out, 4♥ is likely after either choice.

4♥ can make if declarer relies on the club break. It would be hard to fault declarer for trying to play spades. The immediate spade ruff will not feel very good, but it doesn't mean you have made a mistake.

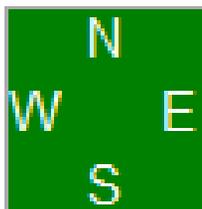
Board 24

West Deals

None Vul

♠ J
 ♥ J 6 5 4 3
 ♦ A K J 5 4
 ♣ 9 6

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



♠ 9 6 3
 ♥ 8 7 2
 ♦ Q 10 8 2
 ♣ A K 8

♠ Q 8 7 5
 ♥ A Q 10
 ♦ 6 3
 ♣ Q 7 4 3

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	2 ♠	3 ♠	4 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	
4 ♥ by South			

Is this a Michaels cue bid at these colors? Here is what the panel said:

North's Choice:

1♠ - ?

GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTY	KRAN	HURD	KB
2 ♠	P	2 ♠	2 ♠	P	2 ♠	2 ♠	2 ♠

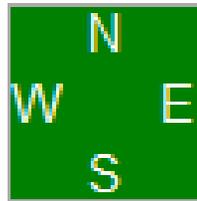
The passers are likely to have another chance after east raises to 2♠ and it goes pass – pass back to North. 2NT shows two places to play

4♥ is doomed to fail with the offside heart and bad diamond break. The passers will do better to keep the auction lower.

Board 25
 North Deals
 E-W Vul

♠ K 8 4
 ♥ J
 ♦ Q J 9 5 4
 ♣ A K 7 4

♠ A Q 5 2
 ♥ Q 9 6
 ♦ 10 3
 ♣ J 9 6 2



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

♠ 9 3
 ♥ K 8 7 4 3
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ 10 8 5 3

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			
2 ♣ by North			

A tame auction by comparison to many of the hands in this set. This should be pretty standard all around. N-S find a nice landing spot in 2♣ and the opponents should never be in the auction here.

Normally in this auction, where responder passes declarer in their second suit, we try to lead trumps. Here a trump lead doesn't do much damage to declarer as they do not need to ruff many cards in the south hand.

The alternate jack of spades lead also helps declarer on their way. It will be difficult for declarer to avoid 5 losers, 3 aces and two trump tricks.

Board 26

East Deals

Both Vul

♠ 10 7 2

♥ A 8 6

♦ 8 4 3 2

♣ A 7 6

♠ A K 9 6 3

♥ 5 2

♦ K Q

♣ 8 5 4 3



♠ Q J 5 4

♥ Q 10 3

♦ A 10 7

♣ Q 9 2

♠ 8

♥ K J 9 7 4

♦ J 9 6 5

♣ K J 10

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

1 ♠

Pass

Pass

Pass

2 ♠

Pass

2 ♣

Pass

Pass

3 ♦

Pass

Dbl

Pass

Pass

3 ♠

Pass

3 ♠ by West

Notice, we are passing with the east hand in first chair. YUK! No reason to open the balanced 11 counts. When west opens 1♠, E-W will have the opportunity to see if they remember **Drury** ☺. The 2♣ bid by east just shows a good raise in spades and west should realize game is unlikely opposite a passed hand. In matchpoints, it's right for south to balance and this should push east to the three level in spades with their nine card fit in the boss major suit.

The opening lead will decide the fate of the contract. If the defense don't grab their hearts, declarer can discard one on the ace of diamonds. The south's that bid hearts will help their partner find the heart lead. After the takeout double we suggest, it is hard to fault north for a safe diamond lead.

Board 27

South Deals

None Vul

♠ A 3
 ♥ 8 7 5
 ♦ K Q 9 8
 ♣ K 10 8 7

♠ K Q 9 8 4
 ♥ A 6 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ A 9 5 4



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

♠ J 10 5
 ♥ Q J 9 3
 ♦ A 5 2
 ♣ Q 6 3

West
West

North
North

East
East

South
South

1 ♠

Dbl

2 ♠

3 ♥

Pass

Pass

Pass

Pass

3 ♥ by South

The non vulnerable east raise to 2♠ is effective at this vulnerability. You usually want to take the more aggressive approach when competing for part scores with neither side vulnerable.

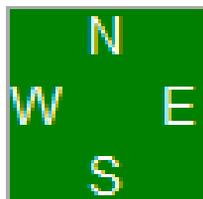
The aggressive 2♠ bid will produce a very normal 3♥ bid by South and that is likely where the auction will end. West may consider competing, but with only 8 trumps and good defense, west should resist the urge to compete.

With just a 7 card fit, N/S is not in good shape. There are 4 sure losers: 1 spade 2 hearts and the ace of clubs, but two more potential losers with the jack of clubs and the diamond ruff.

Board 28
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ 8 3
 ♥ Q 7 3 2
 ♦ A 10
 ♣ K J 7 5 2

♠ 10 2
 ♥ A K J 6 4
 ♦ 7 6 3 2
 ♣ 6 4



♠ A K Q J 7 6
 ♥ 9 8 5
 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ 10 9

♠ 9 5 4
 ♥ 10
 ♦ K J 8 5 4
 ♣ A Q 8 3

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
3 ♥ by West			

West has an interesting hand evaluation problem after partner's 1♠ opening. We gave this choice to our panel and here's what they bid;

West's Choice:

as a passed hand after 1♠ - P - ? Do you upgrade to 2♥? Or respond 1N?

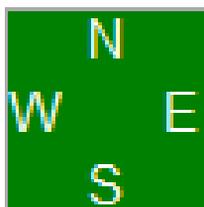
GRUE	MOSS	COHEN	DEMUY	MARTY	KRAN	HURD	KB
1N	2♥	1N	2♥	1N	1N	2♥	2♥

Martel breaks the panel's tie on this hand by bidding 2♥ with west. All the experts agreed that it was very close between both choices with some noting both are "fine". Amazing that 3♥ fares so badly with these cards, N-S just have tricks to take here.

Board 29
 North Deals
 Both Vul

♠ A 10 9 7
 ♥ A Q 2
 ♦ 5 3
 ♣ J 7 6 5

♠ Q J
 ♥ 9 6 3
 ♦ A K Q 8 6
 ♣ K 8 4



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

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

West	North	East	South
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	2♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

2♦ by South

Preempting at these colors and with this suit is a good idea in 3rd seat, knowing partner isn't going to take us too seriously. If this is how the auction starts it could be interesting. We know west will just pass and hope partner doubles, but will they? We asked the panel what they would do with east's cards on this auction;

East's Choice:

as a passed hand 2♦ - P - P - ?

GRUE	MOSS	MARTY	DEMUY	MARTEL	KRAN	HURD	KB
P	P	X	X	X	X	X	P

Several on the panel would delight partner with a double, others were reluctant passers.

Board 30

East Deals

None Vul

♠ A J 7

♥ 9 4 3

♦ A K 10 5 3

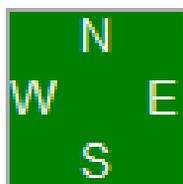
♣ K J

♠ 10 5 4 3

♥ K

♦ Q

♣ A 10 8 7 6 5 2



♠ 8 6

♥ Q J 8 7 2

♦ J 9 6 2

♣ 9 3

♠ K Q 9 2

♥ A 10 6 5

♦ 8 7 4

♣ Q 4

West

North

East

South

*West**North**East**South*

3 ♣

Dbl

Pass

Pass

Pass

4 ♦

Pass

4 ♣

Pass

4 ♠

Pass

4 ♥

Pass

Pass

Pass

4 ♠ by North

This is a tough one if west starts with a 3♣ preemptive opening. N-S are likely to play in a tough major suit fit at the 4 level here. Note, if south were to choose to open this hand it might make it easier for the N-S pair.

South's 4♣ bid in the above auction is telling partner to bid their suits up the line (typically showing 4-4 in the majors). North only has diamonds so they bid 4♦. After south bids 4♥, north must choose between the majors.

If the diamonds were breaking, the defense would need to get their hearts set up. With this dreadful layout the defense can do whatever they want and declarer will go down, likely multiple tricks.