

Yorkshire Contract Bridge Association

Yorkshire Improvers Pairs 2020 Commentary

The dlm, dup or pbn file relating to this commentary can be obtained by e mail to:

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Prizes kindly provided by
No Fear Bridge

1.

♠ A J 4
♥ A 2
♦ A K Q 4
♣ A Q 6 5

 Dealer: N
Vuln: None

♠ Q 8 7 6	N	♠ K
♥ 7 5	W	♥ K Q 10 9 6 3
♦ 7 6 3 2	E	♦ J 10 5
♣ J 9 8	S	♣ K 4 2
♠ 10 9 5 3 2		
♥ J 8 4		24
♦ 9 8		3 12
♣ 10 7 3		1

W	N	E	S
	2♣	2♥	pass
pass	dbl	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	end	

Bidding:

North opens 2♣ (23+ or any game force).
 East makes life difficult by overcalling 2♥.
 Don't be afraid of overcalling a 2♣ opener where you have a good long suit.
 South shows a poor hand by passing.
 North doubles for takeout.
 South shows her spades (this might only be 4)
 Over 2♠ by south north's 3♥ is a general force.
 This often implies only 3 spades (she could just raise spades with 4).
 South shows the 5th spade by a bid of 3♠.
 North raises to game.

Play:

West leads the ♥7 - partner's suit and top of a doubleton.
 The main difficulty for declarer is the lack of entries to hand to take finesses and draw trumps. She wins the heart lead with dummy's ♥A and leads the ♥2.
 She is hoping to ruff a (losing) heart before drawing trumps.
 East wins and switches to the ♠K (not without risk!).
 Declarer wins in dummy and cashes 3 rounds of diamonds (discarding a losing club from hand) and ruffs a diamond in hand.
 Declarer's 3rd heart is ruffed in dummy. The ♠J is led from dummy.
 West makes life difficult by ducking this. Declarer plays the ♣A and another club. However east wins and plays another heart. Now west gains a trump promotion and the contract is defeated.
 It could have been made double dummy, so well done if you managed to defeat it.

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	1	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	2	1	-	-
♦	2	2	-	-
♣	3	3	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♠; 420				

2. Dealer: E
Vuln: N/S

♠ A 10 8 7 4			
♥ 9 6 5			
♦ J			
♣ 9 8 7 3			
♠ K J 6 5 2	N		♠ Q 9 3
♥ J			♥ A 4 2
♦ A K 10	W	E	♦ Q 9 8 7 3
♣ A 10 5 4			♣ K 6
♠ -			
♥ K Q 10 8 7 3			5
♦ 6 5 4 2			16 11
♣ Q J 2			8

W	N	E	S
		pass	2♥
dbl	pass	3NT	end

Bidding:

South doesn't have perfect shape for a weak 2♥ opening.

The void may make the hand better suited to defence.

But the suit is good and 2♥ it is.

West has a difficult choice.

Some will overcall 2♠ others will decide that suit quality does not meet SQOT for a 2-level overcall and will make a takeout double.

The latter action is probably best.

North might consider a pre-emptive raise but should ask themselves how many tricks they might make – on a good day - and what it might cost at this vulnerability.

Imagine partner has AKxxx hearts.

There are probably 5 heart tricks, 1 spade and a diamond ruff, which is only 7.

If we were doubled that would be -500, so we should avoid raising.

Non-vulnerable we would raise.

With a maximum pass and a heart stop, east jumps to 3NT.

Play:

South leads the ♥K.

East ducks twice.

On the 3rd round south clears the hearts by playing the ♥3 to suggest to partner an entry in a low-ranking suit (clubs).

Declarer has hopefully 5 diamonds, 2 clubs and 1 heart off the top, so will need a spade trick to make the contract.

A spade to the ♠J (perhaps South will duck when they shouldn't).

North wins but can't get partner in.

The benefit of declarer's ducking play.

When the ♦J comes down declarer has 10 tricks.

Note:

NS have done well to avoid 3♥X.

This would be at least 2 off for a poor score! -500 rather than -430.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	4	4
♠	-	-	4	4
♥	1	1	-	-
♦	-	-	6	5
♣	-	-	3	3
Optimum: E 6♦; -920				

3.

♠ 7 5	Dealer: S
♥ 10 6	Vuln: E/W
♦ A K J 9 7 6 5	
4	
♣ 6	

♠ J 9 6 2	N W E S	♠ 10 8 3
♥ A 9 2		♥ 7 5
♦ 8		♦ Q 3
♣ K Q 10 7 2		♣ J 9 8 5 4 3
♠ A K Q 4		8
♥ K Q J 8 4 3		10 3
♦ 10 2		19
♣ A		

W	N	E	S
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♣	pass	6♥

Bidding:

South's bid of 2♠ is a reverse.
 After a 2-level response it is game-forcing.
 North simply repeats her suit.
 South shows a 6th heart.
 North agrees hearts.
 South uses RKCB (1430 version)
 North shows 1 or 4 of the 5 key cards and south knows it is one.
 South realises they're missing one key card and settles for the small slam.

Play:

Holding the ♥A west hopefully leads the ♣K but is disappointed when dummy comes down.
 Declarer wins.
 Providing diamonds behave there are 12 tricks.
 A 2-1 break is 78%.
 The other option is to ruff a spade.
 It looks reasonable to play for the diamonds but cater for 3 with west by playing the diamonds before the spades so the spades provide a route back to hand for a diamond finesse.
 At T2 declarer will play a small heart towards dummy's ♥10.
 With diamonds 2-1 all is well.

	N	S	E	W
NT	6	6	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	6	6	-	-
♦	6	6	-	-
♣	-	-	1	1
Optimum: NS 6NT; 990				

4.

	♠ -	Dealer: W
	♥ K 7 2	Vuln: All
	♦ Q 10 7 6 3 2	
	♣ A K J 8	
♠ A 10 8 7 6 5	N	♠ K 4 3 2
♥ Q 9 6 3	W	♥ 5 4
♦ K J	E	♦ A 5
♣ 5	S	♣ Q 10 9 6 2
	♠ Q J 9	
	♥ A J 10 8	13
	♦ 9 8 4	10 9
	♣ 7 4 3	8

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♦	3♠	end

Bidding:

West opens on the rule of 20
 Not pristine with ♦ K J doubleton but 6-4 shape, holding the spades and an easy rebid.
 North's diamond suit is not great but, with a spade void, he needs to do something.
 Some easts may take a conservative view and raise to 3♠.
 Others, with a 7-loser hand will raise to 4♠ and their partner will be disappointed when the 3-0 trump break comes top light.
 South has sterile 4333 distribution and has too few trumps to support partner at the 4 level if east's bid is 3♠.

Play:

North leads the ♠A.
 When leading against a suit contract the ace from a side suit headed by A K (if you have it) is the top of the tree lead.
 Seeing the ♣Q in dummy north must switch to avoid setting it up if he continues with the ♠K.
 Suppose a diamond switch.
 Declarer wins in hand and plans to draw two rounds of trumps expecting to be able to claim.
 A small spade is led to the ♠K and the bad split comes to light.
 Now trumps can't be drawn or there won't be enough in dummy to ruff losing hearts.
 A heart is led from dummy.
 South should put up the ♥10 which is covered by the ♥Q and ♥K.
 North plays another diamond, won in dummy.
 Another heart, and south plays the ♥J to lead the ♠Q.
 Declarer wins in hand, leads a heart and ruffs in dummy.
 A club ruff back to hand and another heart ruff in dummy.
 Declarer just has to give up a trick to the master spade for 9 tricks.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	1	1
♠	-	-	3	3
♥	2	2	-	-
♦	4	4	-	-
♣	1	1	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♦; 130				

5.

♠ K 10 6	Dealer: N
♥ Q J 8 7 3	Vuln: N/S
♦ J 5	
♣ K 5 3	

♠ 9 8 5	N W E S	♠ Q J 2
♥ 5 2		♥ A K 10 6
♦ A Q 8		♦ 9 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 7 2		♣ J 6 4
♠ A 7 4 3		10
♥ 9 4		6 11
♦ K 10 7 6 4		13
♣ A Q		

W	N	E	S
	pass	pass	1♦
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	end	

Bidding:

South opens her longest suit.
 North shows hearts and south bids out her shape.
 The spade bid could be up to a poor 18 points.
 A jump to 2♠ would be game forcing.
 North feels they may have a misfit so exercises caution and takes a gentle approach.
 1NT would normally be 6-9 points and, with 10-12, the bid would be 2NT.
 But north has a poor 10 points.
 ♣ K x x is not a great stop but will do.
 South is minimum and gets the message.
 If south were stronger she might make another push.

Play:

A club lead is suggested by the auction.
 Declarer has 5 top tricks – 3 clubs and 2 spades.
 There is potential for more in all 3 suits, so which is best?
 Diamonds is the best suit, but, having been obliged to win T1 in dummy, declarer is in the wrong hand to take the finesse by leading up to the ♦K.
 However, declarer can afford 2 diamonds losers and there's no guarantee he'd make an extra trick by taking the finesse.
 e.g. Lead the ♦J - it gets covered and now we lose a trick to the ♦9.
 So, a diamond to the ♦J.
 If this wins, we continue diamonds with West winning the Queen.
 Club continuation which declarer wins to play another diamond.
 On the 3-3 diamond break declarer has:
 3 diamond tricks, 2 spades and 3 clubs to make +1.

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	1	-	-
♠	1	1	-	-
♥	1	1	-	-
♦	2	2	-	-
♣	-	-	1	1
Optimum: N 2NT; 120				

6.

	♠ A 10 8 5 2	Dealer: E
	♥ A 4	Vuln: E/W
	♦ J 9 5	
	♣ A 9 5	
♠ Q 6 4	N	♠ K 7 3
♥ J 9	W	♥ 10 6 5 2
♦ Q 7 6 4 3 2	E	♦ A
♣ 8 3	S	♣ K Q 10 4 2
	♠ J 9	
	♥ K Q 8 7 3	13
	♦ K 10 8	5 12
	♣ J 7 6	10

W	N	E	S
		1♣	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♥
end			

Bidding:

North's new suit over his partner's overcall shows either a very good overcalling hand or heart tolerance.

With a minimum hand lacking spade support south simply repeats her suit.

Play:

West leads top of the doubleton in partner's club suit.

Declarer plays low from dummy and east wins the ♣Q.

East cannot now safely continue clubs.

She plays the ♦A and switches to a trump.

This is simply because she doesn't really want to play anything else.

Declarer draws 3 rounds of trumps playing ♥3 to the ♥A and then ♥4 to the ♥Q and then ♥K.

This follows the principle - high cards short hand first.

Declarer leads the ♠J.

Note: she can afford to do this because, between her hand and dummy she has a 4-card sequence.

West covers and declarer wins dummy's ♠A and plays the ♠2 to force out the ♠K.

East still can't safely attack clubs.

Declarer will be able to use spades to discard the minor suit losers to make plus one.

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	-	-
♠	2	2	-	-
♥	3	3	-	-
♦	1	1	-	-
♣	2	2	-	-
Optimum: NS 1♥; 140				

7.

♠ K 9 4	Dealer: S
♥ 10 3	Vuln: All
♦ J 10 8	
♣ A Q J 6 2	

♠ A J 10 7 2	N	♠ Q 8 6
♥ K 9 7 5	W	♥ Q 2
♦ 9 4	E	♦ Q 6 5 2
♣ 8 3	S	♣ 9 7 5 4
♠ 5 3		
♥ A J 8 6 4		11
♦ A K 7 3		8 6
♣ K 10		15

W	N	E	S
			1♥
1♠	2♣	2♠	dbl
pass	3NT	end	

Bidding:

EW must make life as difficult as possible for NS hence east's pre-emptive raise to the level of the fit (2♠).

If South had tried 3♦ over 2♠ this would suggest a more distributional hand whereas the double promises a hand of about 15+ points or more and is take out in principle.

It is also a much more flexible bid as it keeps clubs in the equation.

Play:

On a small spade lead, declarer has 9 tricks.

Taking the heart finesse will lead to failure.

After running the clubs declarer could take the diamond finesse and this would garner 11 tricks.

Declarer should watch the defenders' discards as the clubs are run.

This may point the way to success.

	N	S	E	W
NT	5	5	-	-
♠	1	1	-	-
♥	3	3	-	-
♦	5	5	-	-
♣	5	5	-	-
Optimum: NS 3NT; 660				

8.

♠ K J 7
♥ A Q 10 9 8 7
♦ A 9
♣ 5 4

Dealer: W

Vuln: None

♠ 10 9 6	N	♠ 8 5 3
♥ K 5	W	♥ J 3 2
♦ 7 5 2	E	♦ J 3
♣ 10 8 7 6 3	S	♣ A K Q 9 2
♠ A Q 4 2		
♥ 6 4		14
♦ K Q 10 8 6 4		3 11
♣ J		12

W	N	E	S
pass	1♥	2♣	2♦
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
end			

Bidding:

West passes and north opens 1♥.

Opposite a passed partner and NV, 2♣ by east is fine.

Close to opening values and with a good suit that east would want to be led if they end up defending.

South, with 10+ points, is able to show the diamonds.

A negative double is an option to show 4 spades but showing the 6-card diamond suit is preferable.

West might consider a pre-emptive raise of clubs to disrupt the opposition bidding.

However; the bid would not be very disruptive and it might also suggest more shape and prompt partner to sacrifice in 5♣.

There is no need for south to bid 3♠ over 3♥ as north will not have spades (did not bid them and no double) and as north has shown 6 hearts the raise is easy.

If south does bid 3♠ over 3♥, then north has a problem. 4♦ is preference but a raise to 4♠ would not be out of the question at pairs.

Play:

In 4♥ there is no problem in the play just losing 1 heart and 1 club.

As it happens 6♦/6♠ are cold with the spades 3-3, the heart finesse working and diamonds 3-2!

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	-	-
♠	6	6	-	-
♥	5	5	-	-
♦	6	6	-	-
♣	1	1	-	-
Optimum: NS 6♠; 980				

9.

♠ 9 5 2	Dealer: N
♥ A J 4 2	Vuln: E/W
♦ A K 5	
♣ J 10 5	

♠ Q 6 3	N	♠ A J 10 8 7 4
♥ Q 9 7 5		♥ K 6
♦ Q J 7 4	W E	♦ 9 8 2
♣ Q 2	S	♣ 8 3
♠ K		
♥ 10 8 3		13
♦ 10 6 3		9 8
♣ A K 9 7 6 4		10

W	N	E	S
	1NT	2♠	2NT
pass	3♣	end	

Bidding:

North opens 1NT.
 East is just about worth a vulnerable 2♠ bid.
 Now south has a problem unless playing the Lebensohl convention.
 If not playing Lebensohl, if south bids 3♣, is this forcing or to play?
 If forcing what can north bid in response?
 However, Lebensohl resolves the problem.
 It allows south to get to the 3-level non-forcing.
 South bids 2NT (alertable) which simply asks partner to bid 3♣.
 South will pass (as here) or convert to their long suit.
 There is lots more to Lebensohl but that is not for here.

Play:

3♣ will make in comfort, possibly 10 tricks.
 Draw trumps, eliminate spades and then play the ♦A and another diamond to end play west.
 Look up elimination and end play.
 Of course if NS end in 3NT and east leads the ♠J!!
 Note also that if east plays in 2♠ and drops the ♠K then, with diamonds 3-3, 2♠ will make.

	N	S	E	W
NT	1	1	-	-
♠	-	-	2	2
♥	2	2	-	-
♦	-	-	-	-
♣	4	4	-	-
Optimum: NS 3♣; 130				

10.

♠ Q 7 6 4	Dealer: E
♥ 9 8	Vuln: All
♦ 7 2	
♣ A K J 4 2	

♠ 10 5	N	♠ J 8 2
♥ Q J 7 6 5	W	♥ K 4
♦ K 10 9 5 3	E	♦ A 8 6 4
♣ 8	S	♣ Q 10 6 3
♠ A K 9 3		10
♥ A 10 3 2		6 10
♦ Q J		14
♣ 9 7 5		

W	N	E	S
end		pass	1NT

Bidding:

East passes and south opens 1NT.
 Playing pairs it is best for north to pass.
 If they do decide to try Stayman, then 4♠ will be reached, without much success (2 off) via :
 1NT : 2♣
 2♥ : 2NT
 4♠

Play:

West could lead either red suit but, if Stayman has not been used, might favour a lead of the major.

On either red suit lead, south has:

♠ 4 : ♥ 1 : ♦ 0 : ♣ 2

If a heart is led and the club finesse is taken, that will be one down.

If a diamond is led and then a heart switch, declarer can try the ♣A then cash spades ending in hand and when a second club is led just cash out for 7 tricks.

This will not beat the 110 available in 2♠ but at least will be positive!

	N	S	E	W
NT	1	1	-	-
♠	2	2	-	-
♥	-	-	1	1
♦	-	-	3	3
♣	2	2	-	-
Optimum: EW 3♦; -110				

11.

♠ 9 8	Dealer: S
♥ J 10 9 5 2	Vuln: None
♦ 7	
♣ A K 7 5 4	

♠ A 7 4 3	N W E S	♠ 10 5
♥ 8 3		♥ A 7
♦ 10 5 3 2		♦ K Q J 9 8 4
♣ Q 9 6		♣ 8 3 2
♠ K Q J 6 2		8
♥ K Q 6 4		6 10
♦ A 6		16
♣ J 10		

W	N	E	S
pass	1NT	2♦	1♠
3♦	4♥	end	2♥

Bidding:

With 5-4 shape south opens her longer suit. North does not have quite enough points to bid 2♥ so replies 1NT. East's 2♦ bid shows a suit that he would be happy for partner to lead if they end up defending. South bids out her shape. The hand is not strong enough for anything other than 2♥. West tries to muddy the waters. Despite the interference from EW 4♥ should be reached by NS.

Play:

West leads the ♦2. With clubs 3-3 (and queen onside if you prefer) and hearts 2-2, there should only be 2 losers.... The major suit aces. If EW get over ambitious a double of 5♦ will lead to a juicy penalty of 800. (even 500 is a disaster at Love All)

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	5	5	-	-
♦	-	-	1	1
♣	5	5	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♥; 450				

12.

♠ K 8	Dealer: W	
♥ 9 3 2	Vuln: N/S	
♦ K 9 5 2		
♣ Q J 8 6		
	N	
	W	E
	S	
♠ 6 5		9
♥ 8 6		3
♦ A Q J 6		14
♣ A K 10 5 4		14

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

W	N	E	S
pass	pass	1NT	pass
2♣	pass	2♠	end

Bidding:

An interesting hand in several respects.

Should east open 1NT or 1♠.

My preference is to open 1NT on all balanced hands of 12-14 HCP regardless of whether or not they contain a 5-card major.

South is not quite strong enough to double and the shape is not quite right to show the minors (although some might).

West has one of the weak hand types suitable for Stayman after partner opens 1NT.

Even though she has only 3 points, with 5-4 in the majors west can cope with any response to 2♣ that partner might make.

A response in a major is the jackpot (as here !).

Over 2♦ west would bid the 5-card major and partner would get the message.

The alternative auction is:

P - P - 1♠ - 2♣

2♠ - 3♣ - P - P

3♠ - end

Play:

Spades 2-2 with the finesse working means that 3♠ will just lose the obvious 4 tricks in the minors. If EW compete to 4♣ this just loses the obvious 4 tricks in the majors.

This is then a good score: 1 off (probably) doubled is -100 against -140 for 3♠ making.

If west passes partner's opening 1♠ because "I only have 3 points", then you will be defending a lot of the time in your bridge career.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	-	-
♠	-	-	3	3
♥	-	-	3	3
♦	3	3	-	-
♣	3	3	-	-
Optimum: EW 3♠, EW 3♥; -				
140				

13. Dealer: N
Vuln: All

♠ 8 6 4				
♥ Q 8 6 3				
♦ 7 4				
♣ Q 10 6 5				
♠ Q 9	N			♠ K J 5
♥ K 10				♥ A 9 7 4
♦ 10 6 5	W		E	♦ A J 9 2
♣ A J 9 8 3 2				♣ K 7
♠ A 10 7 3 2				
♥ J 5 2				4
♦ K Q 8 3				10 16
♣ 4				10

W	N	E	S
	pass	1♥	1♠
2♣	pass	2NT	pass
3NT	end		

Bidding:

All systems should get you to 3NT by East.

Play:

On the 3♠ lead the bad club break makes this a difficult contract.

Best is to play ♣K and another club and duck when West shows out.

On the spade return from north, south should duck to keep communications open.

If not the contract will make.

Declarer can set up clubs for 9 tricks, but NS can cash 5 tricks first – two clubs and three spades.

Most will make just 8 tricks.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	3	3
♠	-	-	1	1
♥	-	-	2	2
♦	-	-	4	4
♣	-	-	3	3
Optimum: EW 3NT; -600				

14. Dealer: E
Vuln: None

♠ 5 2				
♥ K Q 9 5 4				
♦ A 9 5 4				
♣ 10 8				
♠ K Q 8 7 4	N			♠ A 10 6 3
♥ J 7 6 3				♥ A 10
♦ 8 6	W		E	♦ K Q 7
♣ K 6				♣ Q J 9 3
♠ J 9				
♥ 8 2				9
♦ J 10 3 2				9 16
♣ A 7 5 4 2				6

W	N	E	S
		1♠	pass
3♠	pass	4♠	end

Bidding:

East opens 1♠ (major before minor if you plan to rebid NT).

At first glance west has a 7-loser hand and, with 5-card spade support, should consider the weak shapely raise to 4♠.

However, adding a loser for the aceless hand, 3♠ is preferred.

East has an easy raise to 4♠.

If West bids only 2♠, east should make a game try.

3♣ asks partner to bid 4♠ with any maximum, or with help in the club suit.

Here west would raise to game.

Play:

4♠ has an easy 10 tricks losing a trick in each of the side suits.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	4	4
♠	-	-	4	4
♥	-	-	2	2
♦	-	-	1	1
♣	-	-	2	2
Optimum: EW 3NT; -430				

15.

♠ A K 5 2
♥ 7 6
♦ 10 8 3
♣ Q 9 5 3

Dealer: S
Vuln: N/S

♠ 8 6	N	♠ J 10 3
♥ 9 2	W	♥ K J 8 4 3
♦ A K 7 5	E	♦ 6 4
♣ K 10 7 6 2	S	♣ J 8 4
♠ Q 9 7 4		
♥ A Q 10 5		9
♦ Q J 9 2		10 6
♣ A		15

W	N	E	S
			1♥
pass	1♠	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	end	

Bidding:

South opens 1♥ and north responds 1♠.
 Never respond 1NT "to give a point count" if you have an alternative bid - particularly with a 4-card major.
 Although a singleton ace is not usually a good holding, south is easily worth 3♠.
 North raises to 4♠.
 South may choose to open 1♦ and the same contract will be reached.

Play:

East has a choice of the minors for opening lead. Top of the diamond doubleton is probably better than the ♣4 from ♣ J x x.
 The defence will win the first three tricks with the ♦A & K and a ruff.
 On a club return, declarer can draw trumps in two rounds, and now just needs to finesse the ♥Q to make the contract.

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	2	2	-	-
♦	4	4	-	-
♣	1	1	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♠; 620				

16.

♠ 8 7 4	Dealer: W
♥ K 4	Vuln: E/W
♦ K Q 7 4	
♣ J 8 7 5	

♠ A 6 5	N	♠ 9 3 2
♥ Q 9 5 3	W	♥ 8 6 2
♦ 6 3 2	E	♦ 10 9 5
♣ A 10 9	S	♣ K Q 3 2
♠ K Q J 10		
♥ A J 10 7		9
♦ A J 8		10 5
♣ 6 4		16

W	N	E	S
pass	pass	pass	1♥
pass	1NT	end	

Bidding:

South has a balanced 16 points.
 With 4-4 in the majors she opens 1♥ planning a minimum rebid in no trumps (unless north responds 1♠).
 North responds 1NT.
 South has a good 16 points.
 Two 4-card suits, sequential honours and good intermediates.
 She would like to raise.
 However, partner needs to have a maximum 9 points for this to be good and that is well against the odds, so south should pass.
 It's a good hand for those playing strong NT.

Play:

East leads the ♣2.
 West wins the ♣A and returns the higher of two remaining.
 North must cover with the ♣J and now has a stopper.
 East can cash the ♣K but declarer makes 9 tricks.
 Declarer makes 9 tricks.
 ♠3 : ♥2 : ♦4 : ♣0
 The heart finesse is not needed.

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	3	3	-	-
♦	4	4	-	-
♣	2	2	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♠; 420				

17.

♠ Q 9	Dealer: N
♥ A 10 9 3	Vuln: None
♦ Q 7	
♣ K Q J 6 5	

♠ 10 7 5 2	N	♠ K 4 3
♥ 7	W	♥ K J 6 5 4
♦ 9 6 3	E	♦ A J 8 5
♣ A 9 8 7 3	S	♣ 10
♠ A J 8 6		
♥ Q 8 2		14
♦ K 10 4 2	4	12
♣ 4 2		10

W	N	E	S
	1♣	1♥	dbl
pass	2♣	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	end	

Bidding:

What should North open ?
 Modern style is not to worry about having two doubletons.
 Here you have the queen in each doubleton suit....
 ...and the hand benefits from having the lead come up to it.
 - so I open 1NT.
 However, most people will open 1♣.
 East's overcall is not pristine but they are not vulnerable.
 South can now take advantage of the overcall and use a negative double.
 With 4 spades south doubles and...
 ... with 5 spades south would bid 2♠.
 Check out negative doubles.
 North has no choice but to repeat her clubs.
 South shows 10 - 11 points and a heart stop (!)
 North is tempted.

Play:

There are always eight tricks, and it is very difficult for the defence to avoid giving a ninth trick, and I would expect it to make at most tables.

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	-	-
♠	2	1	-	-
♥	2	2	-	-
♦	-	-	-	-
♣	3	2	-	-
Optimum: NS 3NT; 400				

18.

♠ 9 7 5 3
♥ A Q 10 8
♦ K 3 2
♣ A 8

Dealer: E
Vuln: N/S

♠ A Q J 4 2	N	♠ K 10
♥ J 9 6	W	♥ K 5 2
♦ J 7	E	♦ Q 10 8 5 4
♣ J 9 6	S	♣ 10 7 3
♠ 8 6		
♥ 7 4 3		13
♦ A 9 6		10 8
♣ K Q 5 4 2		9

W	N	E	S
2♠	end	pass	pass

Bidding:

Two passes to West, who doesn't quite have enough for an opening bid. However, west is 3rd in hand, at favourable vulnerability. In this situation you should certainly bid something. 1♠ would be reasonable but a weak 2♠ makes life much more difficult for the opposition. This is only acceptable in this position and at favourable vulnerability and you need a suit as good as this. Here it is quite likely to end the auction,

Play:

If the defence get it right declarer will make 6 tricks and -100 will be a good score. It's unlikely to be bid but N/S can actually make 4♥. I suspect most wests will pass. North will open 1NT and play there - probably for 8 tricks.

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	-	-
♠	1	1	-	-
♥	4	4	-	-
♦	1	1	-	-
♣	3	3	-	-
Optimum: NS 4♥; 620				

19.

♠ A K J 9	Dealer: S
♥ 6 2	Vuln: E/W
♦ A K 5	
♣ K 8 6 2	

♠ 10 8 7 3 2	N	♠ Q 5
♥ 10 8 7 5	W	♥ K Q 9 3
♦ 6	E	♦ Q 10 8 4
♣ 9 7 5	S	♣ J 10 3
♠ 6 4		
♥ A J 4		18
♦ J 9 7 3 2		0 10
♣ A Q 4		12

W	N	E	S
pass	2♣	pass	1NT
pass	3NT	end	2♦

Bidding:

South opens 1NT.

North uses Stayman and south responds 2♦ to deny a 4-card major.

North has a good 18 points but, opposite 12-14, slam is unlikely so should settle for 3NT.

If North does make a slam try with a quantitative raise to 4NT south will pass.

The hand does have a five card suit but suit quality is poor and the hand is minimum.

Play:

West makes the normal lead of the ♠3.

It seems best to win this with the ♠A.

It is tempting to finesse as west is favourite to have the ♠Q.

However, if the finesse loses, a heart switch from east would be unwelcome.

South tackles diamonds by playing the ♦A & K from dummy with west showing out on the 2nd round.

A 3rd diamond is won by east.

East now leads the ♥K and declarer ducks (correctly) placing both heart honours with East. Declarer will later finesse the ♥J for 11 tricks.

Any Souths who win the first heart and then drop the queen of spades will make 12 tricks.

	N	S	E	W
NT	5	5	-	-
♠	4	4	-	-
♥	3	3	-	-
♦	5	5	-	-
♣	5	5	-	-
Optimum: NS 3NT; 460				

20.

♠ 4
♥ J 6 4
♦ K Q 4 2
♣ K 9 6 5 2

Dealer: W
Vuln: All

♠ K Q 10 9	N	♠ A J 8 5
♥ A K 10 2	W	♥ Q 9 8 7 3
♦ 9 8 3	E	♦ 10 7
♣ A 8	S	♣ 7 4
♠ 7 6 3 2		
♥ 5		9
♦ A J 6 5		16 7
♣ Q J 10 3		8

W	N	E	S
1♥	pass	3♥	pass
4♥	end		

Bidding:

With 16 HCP west's book opening is 1♥.
 Despite having only 7 HCP the losing trick count suggests east is worth a raise to 3♥.
 The fifth heart makes the difference.
 West accepts the invitation and the fit in spades does not come to light.

Play:

In 4♥ there are ten obvious tricks.
 The defence cash two diamonds.
 West can then arrange to ruff a diamond in dummy before drawing trumps in 3 rounds and cashing winning hearts for 10 tricks.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	3	3
♠	-	-	4	4
♥	-	-	4	4
♦	3	3	-	-
♣	4	4	-	-
Optimum: NS 5♣x; -200				

21.

♠ 8 4
♥ 4 3
♦ A K 9 4 3
♣ J 10 8 7

Dealer: N
Vuln: N/S

♠ Q 9 2	N	♠ K 10 5
♥ Q 10 8 5	W	♥ A J 7 6 2
♦ J 8 5	E	♦ 10 6
♣ K Q 9	S	♣ A 6 2
♠ A J 7 6 3		
♥ K 9		8
♦ Q 7 2		10 12
♣ 5 4 3		10

W	N	E	S
	pass	1NT	end

Bidding:

In the modern style, east's opening bid should be 1NT, treating the 5-3-3-2 shape as balanced even when the 5-card suit is a major.

If south passes west is not strong enough to use Stayman and 1NT will probably be passed out.

However, at favourable vulnerability, south may risk a bid showing spades or north might come in with 2♦ if natural in their methods.

Either way a value showing double by West then gets East-West into a heart contract.

If East opens 1♥ south should overcall 1♠.

West will make an unassuming cue bid and EW will play in 3♥.

Play:

Playing in 1NT south leads the ♠6.

Suppose East wins this in hand and crosses to a club to take the (losing) heart finesse.

South knows about most of East's high cards so may switch to diamonds to defeat the contract.

Finding the switch is not so easy if the ♠9 is played from dummy at trick 1.

South will not now know the whereabouts of the ♣A.

2♠ by South is one down.

Heart contracts by East make at least 8 tricks

9 if declarer finesses the right way against the ♠J.

	N	S	E	W
NT	1	1	-	-
♠	1	1	-	-
♥	-	-	3	3
♦	2	2	-	-
♣	1	1	-	-
Optimum: EW 2♥; -140				

22.

♠ A K J 10 5 3	Dealer: E
♥ 9 4	Vuln: E/W
♦ K 8 6	
♣ K 8	

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

♠ 9	
♥ A J 8 3 2	14
♦ 5 3	10 4
♣ A Q J 9 6	12

W	N	E	S
		pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♣
pass	4♠	end	

Bidding:

South opens 1♥ - the higher ranking of 5-card suits.
 North responds 1♠ and south bids 2♣.
 North has an excellent suit with game values so jumps to 4♠.

Play:

North's spade suit is robust enough to be playable opposite a singleton most days of the week, but not today.
 The singleton club lead from East is deadly for two reasons.
 First, it threatens ruff(s) with East's small trumps and secondly, it disrupts communication between the North-South hands so that South's strong club suit cannot be used for discards later in the play.
 The likely outcome is one or two down in 4♠.
 For any pairs playing in 3NT there are eight tricks on top on a diamond lead and there seem to be good prospects of a ninth in spades or clubs.
 However, the 5-1 break in both black suits means that too should be one down.

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	-	-
♠	2	2	-	-
♥	3	3	-	-
♦	-	-	1	1
♣	3	3	-	-
Optimum: NS 3NT; 400				

23.

				♠ J 10 8 2	Dealer: S
				♥ Q 8 7 6 5 4	Vuln: All
				♦ 8	
				♣ 9 4	
♠ Q 7 4 3		N		♠ A 6	
♥ J				♥ A K 3 2	
♦ A K 10 9 5 3		W		♦ J 4 2	
♣ 6 5			E	♣ A J 8 3	
				♠ K 9 5	
				♥ 10 9	3
				♦ Q 7 6	10 17
				♣ K Q 10 7 2	10

	W	N	E	S
				pass
1♦		pass	1♥	pass
1♠		pass	2♣	pass
2♦		pass	4NT	pass
5♥		pass	6♦	end

Bidding:

West has the choice of opening 1♦ or 2♦.
 With a 4-card major it looks a bit too good for 2♦, so 1♦ it is.
 East responds 1♥.
 There is no need to bid any higher - west must bid again.
 West shows her spades.
 East now has the choice of settling for 3NT or bidding 2♣ - fourth suit forcing.
 Most will bid 3NT.
 For the more ambitious:
 FSF then diamonds will be agreed and east will use 4NT to find that partner has two key cards without the trump queen, and so to 6♦.

Play:

In 3NT, on the lead of the ♣K, there is a 100% line for nine tricks.
 Win the first club and play the ♦J to the ♦A.
 Back to the ♥A and take a safety finesse in diamonds.
 This ensures at least five diamond tricks even if the finesse loses.
 East's ♠8 is an important card ensuring the defence cannot run off four club tricks.
 On the actual layout the finesse wins so there are ten tricks.
 Some Easts might attempt a Bath Coup.
 This involves ducking the opening lead and hoping South will continue the suit.
 This is risky as on a slightly different layout, where North has the ♠K with length, a spade switch would be damaging.
 Many good players have the agreement that on the king lead against a notrump contract, promising a strong holding, partner unblocks an honour if they have one, otherwise gives the count.
 With this agreement, if North plays the ♣9 at trick 1 showing an even number of cards without an honour, South knows it is right to switch and avoids the Bath Coup.
 6♦ is not a good contract because West's opening bid is so light, but there is a line to make.
 On a club lead, win the ♣A and cash the ♥A & K to throw the losing club.
 Now the ♠A and another spade won by South.
 Whether South attempts to cash a club or exits with a heart or a trump, west wins and ruffs the spade loser with the ♦J.
 The contract then depends on a successful guess of finessing in trumps rather than playing them from the top.

	N	S	E	W
NT	-	-	5	5
♠	-	-	4	3
♥	-	-	1	1
♦	-	-	6	6
♣	-	-	3	2
Optimum: EW 6♦; -1370				

24.

♠ -	Dealer: W
♥ KJ932	Vuln: None
♦ J8	
♣ AJ9642	

♠ 8764	N W E S	♠ Q10532
♥ 754		♥ A Q108
♦ A Q65		♦ K4
♣ 87		♣ Q3
♠ A KJ9		
♥ 6		10
♦ 109732		6 13
♣ K105		11

W	N	E	S
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	2♣	end	

Bidding:

Doubtless North will open the bidding but which suit?

1♣ is fine if you can count on partner responding 1♦ or having a strong hand.

However, if the response is 1♠ or the opponents intervene, the heart suit may be lost.

Partner would expect more high cards for a reverse into 2♥.

Perhaps it is better to treat the hand as 5-5 and open 1♥.

If north opens 1♣ East has a choice of calls – double, or 1♠.

If East doubles and west responds in diamonds, east must pass.

A correction to spades would suggest a stronger hand.

East would prefer a better suit for 1♠ but the disruption over 1♣ probably makes it worth an overcall.

If north opens 1♥ partner would expect a better suit for a 1♠ overcall so east keeps quiet.

Some south's may rebid 2NT but the hand looks like a misfit so it is better to stay low.

Doubtless there will be a variety of contracts.

Play:

N-S can make at least 9 tricks in clubs.

Ruff a heart in the south hand and discard two more on the top spades.

If E-W declare in spades and N-S begin by cashing two clubs they may hold declarer to 6 tricks.

In some lines it may need the counter-intuitive line of sacrificing a diamond trick (low to the queen, and later overtake the king with the ace) in order to take 2 heart finesses.

This line of play is much easier to find if North has opened 1♥ or South leads their singleton heart.

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	1	-	-
♠	-	-	1	1
♥	1	1	-	-
♦	2	2	-	-
♣	4	4	-	-
Optimum: NS 3♣; 130				