

# ACBL-wide Senior Pairs Game #2

Thursday Afternoon – Oct. 10, 2024



Analysis by Paul Linxwiler



Paul Linxwiler is the editor of the Bridge Bulletin. He has been a member of the editorial staff since 1997 and executive editor since 2014. He has written dozens of world and national championship reports for the magazine and the Daily Bulletins at the North American Bridge Championships.

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The analysis for this set of hands assumes that pairs use Standard or 2/1 game-forcing methods. Partnerships who use weak notrumps or strong club systems will, of course, have different auctions.

## Board 1

North Deals  
None Vul

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

Some Norths may venture a weak 2♦ in first seat, but the poor suit and the side four-card major should cause most to pass. At tables where South gets to open 1♣ – with the plan of rebidding 2NT to show the balanced 19-count – West may well stick in a weak 2♥ jump overcall. Assuming North passes (a negative double at the two level should deliver more high-card strength), South may well continue with his plan to rebid 2NT, although passing with the strong trump holding is tempting. If North does make a negative double, passing may be hard to resist, but the penalty will be worth less than making 3NT (as it turns out). Over a 2NT rebid by South, North might gamble that the diamond suit can be set up in a notrump game and raise. Nine tricks are easy in 3NT for N-S, but making 10 tricks will require some greed and nerves, as it depends on playing East for the ♣A.

## Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

In third seat, West will open 1♥ or 2♦ for pairs who use the Flannery convention, which shows four spades, five hearts and 11-15 HCP. Over 1♥, East will respond 1NT, and West may well decide to play it there because East did not respond 1♠ or raise hearts (naturally or via a Drury 2♣ raise). 1NT is a reasonable place to play on this layout, especially at matchpoints. Note that East's 1NT is nonforcing in this situation because East is a passed hand. Over a Flannery 2♦ opening, East will choose between 2♥ (likely more popular) and 2♠. Despite the 5-1 heart break, nine tricks are available in either major if East gets everything right.

## Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

At most tables, South will open 1♣, North will respond 1♥ and East will overcall 1♠. Pairs who use support doubles will permit South to use that device here, but regardless of how South proceeds, North will try 3NT to protect the ♠K on opening lead. If East can resist the urge to lead a low spade, the defense will prevail, as West will eventually get on lead with the ♥A and push the ♠J through declarer's gizzard. N-S pairs who are allowed to make 3NT will score very well indeed.

**Board 4**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ Q 9 8 7 4
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ K 7	♥ Q 10					
♦ J 10 7 3	♦ Q 9					
♣ A Q 5 3 2	♣ 10 9 7 4					
	♠ K J 10 6					
	♥ J 8 6 5 3					
	♦ A K 8					
	♣ 6					

N-S auctions of 1♦-1♥; 2♥-4♥ will be common, and 11 tricks will be an easy task with 2-2 trumps and defensive high cards favorably placed for declarer. Note that even if declarer successfully sneaks the singleton club past West (though few Wests would duck on this auction), the defense will still collect a trump and a slow diamond to hold declarer to 11 tricks.

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

♠ 6 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ K J 7 4
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 9 5 3	♥ 4					
♦ 8 6 3	♦ 10 9 5 2					
♣ K 9 8 7 2	♣ J 6 5 4					
	♠ A Q 5					
	♥ K Q 8 7 2					
	♦ A Q J 7					
	♣ A					

Most tables will see South open a strong, artificial 2♣ in third seat, with North responding with a waiting 2♦. Depending on South's taste, both 2♥ and 2NT are possible rebids. Where South chooses 2♥, North will have an easy 3♥ raise. (Remember that 4♥ is weaker than 3♥ in this context; 4♥ denies slam interest.) Several slam-going paths exist from there, including a round of control bids (4♣ by South and 4♦ by North, followed by Roman key card Blackwood) or just a direct 4NT, also RKCB. Once all the key cards are confirmed, a 5NT continuation that asks North for specific side kings will uncover the ♦K. 6♥ will be an obvious choice, but some aggressive Souths will gamble that North holds the ♠K, too, and try the grand slam in hearts, while other Souths may try for matchpoint gold with 6NT. Where South rebids 2NT over the waiting 2♦, a Stayman sequence will reveal the heart fit, and the auction will proceed similarly. Note that 7♥ requires the ♠K to be onside, while 7NT requires both the ♠K and the ♠J to be in the slot.

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

♠ K 9 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ Q J 7 4
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ A 10 9 3 2	♥ 4					
♦ J 5	♦ A K 9 4					
♣ 8 7 2	♣ A Q J 4					
	♠ 10 6 5					
	♥ K J 8					
	♦ 10 7 6					
	♣ K 10 9 3					

There are several possible ways that E-W pairs will begin the auction on this deal. 1♦-1♥; 1♠ will be a popular start, and many Wests will continue with 1NT. East might be tempted to try a pattern- and value-showing 2♣ after that, but the practical 2NT will be a fan favorite. This will likely persuade East to carry on to 3NT, but any East who tries 3♠ on the way may get their side to 4♠ instead. Declarers in 3NT will have no trouble, although an initial heart lead needs to be ducked. Easts who declare 4♠ can come to 10 tricks by crossruffing hearts and diamonds, but if the defense starts with two rounds of trumps, declarer must find a friendly layout in trumps (3-3) and in the diamond suit to make the contract: After winning the second round of trumps, declarer can cash a top diamond, cross to the ♥A and play the ♦J. If North ducks, declarer lets it ride. If North covers, declarer wins and ruffs a low diamond, bringing down South's 10 and promoting the 9. Declarer needs this establishment to eventually come to 10 tricks.

**Board 7**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ Q J 10 8 6	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ 7 3
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ A K J 5	♥ 10 7 6 4					
♦ 10 7 2	♦ A 9 6 5					
♣ Q	♣ A 9 3					
	♠ A K					
	♥ 9 2					
	♦ 8 4 3					
	♣ J 10 8 7 5 4					

At tables where West opens 1♠, East will try 1NT. West will rebid 2♥, which will be passed around to South who, assuming they've remained silent thus far, might well try a balancing 3♣, a typical matchpoint ploy to make the opponents guess what to do. This push to the three level works extremely well here, as E-W are limited to eight tricks in a heart contract, while 3♣ is a maker. Many Easts - with four-card heart support - will compete to 3♥, and while this is unlikely to be doubled, it will still force E-W into minus territory.

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

A common sequence at many tables will see West pass as dealer, North open 1♠ and East overcall 2♦ or 3♦. South will raise spades over either. If East overcalls 2♦ and South bids 2♠, East will have another chance to bid diamonds. Typical contracts will be spade partials by N-S or a diamond partial by East. In spades, most Norths will take nine tricks unless they can see East's hand to pick up the singleton ♠K. In diamonds, East can take nine tricks by holding the club losers to one. Playing a club to the ace, dropping the singleton queen is one way to do that, but playing a club to the 8 is better single dummy.

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

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

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



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

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

A popular start to the auction will be a weak 2♠ opening by North, a 3♥ overcall by East and a 3♠ raise by South. This should end the bidding. Any Easts who foolishly persist over 3♠ will get what they deserve.

Some Souths may be tempted to try a penalty double of 3♥. (Remember: After a preempt and overcall, a double is penalty, not negative.) On this layout, the double hits the jackpot, as East can manage only seven tricks, giving up a penalty of 500. But this score is available only because North has a maximum for 2♠ and East has four black-suit losers due to the 2-2 distribution East has in those suits.

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

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



♠ 7 6  
♥ 7 6 4  
♦ K J 5  
♣ K J 8 5 4

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

After East opens 1♦ and West responds 1♠, a takeout double by North will be a popular choice. From there, the auction may diverge. Some Easts may choose to pass at their second turn, while others may select a support double showing three-card spade support, if the pair plays that method. Even a three-card raise to 2♠ is possible. Either way, South will bid clubs as cheaply as possible. With four diamonds, West players may decide to compete to 2♦ over 2♣ by South, but we expect to see N-S persist in bidding clubs to the three level at most tables. Any E-W pairs who insist on competing to 3♦ will discover that it's too expensive vulnerable, even if South chooses not to double.

One note on the play in 3♣: If West leads a spade honor, declarer wins with dummy's ace and draws trump, ending in hand, before playing a spade. If West wins and exits a heart, declarer must guess to play low (i.e., play West for the ♥9). If South fails to do this, the contract will fail by one trick, as declarer will have three heart losers in addition to the spade and diamond losers.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

The auction on this board could develop in several ways. We suspect most Souths will open the unattractive 12-count 1♦, temporarily silencing most Wests except for those who choose to venture a four-card spade overcall. Where West passes, North will respond 1♥ and South will rebid 2♥. Even though this is a live auction, some experienced West players will "pre-balance" with a takeout double due to their red-suit shortness and concentration of values in the black suits. This will allow E-W to compete in spades. Note that the auction may well die out at 2♥ if West fails to act, as it is more difficult for East to balance on this layout.

Due to the friendly position of the ♦K and ♠K, and the 3-3 club split, E-W can take 10 tricks with spades as trumps, although very few pairs will actually get to 4♠ on the combined 18-count. E-W pairs who allow N-S to declare 2♥ can expect a below-average score.

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

♠ 9 7 5 4 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ J 10 8
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ —	♥ A K Q 8 3					
♦ A 7	♦ 8 6 2					
♣ 10 7 6 4 3	♣ A K					
	♠ A					
	♥ 7 6 4 2					
	♦ K Q J 10 5					
	♣ Q 9 5					

Influenced by the favorable vulnerability and wild distribution, some Wests will consider a 2♠ preempt despite the headless suit. But let's consider auctions where West passes in first seat. With a balanced 17-count, East will have the choice of opening a strong (15-17 HCP) 1NT or 1♥. Over 1NT, West may simply transfer to 2♠ or use a Texas transfer to 4♠, depending on taste. With spades as trumps, 10 tricks are easy: Win the opening diamond lead in dummy, cross to the ♣A, cash the ♥A K Q, pitching a diamond and two clubs from the table, cash the ♣K, ruff a diamond and ruff a club in the closed hand. Declarer loses only three high trumps. If West opens 1♥ instead, South may overcall 2♦. Continuations from here are more difficult to predict. A negative double by West is ill-advised with so few values and no tolerance for opener's suit. If 2♦ gets passed back to East, therefore, a reopening double will be needed for E-W to find their spade fit. Further, West must do something more dramatic than bid a simple 2♠ over the double (3♠? 4♠?) for the spade game to be reached.

**Board 13**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 10 8 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ K J 9 3
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ A Q J 8 6	♥ 10 5 4					
♦ A K 10	♦ Q J 5					
♣ K 10	♣ Q 7 4					
	♠ 5					
	♥ 3 2					
	♦ 9 8 6 4 3 2					
	♣ 9 6 5 3					

After North opens 1♠, two passes will follow, and the spotlight will be on West in the balancing seat. With a five-card major and no spade stopper, 2♥ will be a choice for some Wests. Others, impressed by the prime nature of the 17-count, may try a takeout double. Others, noting that South did not raise spades, may try 1NT with the balanced West hand, banking on East to provide a spade stopper. Regardless of the choice, E-W pairs who land in notrump will score best. West can take nine tricks in notrump, but East can take only eight, as an initial club lead by South (if South can find one) will shave a trick from the E-W total.

**Board 14**  
East Deals  
None Vul

♠ A J 9 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ 8 7 5
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 9 5 3	♥ A J 7					
♦ Q J 7 6	♦ A 9 5 3					
♣ Q	♣ A J 6					
	♠ Q 6					
	♥ Q 8 4 2					
	♦ 10 4					
	♣ 8 7 5 3 2					

Most E-W pairs will begin 1♦-1♠; 1NT. (No, North shouldn't act in this sequence. Yes, North should pass in tempo.) Pairs who use new minor forcing or other checkback tool will continue with 2♣ to explore for a 5-3 spade fit. This is especially comfortable for West, as the diamond fit provides safety should a spade fit not exist. When East confirms the spade fit with 2♠ or 3♠, that will likely end the auction at most tables. Double dummy, E-W can make 10 tricks in spades, but it requires a near-miraculous layout. The diamond suit can be played for no losers, and the favorable position of the ♣K gives West a parking place for one of the heart losers.

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

♠ K 8 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ 10 5 4 3
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 8 6	♥ K Q 3					
♦ A K Q J 6 2	♦ 5 4					
♣ Q 6	♣ A K 8 5					
	♠ A Q 6					
	♥ 10 9 4					
	♦ 8 3					
	♣ 10 9 7 4 2					

Let's assume N-S stay silent on this deal. Most Wests will open 1♦, East will respond 1♠, and West will have to choose among several options. A heavy 2♦ rebid is possible, as is a mildly understrength 3♦. Regardless, the E-W field will overwhelmingly land in 3NT. Some Wests may open an off-shape 1NT, but a Stayman sequence will yield the same outcome: 3NT. Ten tricks are easy, and 11 are possible if the defense fails to lead spades. Declarers in 3NT can lead toward the ♥K Q twice ... if they dare.

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

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

Predicting likely auctions for this deal is not easy. In third seat, East will have an opportunity to open despite the subminimum values, and 1♥ or 1♠ will be popular choices for those who want to act. The bidding that follows such a decision go in many directions, but a diamond partscore for N-S will be a common result. Other Easts may decide to pass and take a wait-and-see approach. After South opens 1♦, North must decide how to advance. A simple 2♦ raise may be best, though some might select 3♦. Pairs who play inverted minor raises may decide that a passed-hand 2♦ is better (or less shapely) than a 3♦ jump. Getting to 5♦ is difficult, but if declarer plays for the ♠Q drop doubleton or tripleton, 11 tricks will be taken.

**Board 17**  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

North players, holding a 2=5=4=2 pattern and 16 HCP, must decide between 1♥ and 1NT. The pattern suggests the former, but concentration of values in the doubletons means the latter is a reasonable choice, too. A 1♥ opening should silence East, but there will be quite a few who won't resist the temptation to try 2♣. Regardless of whether East bids or passes, South should pass, too. No matter what total-trick theory would suggest, a hand with this many losers should wait and raise later if the auction suggests it. After 1♥-Pass-Pass, West has some choices, including 1♠, double and Michaels-style cuebid. Although East should give partner some leeway in the balancing seat, many East will drive to 3NT after West acts in fourth chair.

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

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

West opens 1NT, and North will use whatever systemic gadget available to show a two-suited hand that includes hearts. Those that use strictly natural methods will have to content themselves with a simple 2♥. 2♥ may well end the auction. E-W should prevail on defense, as the need to remove trumps from dummy will become quickly apparent. Only a diamond lead allows North to get home in 2♥. If East decides to aggressively compete over 2♥ with a takeout double (assuming such a choice is systemically available), West will likely move to 2NT, a maker on this layout, or take a chance on defense, a winning decision on this layout, provided E-W defend properly.

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

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

Where South opens 1♦, some Norths may simply blast to 3NT, but those who prefer a more careful exploration can try an inverted 2♦ raise (for pairs who use that method to show an invitational or better hand, lacking a four-card major). After a conventional 2♦ raise, we expect some Easts to make a takeout double. Regardless of E-W's two-level interference, North will drive to 3NT at most tables. With so many of the defensive values favorably placed, making 10 tricks is trivial on this layout for N-S.

**Board 20**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 7 5 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ A J 2
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ Q J	♥ 10 3 2					
♦ K Q J 9 7 6	♦ 5 4					
♣ Q 3	♣ A K 10 6 5					

  

♠ Q 10 9 6
♥ A K 9 8 7 6
♦ A 3 2
♣ —

A partscore battle. The West hand is a good candidate for a weak 2♦ opening. When this passed around to South, a 2♥ balance looks like a popular choice. This may end the auction, though some Easts may compete to 3♦. As 2♥ makes, and it's difficult for N-S to double 3♦ for a vulnerable, one-trick set, the push to 3♦ may work out best for E-W. If North leads a heart against 3♦, one cute defense is for South to take the ♥K A and then play a third round of the suit. Say West ruffs high and plays another high diamond. South can win the ace and play a fourth round of hearts.

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

♠ A 7 4 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ 10 9 8
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 10 9 7 4 3	♥ 8					
♦ 7 5	♦ A J 10 8 4					
♣ 5	♣ K Q J 9					

  

♠ K J 5
♥ A Q J 5 2
♦ 9 6 3
♣ A 4

We predict that some Easts will open the shapely 11-count with 1♦. After South overcalls 1♥, the auction is difficult to predict from there. Some Wests will choose a light 1♠ advance, others will pass. Regardless, North will face a difficult choice: 1NT? Dbl? 2♣? 2♥? And then, East may try a support double (for pairs using that method) or a raise to 2♠. South may plow ahead with 2NT, likely propelling the partnership to likely-doomed 3NT. If East passes initially and South opens 1NT, North-South again will probably land in 3NT. N-S pairs who stop short of game will likely score well.

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

♠ A 9 6 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ K Q J 8
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 7 6 4 3	♥ Q J					
♦ A K 8 5	♦ 9 7 4					
♣ 4	♣ A 8 7 6					

  

♠ 10 5 4
♥ 9 8
♦ Q 6 3
♣ K Q 10 5 2

There are a few possible auctions here, depending on how West responds to 1♣ by East. Where West chooses a 1♦ response, North will inject 1♥. But where West prefers to respond in a major instead, a 1♥ response will silence North. Regardless, East will get to bid 1♠, and West can invite to game in spades or bid it directly. Note that in auctions where North gets to bid hearts, East players may well downgrade their hands (the doubleton ♥Q J is likely worthless) and refuse a game invitation. Even those Easts who have an unopposed auction might decline to bid 4♠ when invited to do so.

**Board 23**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ —	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ Q J 7 3
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ K Q 10 5 4 2	♥ A 8					
♦ 9 4 3 2	♦ A K Q 10					
♣ A Q 9	♣ K 7 4					

  

♠ A K 9 8 6 2
♥ J 9
♦ —
♣ J 10 6 5 2

A wild deal. An opening preempt of 2♠ (or even 3♠) is possible for South. Wests who venture a 3♥ overcall of 2♠ will make it easier to get their side to slam, especially if they can show a spade void. One such possibility exists if East cuebids 3♠ to create a force, and South doubles. West can redouble, which some pairs use to show a first-round control. In response to 3♥ by West, some Easts will try a heavy 3NT, but this is too conservative. 4NT, if understood to be quantitative (not Blackwood) is more on target value-wise, but may make getting to slam too hard. E-W pairs who make it to a small slam will do well, as bidding 7♥ after a 2♠ preempt might be too tough.

**Board 24**  
West Deals  
None Vul

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

When West opens 1♥, how should East respond? 4♥ shows a five-card raise but a much weaker hand, so that's not an option. A limit raise (3♥ or a conventional 3♣/3♦) will be the choice of some East, while more aggressive players might try Jacoby 2NT, even though the values of the East hand are borderline for such an action. Over 2NT, some intrepid Souths may try 3♠, but if South passes, West has a textbook 4♣ call, showing a five-card suit with trick-taking power. Will this be enough to get E-W to slam? Perhaps: 4♣ certainly improves the value of the East hand. Regardless, we suspect that most E-W pairs will declare 4♥.

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

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

Fans of the Rule of 20 (or the superior Rule of 22) will open the North hand 1♦, planning to rebid in clubs. The Rule of 22 suggests opening hands if the number of cards in the two longest suits plus the high-card total plus the number of quick tricks is 22 or greater; the North hand qualifies with 10 cards in clubs and diamonds, 10 HCP and two quick tricks. A likely auction starts 1♦ by North, 1♥ by East and a negative double by South. 1NT by West will be a popular choice, and when (if?) North rebids 2♣, East will try 2♥. This should end the auction, but some fearless Norths will persist with 3♣. This will be a successful push, especially if East leads the ♥K, allowing North to pitch a spade and embark on a crossruff plan for nine tricks.

**Board 26**  
East Deals  
Both Vul

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

What should West open in third seat? 1♠? 4♠? Something else? If West chooses 1♠, East can respond 1NT, and West can rebid 2♠. A spade partscore will be the most common contract on this board. Ten tricks are available due to the friendly break in trumps and the favorable position of the ♥K. It's not a great game to be in, but those who blast to 4♠ on this deal will score very well.

**Board 27**  
South Deals  
None Vul

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

At some tables, South will open 1♣, but others will see South pass the prime 11-count in first seat. Whether South opens or not, West may try a weak 2♠ jump. Where South has opened 1♣, North will have an easy takeout double over 2♠. But if South has passed, North may well pass over 2♠; the sketchy values and imperfect shape make a takeout double much less attractive. In short, if West opens 2♠ in second chair, it could well end the auction. After 1♣-(2♠)-Dbl-(Pass), what should South do? Good luck with this one!

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

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

A common N-S auction will be 1♦-1♠; 1NT-2NT; 3NT-Pass. Some standard bidders might try 1♦-2♣; 2NT-3NT; Pass. The defense will almost certainly attack hearts, holding declarer to nine tricks. When declarer knocks out the ♣A, the defense will finish collecting its heart tricks. On a non-heart lead, declarer has at least 10 tricks.

**Board 29**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

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

There may be some aggressive Easts who open 1♣, but we suspect that West will get to open 1♥ at most tables. Depending on methods, West can reply 1NT (regardless of system, this is non-forcing by a passed hand) or 2♣ by pairs who don't use the popular Drury convention. (2♣ shows an invitational heart raise in that case.) It's likely that E-W will get to 2♥ or 3♥ on this layout despite variations in the early auction. In hearts, West will lose the obvious four tricks: two trumps, a diamond and a club. Plus 140 E-W will be a common score.

**Board 30**  
East Deals  
None Vul

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

The auction at many tables will be 3♥ by South and 4♥ by North. With the red kings cooperating, South will have no trouble taking 10 tricks. There will, of course, be some hand hogs in the North seat who try 3NT instead, and they'll be rewarded for their greed with the same 10 tricks for a superior matchpoint score. Matchpoints is not a fair game.

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

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

Let's say West opens 1♣, East responds 1♥, and South (a passed hand) makes a takeout double or bids 1NT, unusual, to show spades and diamonds. Over either, West can jump to 4♥ to show 18-19 HCP and four-card heart support, typically without shortness. What then? It would be lazy for East players to sign off without considering the auction carefully or thinking about their controls in spades and diamonds. For East to use RKCB here isn't entirely silly; and when West shows four key cards, getting to 6♥ is automatic. Getting to 7♣ requires a little imagination on East's part, but the 4-4 club fit (strongly suggested by the bidding) allows East to use the heart length for extra tricks in a club contract.



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

♠ 6		♠ AK108
♥ Q		♥ AJ8765
♦ AK1098643		♦ Q
♣ K84		♣ J3
♠ 9542		
♥ K92		
♦ —		
♣ AQ7652		
	♠ N	
	♥ W	♠ E
	♦ S	♠ S
	♠ QJ73	
	♥ 1043	
	♦ J752	
	♣ 109	

Despite holding an eight-card suit, North should start the bidding with 1♦, as the hand contains opening values. After East overcalls 1♥ (some might double), South passes, and West has some choices. With a fit, 9 good points and a void in opener's suit, 2♥ is wimpy. 3♥ should deliver another trump (if played as invitational), so a 2♦ cuebid will be popular. If North continues with 3♦, East might introduce spades, but this could tilt E-W to a game in spades instead of hearts, which is inferior on this layout. Easts that suppress spades will fare better here. Well done to any E-W pair that gets to 6♣. Very tough.

**Board 33**  
North Deals  
None Vul

♠ 1074		♠ KJ932
♥ K974		♥ 105
♦ 74		♦ AKQ
♣ Q762		♣ A104
♠ Q		
♥ A863		
♦ 10986		
♣ KJ83		
	♠ N	
	♥ W	♠ E
	♦ S	♠ S
	♠ A865	
	♥ QJ2	
	♦ J532	
	♣ 95	

Although 1NT is possible for East in second seat, the maximum nature of the hand, the prime values, and the heart weakness all argue for 1♠. But after West bids 1NT (regardless if played as natural, forcing or semi-forcing), what should East do next?

A simple 2NT is probably best, and this will get the duo to 3NT. But some Easts might choose to temporize with 2♣ or 2♦ first, hoping that the auction doesn't end prematurely. There's a chance of that happening if West takes a pessimistic view of the situation, but if West takes another call, then 3NT is still the landing place. To take 10 tricks against a heart lead, West must duck the first two rounds of the suit before playing the ♠Q. When South wins the ace, declarer can win the (likely) diamond return and cash the ♠KJ. When the ♠10 drops, declarer has an overtrick (four spades, one heart, three diamonds and two clubs).

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

♠ —		♠ AK763
♥ 985		♥ QJ102
♦ AK984		♦ 107
♣ K10854		♣ 32
♠ QJ10854		
♥ AK		
♦ J32		
♣ 96		
	♠ N	
	♥ W	♠ E
	♦ S	♠ S
	♠ 92	
	♥ 7643	
	♦ Q65	
	♣ AQJ7	

At tables where West opens 1♠, North may well choose an unusual 2NT overcall. From there, the auction will get high quickly. It's unlikely any E-W pairs will stop short of 4♠, but when South tries 5♣ (all of South's values are working after North's minor-suit announcement), some E-W pairs will take advantage of the vulnerability to push to 5♠. N-S should double and take their 300, the best they can do in that situation.

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

♠ AJ76		♠ K1082
♥ 63		♥ A72
♦ J1072		♦ Q98
♣ 1098		♣ 765
♠ Q543		
♥ KJ5		
♦ A53		
♣ AK3		
	♠ N	
	♥ W	♠ E
	♦ S	♠ S
	♠ 9	
	♥ Q10984	
	♦ K64	
	♣ QJ42	

There are a couple of likely E-W auctions here after West opens 1NT. East can try a Stayman sequence, and after discovering the 4-4 spade fit, can invite with 3♠, leading to a 4♠ conclusion, as West has a maximum.

Other Easts, noting the pancake nature of the hand, may try a simple invitational raise in notrump via 2NT. This will get E-W to the superior (on this layout) 3NT. But East players who are forced to make a balanced invite via a 2♣-then-2NT path discover that opener has four spades, they may change their minds and wind up in 4♠ anyway!

**Board 36**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 42		♠ AQ96
♥ 8732		♥ A96
♦ 75		♦ AQ4
♣ K10642		♣ J97
♠ K1085		
♥ QJ5		
♦ K108		
♣ A83		
	♠ N	
	♥ W	♠ E
	♦ S	♠ S
	♠ J73	
	♥ K104	
	♦ J9632	
	♣ Q5	

The E-W auction a most table will begin 1♣-1♠; 2♠. From there, systemic gadgets such as "spiral" may take over, for pairs who use that method (2NT asks opener to describe strength and spade length), while some Easts may try a series of control bids to suggest slam interest. It will be difficult to get West to cooperate with any slam try, and the field will be in 4♠ (with the usual 3NT outliers).