

ACBL-wide Junior Fund Game #1

Friday Morning – January 24, 2020 – Set 240031



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Oren Kriegel



Oren grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and learned bridge at 14. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 2016 and has been playing and writing about bridge full time since then. His articles appear frequently on BridgeWinners and in The Bridge World. He is a regular on U.S. Junior teams. He has won a gold and silver medal in world Junior tournaments and was the non-playing captain of the U.S. open team in 2016.

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K J 8 7 6 2
♥ A
♦ 7 5 2
♣ K 6

North opens the bidding with a minor (we almost always open 1♦ with 4-4). Some brave souls might overcall 2♥ with the East hand, but pass is probably the majority action. Assuming N/S have the auction to themselves, North will rebid 1NT over 1♠, and South has enough strength to try for slam.

6♠ is just about 50-50. It will make most of the time when the ♦A is with West (except it will not here if West leads and continues diamonds) and go down most of the time when East holds the ♦A (although there might be a squeeze to get to the 12th trick). We tend to be cautious about bidding borderline slams, so we would probably play in game, but we certainly would not fault an auction that reached slam.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 8 4 2
♥ K Q 8 7
♦ 10
♣ A J 9 2

Another uncontested auction for N/S, and the two most likely sequences lead to 1NT by North: 1♣-1NT and 1♣-1♦-1♥-1NT. East will presumably lead a diamond if North does not bid the suit and might lead one anyway if North does respond 1♦. The alternative choice, a heart, works just as well.

Seven tricks are available — four clubs and one in each other suit — but declarer might play on one of the majors and go down. This deal shows why 1NT can often be such a difficult contract to declare: North has no idea how the suits lie and which of the three possible sources of tricks he should rely on.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K J 7
♥ 5 4 2
♦ Q 5 2
♣ 8 7 6

The contract will probably be 1NT by East in most rooms, and declarer will take eight tricks (two hearts, four diamonds, and two clubs). This board rates to be pretty flat around the room at +120 for E/W.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

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



♠ J 10 7 5
♥ 6 5
♦ A 10 9
♣ Q 6 5 3

Another deal, another 1NT contract, this time by North. Which suit should East lead? There are several reasons to prefer a heart lead. Leading a major rather than a minor is slightly preferable, because South will not pass 1NT with a five-card major, but he would pass with a five-card minor. The heart suit is stronger, so East needs less from West to make the lead successful: the ♥Q is ideal, but the ♥A or ♥10 might make the lead successful too. By contrast, if East leads a club, even if West has the ♣Q-10, the lead might have cost a trick.

On this layout, declarer probably has eight tricks no matter what the lead is and whether he goes after spades or clubs. Another mostly flat +120.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

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



♠ 9 8
♥ J 10 3
♦ 9 8 5 4
♣ K 10 9 2

E/W have the auction to themselves. West should respond 2♣ to the 1♥ opening bid, not 1♠. With enough strength for game, respond in the longest suit first, unless there is some special reason not to. East rebids 2NT, and West establishes trumps with a 3♥ call. East has a minimum for the 1♥ opening bid and the trumps are poor, but with three keycards, East might be worth a 3♠ cuebid. Even if East cooperates, the partnership should stop in 4♥.

The play in 4♥ might be of interest, because declarer can't do everything he would like to. It is ideal to ruff a diamond in dummy and to lead a heart up to dummy's ♥Q, in case South started with ♥A-x. Then, after the ♥Q wins, a low heart can be played from both hands, limiting the opponents to one heart trick. There aren't

enough entries, though, so declarer should probably give up on the unlikely ♥A-x with South and just ruff a diamond loser in dummy. That will result in 10 tricks on this layout, although Deep Finesse says declarer can take 11.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

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



♠ K Q 7 6 5 4
♥ 7
♦ J 2
♣ K 6 3 2

East passes, and South will open 2♠, which gives West a tough problem. This hand is a little light for a 3♥ overcall, given the poor club holding, but passing doesn't look right either. If West does overcall, East has a borderline raise to game, but with an ace, a king, and a doubleton it's probably the right call.

4♥ isn't a hopeless contract, as both minor-suit honors could be onside, but it won't make today. Still, overcalling 3♥ and going minus in game might not be a disaster, because if West passed instead, South might make 2♠.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

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



♠ K Q 10 9 5
♥ A K
♦ J 10 9 6
♣ A 5

6♠ is cold, but we doubt many if any pairs will get there. There are only 21 HCP, and North probably doesn't have a way to show his diamond void with such a weak hand. If North had a slightly stronger hand, he could splinter, but 1♠-4♠ all pass is probably a popular auction.

If East were nonvulnerable, then barging in with 5♦ over North's 4♠ call might be appealing, but vulnerable, it looks ill-advised. Sure enough, 5♦ doubled would go down 800, not a good sacrifice against game (7♦ doubled, on the other hand, is a good save against slam, but you wouldn't get many more matchpoints for minus 1400 instead of minus 1430).

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

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

After 1♥-Pass-1♠, South should probably pass. He has enough strength to open the bidding, but the distribution is wrong for a takeout double. West will rebid 2♥, and East has a difficult choice to make. As the cards lie, bidding 2♠ is much more successful than passing 2♥. However, holding the heart king, passing has some merit.

It's a close call, but we prefer 2♠ because of the robust spade spots and because the East hand probably won't be worth much in a heart contract, but West's honors might be helpful to East in spades. Of course, if West's hand was ♠x ♥AQJxxx ♦xxx ♣AKx instead, then passing 2♥ will lead to 10 or 11 tricks most of the time, and playing in 2♠ will look silly.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

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

North will declare 3NT after a mundane Stayman auction at most tables. East will be warned off the spade lead, and the second choice of a club doesn't give anything away, although East will still be in trouble. Declarer plays low from dummy, takes the ♣10 with the ♣A and returns the ♣7, which will let declarer take four tricks in the suit.

If East exits passively in clubs (or hearts), then declarer might limit himself to 11 tricks by taking the spade finesse. A squeeze can operate if declarer is careful not to block the heart suit and to cash the ♦A before running clubs (a Vienna Coup), but that doesn't look like the percentage play. Be proud if you take 12 tricks as declarer,

especially if the defense doesn't hand it to you on a silver platter.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

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

East has a normal 3♥ opening, although sound preemptors might be nervous about it. South has a nasty problem. It doesn't look right to overcall 4♣ on such a thin hand, but when we pass we always seem to catch partner with a club fit and both sides make tons of tricks. We would pass with trepidation, although bidding is the winner here.

West raises to 4♥, which comes back to South, who really shouldn't bid, even though sacrificing in 5♣ is the winning action. 4♥ could easily be down, and coming in at the five level is a complete roll of the dice. It's useful to plan your auction before making your first call. If, over 3♥, you know you will be unwilling to

pass out a raise to 4♥, then you might as well get in there over 3♥ when the bidding is lower. We're chicken, so we would pass, pass again, and take our average-minus.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

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

There will be lots of 1♣ openers around the country, but we think it's clear to open 1NT with the South hand. 14 HCP and a strong six-card suit make this hand quantitatively worth 1NT, and 1NT has preemptive value. 1NT will not work well here. It will land the partnership in a poor 2♠ contract that has no prayer as the cards lie.

However, 2♠ might garner a reasonable matchpoint result if South can hold the damage to down two or a miraculous down one. Suppose South opens 1♣. West might overcall with a stronger suit, but we think is clear to pass. Whether North responds 1♠ or not (we would not consider passing), East will have a chance to double a club bid in balancing seat. West will probably declare 2♥, which should make for +110.

Board 12West Deals
N-S Vul

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

West opens 1♥, North overcalls 1♠ (about as light as a vulnerable overcall will be), and East makes a negative double. South's values are soft and 4-3-3-3 shape is a negative feature, so despite the 10 HCP, we would not cuebid to show a strong spade raise. 2♠ by North is the likely final contract, which can be defeated by two tricks if the defense doesn't drop any tricks. Minus 200 is the matchpoint kiss of death, and any E/W pairs who are unlucky enough to declare will probably be left with a below-average score.

Board 13North Deals
Both Vul

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

The East hand presents two questions of bidding style: which suit to open (we prefer 1♦, see Board 1) and what to rebid after a 1♠ rebid. East must rebid 1NT if the opening bid is 1♣ and we like that rebid after a 1♦ opening bid too. Rebidding 2♣ with 1=4=4=4 shape is sometimes reasonable, but not with such weak suits. The partnership will probably rest in 3NT by East.

South will probably lead a club. After learning how the heart suit lies, success will hinge on the diamond suit. As the cards lie, declarer cannot fail to take three tricks in diamonds, but after learning how the heart suit lies, we think the best line is to take the ♦K, ♦A, then lead up to the ♦10-8. This will give declarer three tricks whenever

the suit divides 3-3 or when South has ♦Q-x or ♦J-x. This is not the best line for three tricks just considering the E/W diamonds, so we think it is correct on the actual deal.

Board 14East Deals
None Vul

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

East opens 1♦, South overcalls 1♥, and West passes. North advances with 1NT, which shows about 8-12 points after a one-level overcall. This hand is close to the maximum for 1NT. South has no reason to bid over 1NT. There aren't the values for game, but game is makeable because of the very friendly heart layout. If West had a heart honor or East had an extra heart (♥K-Q-x-x), game probably wouldn't make.

Board 15South Deals
N-S Vul

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

South passes, West opens 1NT. Should North enter the auction? The distribution is good, but with such a weak hand, we would lie low, particularly as we're vulnerable. It is unlikely N/S will buy the contract, and bidding might help the opponents know how to declare in the probable case that N/S end up on defense. At most tables, E/W will probably declare 3NT (perhaps some pairs will make their way to 5♣) for +400, but a few frisky N/Ss might reach the four level and get doubled, paying out 500 for a poor matchpoint result.

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

West opens 1♣, and while few hyper-aggressive overcallers might stick in a 1♠ bid, most Norths will pass. The modern style is to respond 1♥ with the East hand, but traditional up-the-line players will bid 1♦. Despite South's opening hand, he should not enter the auction, because the distribution is wrong for a takeout double. It is acceptable to double with imperfect shape, but you should have some extra high-card values to compensate for the distribution.

E/W will probably wind up in 1NT. The simplest path to eight tricks for declarer is if West declares on a spade lead. South will gain the lead with the ♣A at some point and play another spade, garnering four spades and a club trick for the defense.

If East declares, the ♦Q is a likely lead, even if East bid the suit. The play will be a bit more complicated: East wins a diamond trick and with the delicate entry situation, it's probably best to finesse against the ♣J immediately. This will succeed, giving declarer three club tricks and two in each red suit. South does best to play the ♠Q, which declarer will cover, and North will win. North returns a diamond, and East cannot afford to duck. South would be able to win and play another spade, giving the defenders five spade tricks, one diamond, and one club. Instead, declarer must win and decide whether to guess hearts for one or more overtricks or to cash out and make the contract.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

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

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

After Pass-Pass-1♦-1♥, North has an awkward bidding problem. Passing is possible but unattractive with 8 HCP and no one vulnerable at matchpoints. Raising diamonds with three-card support is also possible, but it's best to avoid that call if possible. We would bid 1NT, despite the lack of a heart stopper. ♥10-8-x-x will stop the suit much of the time if South contributes something like ♥J-x, and even if the opponents can run hearts, 1NT still might make. Particularly at matchpoints, it's good to play partscore in notrump rather than a minor. The minor must take two more tricks than notrump to be worth it. Here, although 1NT might be difficult to play, it is the best contract.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

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

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

The E/W hands mesh perfectly, so slam can be made despite only 24 combined HCP. East and South are likely to pass, so our auction would be: 1♠ by West, 2♣ Drury by East, 4♠ by West. It is totally unnecessary to bid 2♦ to show a full opener if you know where the partnership belongs. (We don't like treating 2♦ as a full opener anyway. Why does it matter whether you would have opened the bidding in first or second seat? Just use 2♦ to show interest in game and sign off at the two level when you don't have game interest.)

In the play, it is important to finesse on the first round of the heart suit without drawing all the trumps. You want to ensure that the opponents cannot take more than one club trick if they gain the lead in hearts. We would probably lose a finesse in hearts unless North led one. Going +450 on this board would be frustrating, but that's matchpoints for you.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

West opens 2♣, and his plan should be to rebid 2NT. The hand is not perfectly balanced, but it is close enough. Auctions beginning 2♣-2♦-3♦ are among the most inefficient in bridge. East should not be tempted to stop in partscore. Yes, there are only three jacks, but the seven-card suit is a positive feature, and who knows, one of the jacks might be useful. (Indeed, the ♦J is an important entry on this deal.) 11 tricks are possible on a reasonably friendly layout, and any pair that chooses to stay out of game will be justly punished, in our opinion.

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

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

Can you show a two-suited hand after 1♦-Pass-1♠? Yes, there's the Unusual 2NT, but it would be nice to stay at a lower level. Some pairs use a cuebid of opener's minor as Michaels here, and others use it as a natural overcall. There is no right answer, and unless your partnership has discussed this type of auction, there is no real way to know which way your partner likes to play it.

N/S happen to have a good sacrifice at the five level, but it's unlikely many pairs will get there. More likely, E/W will be allowed to play in 4♠, making. In fact, a few pairs might even miss game, although we would view this as overly conservative. Both the East and West hands improve in value when South shows hearts and a spade fit is found.

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

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

This deal is a bit of a trap all around. East opens 1♣, which South and West likely pass. North will balance with 2♣, showing the major suits. If East doubles, is that penalty-oriented? Or does it show clubs? We think it shows clubs, so East would pass. South will end up declaring two of a major, maybe doubled at some tables, and struggling. This deal will probably give the defending side more matchpoints than the declaring side at most tables.

Board 22
East Deals
E-W Vul

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

We might open 1♣ or 3♣ as East if we were nonvulnerable, but we think pass is clear at this vulnerability. South opens 1♦, West overcalls 1♥, North bids 1♠, and East bids 2♣. South will presumably rebid 2♦, and West has a close decision whether to bid 2♥ or not, but we think the intermediates in the heart suit makes it worth it. North probably should not compete with 2♠, because the spade suit is so weak. South might compete with 3♦, but that's dangerous, and East should probably double, with the ♣A-K, a possible diamond trick and a vulnerable partner who has bid twice.

If West declares hearts, nine tricks can be taken because the ♠10 falls under the ♠K-Q. South can be held to seven tricks in diamonds. West will lead clubs, and East can play three rounds, letting West ruff with the ♦10. Dummy cannot overruff. Then, West can shift to the ♠K and cash a spade trick when in with the ♥A. East will still take one or two tricks with his trump holding.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

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

South opens 1♠, West overcalls 2♦, and North has a close choice between pass and 2♠. It's good to support with support, but with 4-3-3-3 distribution and only 5 HCP, pass might be the better call. East has a tough call too. 2NT is possible, but we think that's a mild overbid, so we would raise to 3♦. Especially vulnerable, a 2♦ overcall is almost always made on a six-card or longer suit, so we would not be too worried about raising with a decent doubleton.

South's life will be made easier if North has raised to 2♠, because he can make a game try with 3♥ and happily subside in 3♠. If North passes over 2♦, South might let the opponents play in 3♦, going minus 110 when he might have gone +140 or minus 100 in 3♠, depending on whether the opponents find their club ruff and whether South guesses the heart suit.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

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

Another possible slam with less than traditional values, but it would be usual to reach the slam. Slam is good, making whenever there is no spade loser and with chances even if there is a spade loser. The combined club holding helps the E/W hands mesh so well.

Declarer will have to guess which of the high spades to play first. If the ♠A is played first, then there is a sure spade loser, but if the ♠K is taken first, there is a chance to take 12 tricks. When the ♠K is taken, South will play the ♠Q, and then it is correct to finesse North for the ♠J. This is a classic Restricted Choice situation, and South's holding a singleton spade honor is about twice as likely as holding ♠Q-J doubleton. Expect lots of +450s and +480s.

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

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

Depending on opening-bid style, North might open 1♠ (our choice) or pass. 2♠ is a poor call for many reasons. N/S will probably have an uncontested auction and reach 4♠, which might make an overtrick, but if everyone plays well, it should produce only 10 tricks.

This is another Restricted Choice position. After playing the ♠A and seeing East play an honor, declarer has to guess whether to play a low spade to the ♠Q next or finesse the ♠9. The ♠9 is the best percentage play for the same reason finessing is the right play on Board 24: it's about twice as likely East was dealt ♠K-J or ♠K-10 than he was dealt ♠J-10. Of course, this isn't the winning play on this layout, but that doesn't change the odds overall.

It is important to note that West should play low smoothly on the second round of spades. Playing the ♠K immediately blows a trick for the defense, and thinking about playing the ♠K might give declarer enough information to abandon the odds and play the ♠Q.

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

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

The auction is probably a straightforward Pass-1♠; 2♠-4♠; Pass by E/W, but it's worth considering West's rebid if East had bid 1NT, rather than 2♠.

3♠ is an underbid, but he can't rebid 4♠ with this kind of suit. Some players might manufacture a jump rebid of 3♣, hoping to rebid 3♠ to show a six-card suit and a game-forcing hand. We would just raise 1NT to 3NT. This call shows enough strength for game and a six-card spade suit. If West had only five spades, he would have opened or rebid 2NT or would have jumped in another suit. In an ideal world, West would have a stronger spade suit, but 3NT looks like the best description available.

The result in 4♠ will hinge on the opening lead. After a diamond lead, declarer will take 11 tricks by finessing in spades. On a non-diamond lead, declarer will win and should immediately play three rounds of hearts (noting the fall of the ♥J), discarding a diamond, then take the spade finesse. Then take the ♠A. Here, the ♠K falls, so declarer has 13 tricks, but if it hadn't fallen, declarer would play a club to the ♣K and play the fourth heart. Regardless of whether South ruffs in with the master trump, the second diamond goes away.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

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

North has a good hand, and he opens 1♣, planning on rebidding 2NT. The auction continues in disappointing fashion: 1NT by East, passed around to him. He should pass, despite holding 19 HCP. He was planning on bidding notrump, and he has an opportunity to defend against 1NT.

Some players might double 1NT as North, but we think this is a misguided call. E/W might have half the deck, and if E/W are in trouble in 1NT, they may be able to run to a different contract. Here, E/W can make eight or nine tricks in spades, but they will fail in 1NT with careful defense.

Board 28West Deals
N-S Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

We would have an unsuccessful auction on this deal. Uncontested by E/W, we would bid 1♣-1♥; 1♠-4♥; Pass. 3NT can make on a very lucky lie of the cards, but most of the time 3NT would be down along with 4♥. Sometimes reasonable bidding results in an unreasonable contract.

Board 29North Deals
Both Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

North opens 1♠, South responds 1NT, and North rebids 2♥. It is normally correct to take a preference to 2♠ with two spades and three hearts, and we would do that here, but we think South is close to passing 2♥. There is not much chance for game, so South might choose to keep the partnership low rather than bid 2♠ and risk that North bids again. On this deal, North will pass 2♠.

We would lead a diamond against 2♠ as East, and West will win the ♦A. North might choose to unblock the ♦K, but it doesn't make much difference. Although declarer has plenty of tricks, he won't be able to avoid losing one diamond, one heart, and three spades, plus either a second heart (if he doesn't go for discards on dummy's

diamond winners) or a fourth spade (if he does).

Board 30East Deals
None Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

Some players would open 2♥ as East, but we wouldn't. We think the combination of poor shape, poor suit, maximum high cards, and lots of defense makes it better to pass, planning on bidding again later. West opens 1♦ in third seat, and it will be a close decision whether E/W bid game or not. We would guess most pairs will not bid game, but a significant minority will.

4♥ is a good contract. If the missing hearts divide 2-2, then it is cold. Even though hearts are 3-1, on this layout 4♥ can still make. Suppose the opponents lead a black suit. Declarer tests trumps and finds out they split poorly. Then, he finesses in diamonds, and the ♦Q loses to the ♦K, but the opponents can only cash one black-suit winner. The diamonds divided 3-3 initially, so declarer can throw

his remaining loser on the fourth round of diamonds, while South ruffs with his natural trump trick.

Board 31South Deals
N-S Vul

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

N	E
W	S

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

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

After 1♦-Pass-1NT (not an ideal call, but there is no alternative), East has a difficult problem. He has the best hand at the table but no good way to enter the auction. A 2♦ call would be Michaels on this auction, so East probably has no better choice than to pass, ending the auction. N/S can make 1NT with careful play, and E/W can make 2♦. We have sympathy for any Easts who feel frustrated that they couldn't get into the bidding. Sometimes the best result for your side is practically unachievable.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q J 7 4
♥ A Q 10 3
♦ 10 8
♣ 10 8 6

♠ K 9 2
♥ K 8 7 6 4
♦ J 9 7 5 4
♣ —



♠ 8 5
♥ J 2
♦ K Q 3
♣ A J 9 7 3 2

♠ A 10 6 3
♥ 9 5
♦ A 6 2
♣ K Q 5 4

East opens 1♣ in third seat, and South passes, because there is no fitting way to enter the auction. After 1♥-Pass-2♣, however, he can double. This is like a takeout double of hearts. It doesn't promise 4-4 in the unbid suits or anything particular about clubs. North will bid 2♦ over the double, and West might decide to compete to 3♣, with a known nine-card club fit.

That would not be a successful decision on this deal. The opponents have three top tricks, the heart finesse fails, and there are two club losers. Even if East doesn't get doubled, scoring minus 200 in 3♣ will not be worth many matchpoints.

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

♠ A 8 7 6 3
♥ Q 10 8
♦ K 5
♣ Q 4 3

♠ 10 4
♥ J 7 6
♦ A J 10 6 3
♣ 7 6 2



♠ J 9 5 2
♥ 4 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ A J 10 8

♠ K Q
♥ A K 9 5 3
♦ Q 9 8
♣ K 9 5

This is a close decision between 1♥ and 1NT. We think we'd open 1NT but sympathize with someone who opens 1♥ because he thinks it's too strong for 1NT. But we strongly disagree with players who think that this hand is within the range for 1NT, but they don't open 1NT with a five-card major.

Opening 1♥ probably wins the day here. A 1NT opening should buy the contract, and after a spade lead, declarer takes five diamond tricks and the ♥A-K, but when the ♥Q doesn't fall, that's it. Opening 1♥ will get you a better score if you buy it for 3♥ (making +140 or +170) or the opponents compete to 3♠ and South doubles.

Despite it not working out, we still like 1NT with the South hand.

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 9 7 6 5 2
♥ A J 9
♦ J
♣ A K 9 3

♠ A K Q 3
♥ 4
♦ 9 8 7 5 4
♣ J 10 8



♠ 8 4
♥ 10 6 2
♦ A K Q 3 2
♣ 5 4 2

♠ J 10
♥ K Q 8 7 5 3
♦ 10 6
♣ Q 7 6

East passes, and South probably opens 2♥, although we would be very nervous about it. We think pass is the right call, but we might be unable to resist temptation and choose to open the bidding 2♥.

If South does open 2♥, E/W are in for a good score as long as they don't get sucked into the trap of entering the auction. Neither player has an appropriate hand to come into the bidding, and the disciplined pass works here: South fails in 2♥ rather than E/W going down on offense.

Board 35South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 5
♥ 8 7
♦ A K 10 5 2
♣ 10 6 5 4

♠ A Q
♥ A K J 10 6
♦ Q 7 6
♣ A J 7



♠ K 8 4 3 2
♥ Q 9 4 2
♦ J
♣ K Q 2

♠ 10 9 7 6
♥ 5 3
♦ 9 8 4 3
♣ 9 8 3

We would evaluate the North hand as worth 22 points and open 2♣, rather than 2NT. It is unlikely to matter, because most roads lead to 2NT by North. A 2♣ opening and 2♦ response might let West stick in a lead-directing double for all the good that would do.

Deep Finesse defeats 2NT, and many declarers will go down, but we think some combination of tricky play by declarer and helpful defense will let a few N/S pairs escape with a plus score.

Board 36West Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 8 5 4
♥ A J 7
♦ A 7 4 3
♣ 4 3

♠ K 9 3
♥ 10 9 6 3
♦ 8 5
♣ A Q 9 2



♠ A Q 10 7 2
♥ Q 2
♦ 10 6 2
♣ J 8 7

♠ 6
♥ K 8 5 4
♦ K Q J 9
♣ K 10 6 5

We end with a possible passout. West and North have clear passes. East might open a light 1♠ if nonvulnerable, but we think it's just too rich to open 1♠ on that trash, vulnerable. South has an opening hand, but with only a singleton spade, South might apply the Rule of 15 (open if your HCP plus your number of spades equals 15 or higher) and pass.

The Rule of 15 ordinarily applies to borderline opening hands, but while we would open the South hand in any other seat, we think this one counts as borderline too. While we don't hate opening the bidding as South, we think the actual result of letting E/W find a making partscore in spades will be a fairly common result of opening this type of hand.