

ACBL-wide Senior Pairs #1

Monday Afternoon – March 11, 2019 – Set 226033



American Contract
Bridge League

Analysis by Barry Rigal



Barry Rigal is a player, author, commentator and syndicated columnist. Born in London in 1958, he has been a professional bridge player since moving to New York in 1994. Rigal has written many books, as well as magazine and newspaper columns and has contributed to the world championship books for two decades. He has also served as the Chief Vugraph commentator for the World Bridge Federation for 10 years.

He has won two North American championships as well as EC Mixed Teams and multiple UK titles. As a professional player, he claims to be the only pro ever to have been shut out by his client from declaring a single board in a session – not for want of trying! At college, Rigal reached the quarterfinal round of the University Challenge for Queen's Oxford – where he suffered the indignity of losing to Queen's Cambridge – and a team headed by the comedian Stephen Fry. He also claims that his tutors awarded him the title of "The laziest man in Oxford."

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 7
♥ A Q 7 5
♦ A 9 6
♣ K J 5 4 3

♠ K J 6 3
♥ K 4 3
♦ Q 8 7
♣ 10 8 7



♠ Q 9 8 2
♥ J 10
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ A Q 2

♠ A 10 5 4
♥ 9 8 6 2
♦ K 10 4
♣ 9 6

Many desperadoes will open in third seat as South, which might allow N/S to find spades — indeed some may get as high as 3♠ and be doubled there. After a trump lead or perhaps a top heart lead, it would appear South will struggle to take even seven tricks. Most E/W partnerships will buy the contracts if left to their own devices. While few are going to reach game, heart partscores seem to play very well. Declarer should take an early club finesse, then crossruff for 10 or possibly 11 tricks.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A J 9
♥ Q 4 3
♦ 6 2
♣ A J 8 4 2

♠ 10 7 6 5
♥ J 5 2
♦ A K 10
♣ 9 7 5



♠ K Q 4 3 2
♥ 10 8 7
♦ 9 7 5
♣ K 10

♠ 8
♥ A K 9 6
♦ Q J 8 4 3
♣ Q 6 3

While E/W have just a combined 24 HCP, both East and West have opening bids of sorts, so you'd expect them to end up in 3NT, almost certainly by West. After a spade lead it would be an apposite moment for South to falsecard with the king, but that may be easier said than done. Whether South follows suit honestly or not, declarer is likely to cross to a top heart and try a club to the jack. When the ♣A drops the king, West will cash out for his contract and emerge with 10 tricks. That should surely represent a very decent score.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 10
♥ Q 9 7 4 2
♦ A J 10 2
♣ A 6

♠ 9 7
♥ A 10 6 5
♦ 9 6 3
♣ K 10 8 4



♠ Q 4
♥ K 8
♦ K 7 4
♣ Q J 9 5 3 2

♠ K J 8 6 5 3 2
♥ J 3
♦ Q 8 5
♣ 7

What a difference a light opening bid makes! If South passes, you'd expect many E/W pairs to find a way to reach the spade game here. This could happen either if West kicks off with a distorted strong notrump, or if East invites game in spades. But should South open 1♣, then West will surely overcall 1♥. When North responds 1NT, East won't do more than compete to 2♠, and now can anybody bid on? Any West who finds a way to get his side to game now will deserve his fine result. Note that East should take 12 tricks in 4♠ unless the defenders lead hearts.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 9 4 2
♥ J 5
♦ J 7 6
♣ A Q J 2

♠ A Q 8 6
♥ K 9 7 4
♦ A 8 4 3
♣ 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ —
♥ A Q 10 6 2
♦ K 10 9 5
♣ 9 7 5 4

♠ K 10 7 5 3
♥ 8 3
♦ Q 2
♣ K 10 6 3

After East comes in with 1♥ over North's 1♦ opener, both sides should try to compete in their black-suit fit. The successful heart and club finesses let E/W take 10 tricks in clubs, though the bad trump break may require declarer to play a diamond to the king at his first turn. In practice, majors outrank minors, so South will normally get to test his mettle in spades. N/S can come to at least eight winners there, but not nine. On the lead of the ♥J, South must duck in dummy to leave West on play, or else a shift to ♣9 (followed by a reversion to hearts) holds him to seven tricks.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 8
♥ K 9 5 2
♦ Q 9 8 5 4
♣ 9 6

♠ A Q 10 9 7 6 4
♥ Q 3
♦ J 10
♣ 5 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 8 7 4
♦ K 7 2
♣ A Q 10

♠ —
♥ A J 10 6
♦ A 6 3
♣ K J 8 7 3 2

Imaginative as your commentator might be, he can imagine only one possible sequence on this deal: North opening and closing the auction with a call of 3♠. If you did anything else, please don't tell me what it was. After a heart lead, declarer will be able to dispose of his diamond loser on the hearts and should now take nine tricks, one way or another. After a diamond lead, North will be struggling to take even eight winners. Still, it would be curious if the defenders could find a way to promote the ♠5 for a second undertrick without considerable help from declarer.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 5 4
♥ K 9 8
♦ A Q 8 4
♣ 9 8 7 3

♠ 10 2
♥ A J 10 6
♦ 10 5 3
♣ A 10 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 9 7 3
♥ 5 3
♦ K 9 7
♣ K Q J

♠ Q J 8 6
♥ Q 7 4 2
♦ J 6 2
♣ 5 2

East's balanced 16-count is best handled by opening 1NT, despite his suitability for spades and that awkward small doubleton. You'd expect almost every E/W pair to end up in 3NT, though quite a few will declare that contract by West, not East. After a 1NT opener from East, South might well lead a top spade. Declarer would do well to duck, and now on a spade continuation, East can win and try to drive out the ♣A. Eventually he can endplay North in clubs to open up hearts for him, so long as he reads the position precisely.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 8 6 3
♥ K 10 9 8
♦ J 5
♣ J 4 3

♠ A 5
♥ A J 3 2
♦ Q 9 8 4 3
♣ 7 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K
♥ Q 7 6 5
♦ A 10 7
♣ Q 10 8 6 2

♠ Q 10 9 7 4 2
♥ 4
♦ K 6 2
♣ A K 9

You'd expect the field to be split between those in 4♠ and those in 3♠. Say West leads the ♥10: declarer must delay taking his club ruff. Instead, he ruffs a heart to hand and tries a diamond to the ♦Q and ♦A. He wins the diamond return and only now does he ruff a club, then maneuvers to ruff two more hearts in hand. When South exits in diamonds at trick 11, West must ruff his partner's winner and concede the overtrick on a trump endplay. By contrast, if declarer goes after the club ruff at once, he may well jeopardize his chance of 10 tricks, since West might now arrange to promote his ♠8.

Board 8West Deals
None Vul

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

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

If West passes initially, then North might steal the contract in spades, taking six or seven tricks there. Equally, E/W can compete in diamonds or clubs collect nine or and 10 tricks. But if West opens with a minor suit, East figures to end up in 3NT or doubling a spade bid. Against 3NT on a spade lead to the queen and king, it looks reasonable to try a club to the jack, later attempting to drop the other club honor. When nothing nice happens, East must find the ♦Q to make his game. A smart declarer will cash his top hearts early and work out what to do when North discards.

Board 9North Deals
E-W Vul

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

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

You'd expect N/S to declare 3NT, either on an unopposed sequence after North opens to show a strong balanced hand, or by South after each opponent has bid a major. Regardless of which way up it is played, the defenders do far better to lead their partner's suit, not their own. If North is declarer, he must duck one spade but not two, while if South is declarer, life will be even tougher on a heart lead. South may need to win, duck an early spade, then run the clubs and endplay East in hearts to open up diamonds. Still, not all that many pairs will find the most testing defense today.

Board 10East Deals
Both Vul

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

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

Few Wests will pass over a 1♠ opener to their right. Some desperadoes are going to overcall 1NT, in which case they are likely to declare 3NT on repeated spade leads, and might easily misguess the suit (arguing that if North has the ♠A he cannot also hold the ♥K). Curiously, though, just reaching 3NT and making 630 may not be enough, because 11 tricks in hearts look relatively straightforward for West, while some might take 12 on a spade lead. Will any E/W pair miss game? I suspect a few may, but not many.

Board 11South Deals
None Vul

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

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

N/S have the values to play game and no stopper in diamonds, the suit likely to have been bid by their opponents. So which major-suit game should they select? With two strong seven-card fits, working out which suit to declare is far from simple. With spades 3-3 and the heart finesse losing, 4♠ is relatively painless today. Declarer can safely draw trumps in 4♠, then give up a heart (but must not repeat the heart finesse if the first one wins). In 4♥, after a low diamond lead by West, East's sole defense is to return a low diamond, to allow West to find the club shift.

Board 12West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 7 5 3
♥ 10 6 5 2
♦ Q 8 6 4
♣ 4

♠ J 8 2
♥ Q J 9 4
♦ J 9
♣ A 7 6 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 9 6 4
♥ A 8
♦ A 3 2
♣ 10 9 5 2

♠ K Q
♥ K 7 3
♦ K 10 7 5
♣ K Q J 8

Whether or not East opens 1♣ in third seat, you'd imagine South will introduce notrump and find himself sooner or later in 3NT. Best for the defense is a spade lead, after which declarer must guess a red suit to bring home his contract. It might be harder to reach 3NT if East opens 1♠ in third seat. Now neither North nor South may be willing to bid notrump, especially if West raises spades, as he might well do. Then North might find himself in 4♥, defeated on club ruffs. Spade sacrifices against 3NT would be a good idea. but might not save many matchpoints.

Board 13North Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 7 4
♥ A J 9 2
♦ A 3
♣ A 7 6 5

♠ A 10 9 6 3
♥ 8 3
♦ K Q
♣ Q J 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 8
♥ Q 10 6
♦ J 9 6 5
♣ K 10 9 3

♠ Q 5 2
♥ K 7 5 4
♦ 10 8 7 4 2
♣ 8

Those N/S pairs using the forcing notrump may start with 1♠ from North and 1NT from South. That gives West the problem that he has a decent hand, but no security if he doubles and hears a response in diamonds. Should he pass, then South can rebid 2♠ and West still has no safe way into the auction. Thus on a deal where E/W can compete sensibly in four different strains, and maybe even make game in two of them, they may be frozen out of the bidding entirely. While 2♠ will struggle on a diamond lead and trump shift, +100 would be a poor return for E/W here.

Board 14East Deals
None Vul

♠ K 2
♥ Q
♦ Q 9 7 3 2
♣ K J 5 3 2

♠ A
♥ A J 5 4 3
♦ K J 10 5 4
♣ A 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 6 3
♥ K 10 9 7 6 2
♦ A 6
♣ 9 6

♠ Q J 9 8 7 5 4
♥ 8
♦ 8
♣ Q 10 8 7

East's intermediates should sway him to open 2♥, a call that might conceivably end the auction. After all, why should North think his side can make anything at all, despite his high cards? The danger with North's joining in by doubling or bidding notrump is that South may insist on game in spades — and one could hardly blame him. The cards lie moderately for declarer, but accurate defense ought to see E/W emerge with four tricks against 4♠. Meanwhile, it may prove surprisingly hard to beat 2♥.

Board 15South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 8
♥ K J 10
♦ J 7 5 4 2
♣ K 9 6

♠ Q 9 5 3 2
♥ A 8 6
♦ Q 9
♣ 5 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 7 4
♥ 7
♦ A K 10 3
♣ A J 10 2

♠ K 6
♥ Q 9 5 4 3 2
♦ 8 6
♣ Q 8 7

This time, I would understand and agree with a decision not to preempt; South has the vulnerability against him and terrible spot cards, plus some defense on the side. Whether he passes or not, E/W should find their way to 3NT without any undue alarms and discursions. The cards lie well enough that E/W will take 10 or 11 tricks, depending on how they negotiate the clubs. And yes, 6♦ can be made by a series of good guesses, but in practice few are going to attempt that contract, and fewer still will bring it home.

Board 16West Deals
E-W Vul

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

West's cards might constitute a strong notrump for some under the new ACBL guidelines, but include me out, please. After a 1♦ opener from West, I'd hope very few Norths will judge their hand worth an overcall. Now assuming South is allowed to balance, he can produce a Michaels cuebid, but will N/S then climb to a hopeless 4♠ contract? North may settle for inviting game — but even 3♠ requires careful play in the trump suit to be brought home. Perhaps +140 is par, but I suspect it should score pretty well for N/S.

Board 17North Deals
None Vul

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

When North opens 1♦, one could imagine a frisky East interposing a 1♠ bid. That lets South respond 2♥ or make a negative double, depending on whether he is in an optimistic mode or not. One way or another, N/S really ought to be able to reach 3NT here, but there will no doubt be a few pairs finding a less rewarding spot. In 3NT it looks best to win (for example) a spade lead with the king and take a diamond finesse, after which 10 tricks seem straightforward enough. In reality, +430 rates to be a very solid matchpoint result for N/S.

Board 18East Deals
N-S Vul

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

Technically this deal could get passed out, but if South passes, then West will surely open in third seat — a clear-cut action at this vulnerability. Facing a 1♥ opener, some Easts will trustingly drive to game; few are going to let West out below the three level. With the ♦A offside, eight tricks appear to be the limit in hearts. But as against that, the highly favorable lie of the minor suits allows N/S to come home with at least nine tricks in either minor suit. Still and all, just getting into the auction looks to be rather challenging for them here.

Board 19South Deals
E-W Vul

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

Are those South cards a strong notrump? I'll reveal my age by saying no; sneer if you like. Today letting North declare notrump and protect both minor-suit tenaces would be sensible. This could even be critical, because if East competes in clubs he can take nine tricks. Thus absolute par is for North to bid 4NT over 4♣. In practice, one can envisage a 1♥ opener by South resulting in him declaring 4♥. On perfect defense, South can't even take seven tricks in hearts. Can you see how E/W take seven winners? (Hint: it involves East pitching a spade on a diamond winner.)

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

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

When West opens 1♦, what can East do but respond 1NT? At most sane tables this will end the bidding, since no one now has the shape or values to intervene. (Not that this will stop a few Norths from balancing.) Against 1NT, a low club lead by South gives the defenders a chance to come to seven tricks by setting up the black suits before declarer gets diamonds going. As the record indicates, one side or the other can take seven tricks in their seven-card fits, but nobody can make 1NT. Still, 1NT may be almost the only contract allowed to succeed here.

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

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

Whether or not East comes in with 2♥ over 1♠ (if ever there was a marginal hand for that call, it is this one), nothing should stop N/S from reaching 4♠. E/W have no reason to sacrifice over that, but if they do, it will cost them 800. While all boards offer some challenge in the play and defense, this one comes down to little more than the question of whether East will duck the ♣A at his first turn. If he tries for more than his two tricks by ducking, he is likely to emerge with less, because declarer may then avoid losing either a club or a diamond trick.

Board 22
East Deals
E-W Vul

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

At most tables West will open 1NT or overcall 1NT over a light 1♣ opener from South. Either way East will transfer into hearts and can then either stretch to invite game, or pass to ensure a plus score. Facing the 1NT overcall, which has a slightly higher upper threshold, you can understand East trying for game, and that would turn out to be an excellent decision. On any lead but a trump, West can ruff a spade in hand for his 10th trick. After a trump lead, West can win and duck a diamond, playing either to take the spade ruff or set up the 13th diamond.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

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

With way too much for a 1NT opener, South will start with 1♣ and jump to 2NT over the 1♠ response. North might conceivably raise to 3NT without worrying about a possible eight-card spade fit, in order to make sure his partner is declarer. But if he checks back for the 5-3 spade fit, he will probably opt for the suit game. 3NT rates to take nine tricks easily on a heart lead, and with slightly more difficulty on a minor-suit lead. 4♠ by North on a diamond lead looks extremely likely to go down — though there are double-dummy routes in the trump suit to 10 tricks.

Board 24West Deals
None Vul

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

After North opens 1♣, East has distribution to spare for an unusual 2NT call to show the red suits. That lets South introduce his spades, after which West will bid 5♦, and who knows where the music will stop now? East is unlikely to sell out below 7♦, and he would be right in a sense. If North can arrange to declare 6♠ and find the ♠Q, then to defeat the slam East must underlead in diamonds for the club ruff. That said, 6♣ is no worse than negotiating the spades; but would anyone guess that suit once East shows up with no clubs?

Board 25North Deals
E-W Vul

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

Some might consider East's hand too good to preempt, but in second seat vulnerable he has no more than a maximum (and that is still legal in 35 states, I believe). South can overcall 2NT rather than 3♣, but if doubled for penalty, he must escape to 3♣. Should West now double again — correct if game is not making his way — or bid either 4♠ or 3NT? All three actions make sense, but today the spade game is the big winner. After a top club lead, taking 11 tricks requires declarer to strip out the diamonds, then endplay South in trumps. 3♣ doubled escapes for minus 500.

Board 26East Deals
Both Vul

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

South will bide his time when his opponents have a Drury auction (though he might double 2♣), but he can then balance with 2NT for the minors. His side have just 18 HCP, but a lovely fit and some working distribution. With the ♦Q falling and the club honors favorably located, North can take 10 tricks in diamonds. Meanwhile, only a lead of, or shift to, the ♣10 would let West find a route to eight tricks in spades. Neither East nor West has any obvious reason to bid past the two level, but if East makes a simple spade raise initially, he may be tempted to act again.

Board 27South Deals
None Vul

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

The bidding will escalate fast after West comes in with 1♠ over 1♥. North has barely enough for a splinter raise to 3♠, and East will surely join in with a bid of 4♠ or even an aggressive call of 4♥. Since South is in a forcing auction, he can pass over 4♠ despite his minimum values, since he has no wasted cards in spades. That lets North compete to 5♥, expecting either 4♠ or 5♥ to have decent play. Now might West work out to sacrifice in 5♠, which escapes for minus 300? I can't see why he would do that, but no doubt some will.

Board 28
West Deals
N-S Vul

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

Depending on style, some Easts may produce a weak jump response of 2♠ to West's minor-suit opener. Not for me — the combination of holding an ace and a feeble suit makes that action wholly inappropriate. Regardless, South has to intervene; but at what level? He may be worth no more than a simple overcall, but many are likely to bounce to 4♥ and let West decide whether to save. Should West sacrifice in 4♠, he will turn a small plus score into a small minus, after North happily doubles him and collects at least +100.

Board 29
North Deals
Both Vul

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

The textbooks do not tell you how to handle East's cards. Starting with 1♦ and hoping to judge what to do next looks sensible. Then a jump to 5♦ looks normal enough at the second turn. West may have his values in the wrong places, but his singleton spade and beautiful ♦10 combine to let his partner take 11 tricks in diamonds. This is the contract that will be reached by the plurality of the tables, no matter how many spades South bids at his first turn, and what move West makes at his first turn. Depending upon how many ruffs E/W take, 5♠ may be a cheap save.

Board 30
East Deals
None Vul

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

In third seat most Wests will open 1♠. North has no obvious reason to do anything but take it slow and overcall 2♣, letting East raise to 2♠, after which South can double. This shows the unbid suits, but typically rather more tolerance for clubs than this. However, beggars cannot be choosers. If North tries 3♦, he might buy it there, but rebids of 3♣ or 4♣ certainly appear sensible. Not today, though, because the cards lie beautifully for play in diamonds and terribly for play in clubs. Any making contract here will surely score N/S very nicely.

Board 31
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

You'd expect South to open 1♣, over which some Wests will jump to 2♦, while others may feel their hand is too playable in either major to exclude a contract there and simply bid 1♦. East might introduce his hearts in either scenario, but it is far from clear whether game is going to be reached at all tables, and which game will be chosen. 3NT apparently relies simply on a favorable diamond break (though the play is a little messy on a diamond lead). Meanwhile, 4♥ is even more untidy, though declarer can find a route to 10 tricks against any defense.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 8 7 5		♠ 9 4 3 2									
♥ A 7 4		♥ J 8 6 3									
♦ A K 7 3		♦ 10 2									
♣ A 5		♣ K J 4									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ Q J 10 6											
♥ Q 5 2											
♦ J 9 8 4											
♣ 6 3											
	♠ A										
	♥ K 10 9										
	♦ Q 6 5										
	♣ Q 10 9 8 7 2										

North is well outside the range for opening 1NT here; when he bids 1♦, South does not really have a game force in response. Still, many will try 2♣, just to simplify the auction at the cost of a marginal overbid. That action would see North likely to drive to slam. There is basically nothing to choose between clubs and notrump, except that one outscores the other. Declarer in either contract has no logical reason to do anything but lay down the ♣A and play another club, which produces 12 painless tricks.

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

♠ 8 3		♠ A K 5 4 2									
♥ J		♥ 8 2									
♦ A K 9 3		♦ J 7 6									
♣ K Q J 6 5 2		♣ 10 4 3									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ J 9 6										
	♥ A K Q 9 4 3										
	♦ Q 8 5 4										
	♣ —										
	♠ Q 10 7										
	♥ 10 7 6 5										
	♦ 10 2										
	♣ A 9 8 7										

When North opens 1♥, many Easts will feel obligated to introduce the boss suit and overcall 1♠. Now when South raises to 2♥, West has to bid 3♣, whether or not that call is forcing. If North competes to 3♥, West may have to guess whether to reopen with a double or a call of either 3♠ or 4♣. E/W would have five tricks against 3♥, but they also have a painless route to 10 tricks in 4♣, despite the 4-0 trump break. It will be easy for each side to overreach themselves here and go down, possibly doubled.

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ J 5 4		♠ A K 10 9 8 6 2									
♥ A J 6 5 2		♥ 9 8									
♦ Q 6 3		♦ 7 5 4									
♣ Q 7		♣ 5									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7										
	♥ K Q										
	♦ A K 8										
	♣ A J 9 8 6 3 2										
	♠ Q 3										
	♥ 10 7 4 3										
	♦ J 10 9 2										
	♣ K 10 4										

Those Easts whose preempts at favorable vulnerability in first chair verge on the frivolous may be obligated to open 4♠; the rest of us should prefer to bid 3♠. In the latter case West will raise to 4♠, and in either instance North has a simple call of 5♣ to end the auction. Declarer will want to try to combine his chances in 5♣ (perhaps by cashing the ♥KQ early, before or after drawing trumps, in case the ♥J falls early). At the end of the day, North is going to be reduced to using his last trump entry to dummy to take the diamond finesse, to collect his 600.

Board 35South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ J 5		♠ K 7 3 2									
♥ 6 5 3		♥ K 9 8									
♦ Q 10 7		♦ 8 5 3 2									
♣ 10 9 7 5 2		♣ J 3									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q										
	♥ A Q J 7										
	♦ A 9 6 4										
	♣ K 6 4										
	♠ 10 9 8 6 4										
	♥ 10 4 2										
	♦ K J										
	♣ A Q 8										

When North opens a strong 2NT, South can transfer to spades and then either offer a choice of games with a bid of 3NT, or stretch to invite slam with a quantitative call of 4NT, which North will pass. When East leads a diamond to the jack, queen and ace, declarer has a choice of majors to play on. No line is guaranteed to take 10 tricks, but one could understand playing spades either from hand or dummy, or taking the heart finesse. The fall of the ♠J means North can come to 11 tricks if he guesses the play well. In practice, +430 looks a more normal result.

Board 36West Deals
Both Vul

♠ 5 2		♠ J 10 9 4									
♥ A 10		♥ Q 7 3 2									
♦ K 7 6 2		♦ 9									
♣ A 6 4 3 2		♣ K Q 10 5									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K Q 8 6										
	♥ K J 8 5										
	♦ Q J 10 3										
	♣ 8										
	♠ A 7 3										
	♥ 9 6 4										
	♦ A 8 5 4										
	♣ J 9 7										

West does not really have opening values, but I'm sure quite a few players will act. If West opens 1♦, then E/W rate to come to a stop in 1NT, taking a likely seven tricks on a top diamond lead. By contrast, a 1♣ opener allows North to double, and now one side or the other could settle in 1NT, or each side may compete in their minor-suit fit. Clubs plays beautifully for E/W, even if few can bid that suit naturally these days. If N/S can find their diamond fit and come home with +90, that should constitute an excellent result.