

# ACBL-wide Charity Pairs Game #2

Wednesday Afternoon – April 26, 2023



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 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 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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Some Norths will upgrade to 18-19 by opening 1♣, planning a 2NT rebid. Should he do so, South will respond in a red suit. If South bids 1♥, West will show spades and diamonds; if South shows diamonds, West may overcall 1♠. N/S do best to double for penalties here; but in 3NT on a spade lead, declarer can succeed by winning and crossing to a heart to play a club from the South hand. If North opens 1NT, South's hand seems tailor-made for Crawling Stayman – in theory! In practice, this may be the only way to go minus as N/S, in 2♦ (unless West bids the suit first).

## Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

East will open a strong notrump (yes, it may not be perfect, but it is as close as makes no difference to a balanced 15-17 isn't it?). A transfer sequence will see West invite to 2NT. I suppose East ought to pass now, despite his source of tricks, unless he believes in his own declarer play – or doesn't trust the opponents' defense. It is pairs after all, where plus scores matter. What should South lead? A low heart (in response to a double from North) does not suffice. In fact, though, most other leads will see East struggle mightily, even if he has settled for the partscore.

## Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

When East opens 1♥, I'd hope very few Norths will dredge up an overcall here – yes, I know I'm an optimist about human nature. Assuming North does pass, East will respond 1♠; now West has a vicious problem that can be solved with a jump rebid in hearts, notrump or even spades, not to mention a simple 2♦ call, which would work fine – so long as partner doesn't pass ... Getting to 4♠ may be beyond most pairs, but on a club lead declarer can play a crossruff, and emerge with no fewer than 11 tricks. In practice, anyone who brings home a game should score very well.

**Board 4**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

A strong notrump by East is probably going to open and close the bidding, unless South intervenes to show the minors, when his side can make a club partscore. If South passes and defends 1NT by leading a low diamond, declarer can win and plan to lead hearts (perhaps hoping the ace will be ducked, when he could shift to spades to try for overtricks). Today South takes his ♥A, and can now go after either minor. Seven tricks look to be the limit here in notrump, and also in spades, though I can imagine eight tricks being made in either strain, yielding a great result for declarer.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

The vulnerability may inhibit all but the wildest of Norths from opening. East's strong notrump will see South overcall, to show spades, or spades and a minor, or even clubs and a major. What will happen next? West may want to penalize the black suits, North might run to hearts - the possibilities may not be unlimited, but it is truly hard to predict an outcome. Most Easts declaring 2NT will be allowed to make (South either has to lead the ♥K and shift to the ♠A or a low spade; or he can lead either the ♠A or a low spade on the go). Defeated contracts rate to be the order of the day.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

At favorable vulnerability most Souths will open 1♠, after which only the most wildly optimistic of N/S pairs will reach a slam that appears to need both the heart and diamond finesses (the hearts take care of the potential club loser). Today is a lucky one for N/S, since with all three finesses working, any South who fails to collect 12 tricks will enter the Hall of Shame. In practice, if North uses a Jacoby forcing raise and finds their partner with a minimum and no shortage, they should be able to stay safely low.

**Board 7**South Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Some Souths may pass, or preempt to just 2♥, rather than risk going too high with a vulnerable 3♥ call. (Those are the same Souths who don't walk on cracks in the sidewalk.) A 3♥ call will get North to bid 6♥ - the hand is simply too tough to explore intelligently. This slam is a claim at trick one ... but will any E/W pairs find the 1100 save? They might if the auction goes slower, I suppose. There again, how are the defenders supposed to work out that the layout of the opponents' diamonds provides the two crucial discards South needs?

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul

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

A few daredevil Easts will act in third chair; but most Souths will get a free rein to open 1NT. That rates to become the final contract, on the lead of a diamond intermediate from West. (Yes, an inspired low spade would work better.) Declarer wins cheaply, then has to plan how to develop the clubs. Worst is to bash out ace and another; but one might play a low club from hand, or cross to the ♥K to lead a club towards the tenace. Cashing two hearts from hand first might give you a clue about the club length, I suppose. +120 seems a normal - good - result for N/S here.

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

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

Most Easts will introduce their spades over North's 1♦ opener. West can make a mixed raise to 3♦ - a four-card raise with 6-9 HCP. Now optimistic Easts will bid game, pessimists will try with 3♥, and accept West's signoff. 4♠ looks hopeless, but South's diamond lead could turn out to be fatal. An on-song declarer might duck a club, cash the ♦K, and overtake his second top heart to ruff a heart. Then he can play ♠A and a spade. Bingo! North is endplayed - thanks, Deep Finesse. (Oddly, if the ♥Q was a small card, the winning line would be easier to find).

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

South will double East's 1♦ opener, in response to which North's jump to 2♥ may well end the bidding. Yes, East might risk a call of 2♠ - that might see him declare 3♦, possibly doubled if N/S feel they need to protect their +110 from their own partscore. That is good pairs strategy, but if East declares 3♦ on the normal lead of ♥J, the contract can no longer be defeated! North does best to duck; but at double-dummy East is able to riposte by winning, and playing a diamond to the king. Then comes a second heart, and the slow spade loser eventually goes away.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul

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

When West opens 1♦, you'd imagine that few Norths will be able to resist doubling here - with the hand making up in shape what it lacks in high cards. After East responds 1♠, South might innocently try 1NT, and get his side in deep doo-doo. West may not be able to double for penalty if playing support doubles. That would be a shame from his perspective, because his side can make 3NT on offense, and could do even better on defense. I'd guess few E/W pairs will find their way to game, but you never know. Remarkably, 5♦ is also cold.

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

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

Optimistic (read: wild) Wests will open 1♠, and declare 4♠ - a spot that needs to avoid losing three clubs on the go. Today is their day. Of course if East acts in third seat, West might drive him to 4♠ anyway. Some pairs may even be doubled there; and one could hardly blame N/S, since it is only the singleton heart in West that allows the game to come home. I'd speculate that there are going to be quite a few instances of +420 and +590 on the E/W side of the scorecard. Accordingly, any N/S who buy the contract undoubled may be surprised how good their score is.

**Board 13**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

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

A noncompetitive auction will see South end up in 2♠. You'd expect them to take the lead of the ♥Q with the ace and duck a diamond, to set up a crossruff. West does best to win and shift to a trump (not impossible, but hard to find?). Declarer ripostes by ruffing two diamonds in hand and a club in dummy, while taking the heart winner. In the four-card ending he can advance a fourth diamond from dummy; now whether East ruffs high or low, or discards, South can maneuver two more tricks. Only an initial trump lead by West holds declarer to nine tricks.

**Board 14**  
East Deals  
None Vul

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

A simple sequence to 4♠ is likely here. West is going to open 1♦, then raise a 1♠ response to game. That will surely see South lead a top club, covered all round. Now declarer will take a diamond finesse. If the defenders cash their club and exit in hearts, a very reasonable line is for East to play the ♦A and ruff a diamond with the ♠7. South can overruff, but declarer should be able to negotiate the rest. Since there are many reasonable ways East could fall by the wayside, +620 ought to represent a fine score for them.

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

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

After N/S start out: 1♥-1NT; 3♣-3♦, South has a fascinating problem. Obviously notrump is out, and one can hardly rebid hearts, but do you have good enough support to raise diamonds, even perhaps by a splinter? I wish I could say I knew! If South repeats his clubs and North repeats his diamonds, then perhaps South should jump to 6♦. I freely admit that knowing the hand may bias my opinion. 6♥ is excellent, and only goes down on repeated spade leads, when hearts break 5-2. But at pairs the difficulty of reaching slam possibly argues for getting to the safer slam?

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

♠ K Q J 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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 6
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 10 8 7 5 2	♥ J 9 6 4					
♦ 9	♦ 4 3 2					
♣ 8 5 2	♣ K 9 6 4					
		♠ A 7 5 4 2				
		♥ A Q 3				
		♦ K J 8				
		♣ A 10				

After North hears South respond 1♠ to his 1♦ opener, he can either repeat his long suit or introduce his clubs. I prefer the latter - but I may be in the minority. After South uses fourth suit, he will set diamonds as trump, and hope to use keycard then explore for seven. Today 6♦ is cold, while 7♦ (and 6NT on a spade lead) both need the club finesse. So the board would be a lucky one for any N/S pair who overbid or mishandle their cards. You might argue the field will be in slam, so reaching the grand slam is not so terrible. Of course a little bit of luck doesn't hurt.

**Board 17**  
North Deals  
None Vul

♠ A 5 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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 9 6 2
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ A K 9 4 2	♥ J 7 6					
♦ 6	♦ K 8 4					
♣ 10 9 6 2	♣ 8 5					
		♠ J 7				
		♥ 10 8 5				
		♦ Q J 10 5 2				
		♣ K 7 3				

One expert will tell you to open the North hand 1♣, another 1♦. Each call may or may not work in a competitive auction; but if your partner ends up on lead to trick one, you'd be happy to have bid the better suit. As the cards lie, South has a natural lead of the ♦Q against spades - but that will let 10 tricks through! Declarer can ruff a diamond in dummy and eventually drop the ♥Q. However, after repeated club leads there is no sensible play for 4♠. 4♥ is no better a contract (three rounds of clubs after cashing the ♦A defeats 4♥, but for a different reason.)

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

♠ Q 10 8 4	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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	♠ 5
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 6 5	♥ Q J 9					
♦ 6 5	♦ K Q 10 9 8 4					
♣ J 10 9 8 7	♣ Q 3 2					
♠ K J 7		♠ A 9 6 3 2				
♥ A K 10 4 3 2		♥ 8 7				
♦ 7 2		♦ A J 3				
♣ 6 4		♣ A K 5				

Even at favorable vulnerability I can see the logic of opening the East hand 2♦ rather than 1♦, because East has zero (count 'em) sure winners against the opponents' contract. Of course if your view of a favorable preempt is a lucky rabbit's foot and 13 cards, you may feel differently. Here N/S have nine tricks in spades, so long as they don't totally misguess the trump suit, while E/W are favorites to take nine tricks in hearts. So a 4♥ sacrifice is best for E/W, and I'd assume that anyone bringing home a contract will have a splendid result.

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

♠ Q 5 4 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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 8 2
N						
W						
E						
S						
♥ 10 4 2	♥ J 9 8 5 3					
♦ Q 6 3	♦ 9 8 7 5					
♣ 7 6 5	♣ 4					
♠ K 10 7 6		♠ A 9				
♥ A Q 6		♥ K 7				
♦ 4 2		♦ A K J 10				
♣ K 10 9 2		♣ A Q J 8 3				

Switch North and West to see the best reason for South's opening 1♣, planning a reverse to 2♦; 7♣ would be hard to reach after starting with 2NT. Today, if you open 2NT, you may well play there. On the lead of the ♣10, South can set up clubs for +120; (if the defenders try for more, they may get less). A 1♣ opener is also likely to end the bidding. After a diamond lead South can play on spades for +110. If North uses Stayman over a 2NT opener, South will declare 3NT. Only a low club lead would be fatal. Bringing home nine tricks would scoop all the matchpoints for N/S.

**Board 20**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

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

Is the West hand a 1♦ or 2♦ opener? Or should one pass and back in? I vote for the latter. If South gets to open 1♣, West can now overcall or preempt, and the auction may become quite complex. You can see N/S ending up in either clubs or notrump, the latter being far more successful on this layout. After a top spade lead declarer can set up a diamond for his eighth trick. Meanwhile, clubs will be no fun at all. If E/W buy the contract in diamonds, they can make nine tricks on some good guesswork. And I doubt if anyone will find spades from East – the par spot in theory.

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

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

When South opens 1♠, the Wests may be split between doubling or overcalling 2♦. Either way, North does not have enough to act facing a third-seat opener. If West overcalls, East will raise, South will double and North might judge to cuebid, to reach the optimal game of 4♥. If West doubles 1♠ (my choice), and East responds 2♦, South can double a level lower. Now N/S figure to stop in partscore. In hearts, on a diamond lead, declarer may well misguess trumps, after which even 10 tricks are in jeopardy. Anyone bringing home 4♥ will score splendidly.

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

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

Facing a 1♠ opener, North has to choose between a limit raise via a forcing notrump, or a constructive simple raise. The fact that the more aggressive route could bring hearts into the equation might tempt some, but I'd go the other way. After the simple raise by North, West is liable to balance with a double, letting North redouble. East can run to 2NT, suggesting two places to play, and West can "escape" to 3♥, which North will double with glee. Accurate defense will garner a penalty of at least 500. While 3NT may be on for N/S, very few will manage that feat.

**Board 23**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

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

North will open 1♦ in third seat, letting East double. Should South introduce his hearts now? It may work out well to do that, but it is by no means clear to make that call. When West bids spades, a competitive auction rates to ensue. If South plays in hearts on a spade lead, he can scramble quite a few tricks via a crossruff. Even so, he may need to negotiate diamonds to bring home a 10th winner. If West declares spades, the threat of the club ruff appears to make eight tricks improbable (though after a club lead, South might win and shift to hearts).



**Board 24**  
West Deals  
None Vul

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

If West doesn't act in first chair (some will) North can open 1♥, East will bid 2♦ and South will preempt to 3♥. North has enough to push on to game, and 4♥ looks easy doesn't it with the sight of all four hands. You really need hearts 2-2 with the king onside. But in the more mundane 3♥, mightn't declarer win the diamond, take the ♣A and ruff a club? Then you can imagine him leading a heart to the ♥A and trying to ruff a club, before playing a second trump. As North, I'd hate to have to try to justify how I went down in 3♥, while everyone else made 10 tricks.

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

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

After East opens 1♦ and West responds 1NT, few N/S pairs will come in. North rates to lead a small spade against 1NT, and West will win and return a spade to set up that suit. Assuming South does not encourage a heart play by his discard on the third spade, North might accurately shift to a low club to South's queen and West's king. Even so, with the ♦J onside, West should come to at least seven tricks. The difference between +90 and +120 becomes more significant when you consider that a few aggressive N/S pairs will come into the bidding, and perhaps concede 100.

**Board 26**  
East Deals  
Both Vul

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

Some Wests will open 1♦, others 1♣ (possibly planning to invent a rebid of 1♠ or 1NT over the likely 1♥ response). Assuming West chooses 1♣ and North doubles, South will respond 1♥ and West can double for takeout, giving East the choice of inventing a spade suit or raising clubs - neither of which is exactly appetizing! Not to worry: the cards lie very nicely for West in clubs, while N/S cannot make anything beyond the one-level. With deals of this sort, any plus score should matchpoint just fine.

**Board 27**  
South Deals  
None Vul

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

When the auction starts: 1♦-1♠-Dbl-2♠, a few Souths will sell out. Against 2♠, on repeated diamond leads, North will get to discard a discouraging club, and the defenders will in due course hold West to eight tricks. However, over 2♠ South may want to introduce his hearts without showing extras (using a good/bad 2NT - which allows direct calls to invite game, while going via 2NT is purely competitive). If South does bid 3♥, his opponents have to work out both to double and how to cash out for two down. A lot of matchpoints ride on that decision!

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

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

When West opens 1♦, East has too much to jump to 3NT. He ought to bid 2♣ and hear his partner raise to 3♣, over which maybe he should temporize with 3♦. West can bid 3NT now; but does East have enough to raise to 4NT? That would get E/W to the par game contract, taking 11 tricks on a spade lead. By contrast, if N/S attack hearts, declarer will need to guess trick one to bring home +460. 6♣ by East isn't the worse spot you've ever been in, but it is Dead On Arrival after the lead of the ♠J. The miracle in trumps does not materialize today.

**Board 29**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

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

In third chair, every South using a strong notrump will open (and surely close) the bidding with that call. The vulnerability is going to persuade East not to contemplate reopening - won't it? A small heart lead to the king will see South play a club to dummy, which East figures to duck as smoothly as he can. Now declarer will probably try a diamond to the king - and West must also be ready to duck. If he does, then when South plays a second club up, East can win and clear hearts. That leaves the defenders ready to take seven tricks.

**Board 30**  
East Deals  
None Vul

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

After two passes West will have to decide between a 1♦ opener or the Bull-in-a-China-Shop bounce to 5♦ for maximum pressure. If West could see East's hand, he would doubtless go extremely low. But unless gifted with second sight, he is going to end up in at least 3♦. Best for North is to lead a low spade to the king and exit in hearts. Now very careful defense (N/S take their diamonds when declarer leads the suit, then exit in spades) leaves West with just eight tricks. Many declarers may be allowed to score a ninth winner, but have climbed too high already.

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

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

I believe South should plan to open 1♣ and jump in spades, then repeat the second suit rather than preempt himself with a 2♣ call. After the 1♣ bid, many Wests will jump to hearts, and East must up the ante. South can leap to 4♠, where he rates to take 12 tricks by guessing diamonds eventually. 6♣ is a safer slam than 6♠, because you cannot get forced there, but few will climb that high, I suspect. And yes, at this vulnerability there is a paying sacrifice against that slam - but finding it will not save E/W many matchpoints, if they go for more than 800.



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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Many Norths will open at favorable vulnerability, even in second seat. When you have a good suit with an easy rebid, try to make the opponents' life as hard as you can. East will overcall in spades, and when South doubles, West can raise to 2♠. Now what? North might like to compete in clubs, but that would certainly be going to the well once too often. However, if he passes, South should double again, and eventually N/S figure to end in 3♦. With a bunch of finesses to take, you'd happily settle for +110 – but with the sight of all 52 cards you could actually take 11 tricks.

**Board 33**  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

When East opens 1♥, a few Souths will overcall 2♣ (please, not an unusual 2NT bid, which promises 5-5) others will pass and plan to back in later if appropriate. West will raise hearts – some to 2♥, some via Bergen to at least the three level. On this challenging deal N/S have the obvious four top losers in the majors, while E/W rate to lose either four or five tricks in the minors via the diamond ruffs. Clearly, though, N/S have such a great fit that they will want to compete to 4♣ over 3♥ – until they see the full deal. Anyone bringing home a contract will do very well here.

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

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

♠ K J 8 5 3  
♥ A 9  
♦ J  
♣ 8 5 3 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

East seems to have either a 1♥ or 2♥ opener (passing is for losers to my mind, but Your Opinions May Vary). I'm a 2♥ bidder, even at this vulnerability, where preempts tend to be rather aggressive. This is another example of a deal that should feature a battle of the majors. You can imagine that if East preempts to 2♥ and West raises, then North can either pass and be shut out, or bid spades, when he figures to go down in 4♠. A 1♥ opener might see West drive to game, on a hand where 3♥ may be too high, and 3NT worse than hopeless on a spade lead.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

After West opens 1♦, East's thoughts will lightly turn to visions of slam. But after his partner rebids at diamonds, he may simply settle for a jump to 4♥, if for no other reason than that the hand looks so hard to describe in any other way. As it happens, 6♥ is no worse than the spade finesse; but the limit on the deal today is 11 tricks. You'd assume that a few pairs will mess up and bid to slam, or to the wrong game, so +650 ought to be rather above average for E/W. Still, I'd expect the plurality of pairs to duplicate this result.

**Board 36**  
West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

When West opens 1♠, and East raises constructively to 2♠, you'd envisage almost every South will overcall in diamonds – and 3♦ looks to be enough to start with, doesn't it? When West rebids 3♠, North should unquestionably compete to 4♦. This turns out to be the par contract, since 5♦ looks to have no play unless the defense forget to lead hearts early enough. Meanwhile E/W have excellent play for 4♠, but with neither black suit behaving, nine tricks is the limit here. Maybe E/W can count themselves just a tad unlucky if they reach 4♠ and go down.