

# ACBL-wide International Fund Game #3

## Monday Afternoon – December 17, 2018 – Set 218026



American Contract  
Bridge League



Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

### Board 1

North Deals  
None Vul

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

When South opens 1♥, North's hand is too heavy for 2♥ and wrong for a 3♥ limit raise (with only three-card support and balanced pattern). North will temporize with 1♠. South should raise to 2♠ though he has only three-card support, and when North tries for game by showing heart support, South can go to 4♥. If West leads the ♦K, the defense may play three rounds. South ruffs, takes the ♥A, leads a spade to dummy and loses a trump finesse to West's queen. He can discard a club on dummy's spades and score +420. Some Wests will lead the singleton ♠J. Then if South finesses in trumps, West can get a spade ruff for down one. But South may fear a spade ruff if he loses a trump finesse and instead bang down the ♥AK. He can draw trumps, pitch a diamond on a high spade and guess the ♣Q for +480 and a top.

### Board 2

East Deals  
N-S Vul

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

At many tables, a 1NT opening by South will be passed out. South may consider opening 1♦, hoping for a major-suit response, but that would be "masterminding": South should make the opening bid that best describes his hand. West may lead the ♥10, and South takes the jack. We think many Souths will go right in spades by leading to the ace and back toward the jack, though the correct technical play is to cash the king and lead the jack, gaining if West has Q-9-x-x. (East is sure of a spade trick if he has, say, Q-9-7-3.) After running the spades, South can guess well to take the ♥AK and retire. If he tries for an overtrick by leading to the ♣K, the defense has seven tricks in the minors. We think N/S will get a decent matchpoint result for +90, though pairs who somehow locate their spade fit can be +110.

### Board 3

South Deals  
E-W Vul

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

West's hand is wrong for a second-seat weak 2♠, with a broken suit and a side void. If West passes, North will open 1♦, and if East restrains himself from overcalling with all those losers, South will respond 1♥. Then West may try 1♠, and North raises to 2♥. East won't want to double at the two level and may bid 2♠. Then some N/Ss will go to 3♥. East may double that, but if South is tipped off by the double and doesn't try to draw trumps, he can take nine tricks with any lead. At tables where West does open that shaky weak 2♠, he may play there for +110. If instead North aggressively doubles 2♠, South will take out to 3♥, and whether East will pass, double or bid 3♠ is unclear. Pairs with a plus score should win some matchpoints. We see no way N/S can reach 3NT: cold if South is declarer.

**Board 4**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

West has three quick tricks and a five-card major with good intermediates; most Wests will open 1♠. East will raise to 2♠ and South can compete with 3♦. West can't act again, but after two passes, East should try 3♠ because he has a sound raise with four good trumps. The presence of a ninth trump should influence him to compete to the three level. North will lead a diamond, and South takes the A-Q and shifts to the ♣Q. West wins, leads a heart to dummy, draws trumps with a winning finesse, and loses a heart, a club and two diamonds. We think +140 to E/W will be a common result. A few E/Ws will sell out to 3♦ and be only +100 for a poor matchpoint score: The defense can't break the hearts without losing their second heart trick, and South can get a timely discard on dummy's ♣10.

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

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

Some Norths will open 1NT: A 1♠ response by South to a 1♥ opening would leave North with an uneasy rebid. But to open 1NT risks playing at a poor 5-2 spade fit, if South transfers to spades, and risks missing a good heart contract regardless. A 1NT opening will be passed out and down one. At tables where North is unwilling to suppress his five-card major and opens 1♥, some Easts will pass since their hand looks good for defense. If North plays at 1♥, he seems to have seven winners, but if E/W find their club ruff, they will be +100 again. Many Easts will act over 1♥. If East stretches to overcall 1NT, passed out, he can take seven tricks but for only +90. Other Easts will double 1♥ — then West may play at 2♦ — or try a 1♠ overcall, and E/W might emerge with +110 and most of the matchpoints.

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

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

West's hand is awkward to describe. When he opens 1♥ and hears 1♠ from East, he will want to rebid "two splimonds": He has spade support but also a second suit to show. We expect West to bid 2♦, and when East returns to 2♥, West will try 2♠. Since West's sequence suggests more high-card strength than he holds, East may try for game with 2NT. When West bids 3♦ next, showing his precise pattern, East can pass or risk 3♥ since his heart support is stout. E/W's winning contract? West can take nine tricks at hearts for +140 in theory. In practice, he may do best to play at a diamond partial where he can win 10 tricks for +130 with less effort. The play at either red suit may be complex. If North's opening lead is the ♣4 and dummy plays low, South may need to play the eight or 10 to facilitate the defense.

**Board 7**South Deals  
Both Vul

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

If South opens 1♣, most Wests will overcall 1♠, and North can make a negative double. East will commit to game; indeed, E/W can make a slam even though West's overcall is a minimum. East might try a leap to 4♠, a 2♣ cuebid, a 4♣ "splinter" bid or a 3♦ "fit-showing jump." At many tables, the auction will be quite competitive. N/S may take a paying save at 5♣, but we expect most E/Ws to compete as high as 5♠. If North leads the ♣K and shifts to a heart, West can take the ♥A, finesse in trumps, ruff his last club in dummy and lead a second trump to pick up the suit. Then he must guess in diamonds. With N/S having bid to the five level and South likely to have long clubs as well as four hearts, we think West should find the ♦Q. E/W will get at least 80% of the matchpoints for +680.

**Board 8**West Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

North will open 1♠; his hand holds great promise, and “Standard” methods would look silly if South passed 1♠ with 7, 876, K10732, Q942. But the North hand isn’t worth a forcing 2♣ opening. When South responds 1NT, North has another decision. A jump to 3♦ would force to game even if South had an unsuitable six high-card points. A jump to 3♠ would invite game but would focus on spades and on no other suit as trumps. If North rebids 2♦ or 3♠, South will pass. If North judges to risk 3♦, forcing, South will try 3NT, and then North could reasonably pass, go to 4♠ or speculate by bidding 4♣. This time, North will be right to bid boldly. With the cards sitting perfectly, he can take 11 tricks at spades, 10 at notrump and 13(!) at clubs. Pairs who register +450 should get a great matchpoint result.

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

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

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



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

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

Your guess is as good as ours here; we expect as many different auctions and results as tables in the game. East will open 1♦, and with North a passed hand, some Souths may preempt with 3♥. West can’t act over that, and North may raise to 4♥. Then East will try 5♣, doubled by North. East will ruff the heart opening lead and will have hopes of making the contract. He will lead a spade to dummy’s ace to return a diamond. North grabs his ace to lead another heart. East ruffs again, but the cruel 5-0 trump break will hold him to nine tricks. Still, -500 may be better than some E/Ws do. If South overcalls 1♥ at his first turn, West can try 1♠ and North raises to 2♥. East will bid 3♣ or maybe 4♣. If South tries 4♥, West may double, but if East passes trustingly, the contract is cold for +590 to N/S.

**Board 10**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

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



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

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

North may open 1NT after three passes; we hope for no 2♦ bids by vulnerable Wests. Then East may climb in with a gadget to show length in the majors. If his bid is 2♣, South may double or bid 3♣ directly. Many pairs will have an agreement about whether 3♣ is forcing, invitational or competitive, but we expect most to reach 3NT. If East leads the ♠J, North can pass it to his queen. He can then lead the ♣A and a second club, planning to try for his ninth trick by finessing in diamonds; he will win nine tricks as the cards lie. He can take 10 tricks by leading to the ♠A, finessing in clubs and finessing in diamonds later. He can take 11 by leading the ♥K at the second trick. If East’s opening lead is the ♥J, North can make at most one overtrick. We think N/S will score well above average for +630.

**Board 11**South Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

Most Wests will open 1♥, and North will double. If East passes, South may respond 2♣ and play there, taking nine tricks. Some Souths will respond 1NT, and North may raise to 2NT. Best defense would hold South to seven tricks, but in practice he may score +120. If East is inclined to “ignore the double” and bid 1♠ at his first turn, South may pass, and West’s raise to 2♠ may be passed out. N/S can be +50 if South leads the ♦J and uppercuts with his ♠J on a third round of diamonds, promoting North’s trumps. A few E/Ws will use “Flannery,” and West will open 2♦ to show a minimum with four spades and five hearts. North can bid 2♥ as a substitute for a double, but if East bids 2♠, N/S may sell out. We predict that N/S will need +110 or better for a good matchpoint result.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 6 4 2  
♥ Q 7 2  
♦ 5 2  
♣ 10 7 6 5 4

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

N/S's auction may start 2♣-2♦, 3♦. When North then tries 3♠, South can bid 4NT, then 5NT to find out whether North has any kings. Many Souths will yield to temptation and bid 7♠. It may be cold and should depend on a finesse at worst. Other Souths will settle for 6♠: If winning 13 tricks requires astute play, N/S may get a good matchpoint result if they play at 6♠ making seven. In fact, 7♠ is makable. If East leads a trump, North can draw trumps, take the ♦AK and guess to let the ♦J ride. But he may instead ruff the third diamond, planning to finesse in clubs if the ♦Q doesn't fall. If East's opening lead is a club, North must decide immediately whether to finesse or to rely on the diamonds for four tricks. We think few Norths will make seven, and pairs who are +1460 will win most of the matchpoints.

**Board 13**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Many Souths will open 1♣ (let us call it a "prepared bid," not a "short club"), picking off E/W's club fit. After West passes (stoically, we hope), North will respond in a red suit; those chunky diamonds look worth mentioning. South will bid 1♠, and then West may come in with 2♣, natural. North's raise to 2♠ will often end the auction. If West leads the ♣K and shifts to the ♥9 to East's ace, South can win a heart return, take the ♠AK, ruff two clubs in dummy and lose to the ♦A, making three. Many N/Ss will be +140, but if E/W compete actively to 3♣ despite South's 1♣ bid, it's unclear that N/S will bid to the three level. (Note that the Law of Total Tricks is on target here: 17 trumps, 17 tricks.) If N/S defend 3♣, they should be +100 but may win few matchpoints.

**Board 14**East Deals  
None Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 9 4 3  
♥ Q 10 6  
♦ 6 3  
♣ 9 8 2

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

N/S would have a chance at 7♦ and should bid at least 6♦. After 1♦-2♣, South can (in "Standard" methods) jump to 3♦ to show a good six-card suit and extra strength. Then North might raise to 4♦ — or try 3♥ and convert South's 3NT to 4♦. Cuebidding should reach slam. In a "two-over-one" style, North's 2♣ will force to game, so South can "save space" by rebidding 2♦. (A jump to 3♦ might show a solid suit.) But N/S must avoid a "temporizing" auction where nobody ever shows his strength. If West leads a spade against 6♦, South will ponder his play if clubs break 4-2. He might cash the ♦A and ♣AK and ruff a club with the ♦9. The 3-3 break will give him 13 tricks. N/S should score well for +940. Pairs who reach 7♦ will get a top. A few pairs may try 6NT: a make in theory.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

After two passes, North will open 1♠. If South responds 1NT, North might jump-shift to 3♥, and South will usually be content to raise to 4♥, though a jump to 5♥ would be conceivable. Other Norths will shelve their poor heart suit and raise South's 1NT to 3NT. At some tables, South will be willing to respond 2♥ since he is a passed hand, but he won't cooperate if North tries for slam; N/S will usually rest at game. If East leads a club to the ace against 4♥ by North, or if West leads the ♣A against 4♥ by South, declarer can easily take the rest when the trumps behave. If instead East leads a diamond, North can still take 12 tricks with a winning guess in clubs or if he takes a spade finesse through West. We expect most N/Ss to be +680; a few will stretch to slam and score +1430 for a top.

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

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

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



♠ A Q J 9  
♥ A 10 7  
♦ A J 9 7 6  
♣ 6

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

If East opens 1♦, South's hand is good to pass, with balanced pattern, mediocre spade support and a ♦Q that may be valuable only on defense. West will respond 1♥, East rebids 1♠ and West will try 1NT or take a 2♦ preference. Then East can continue with 2♥, a sequence that promises a strong hand — game interest despite West's weak bidding. West has a fifth heart, only a wasted jack in clubs opposite East's implied club shortness and a useful ♠K, but whether he will bid again and reach game is doubtful. Many Wests will take 10 tricks at hearts after North leads a club, and a few pairs will be +620. But if North starts with his singleton trump, a lead that may be more or less indicated on the bidding, the defense can hold West to nine tricks, and N/S will get a top for +100.

**Board 17**North Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

East will open 1♣, and South has a sound 1♦ overcall. (We think 1♦ overcalls should be sound since they have limited preemptive or competitive value.) West responds 1♥. When East rebids 2♣ with his six-carder, South lacks a good second call — a double would be for takeout — and West should pass instead of overbidding mightily with 2♠ or speculating with 2NT when he has only 10 high-card points and no club fit. East can always be held to +90 at clubs. In some play variations, North can profitably cover with his ♣10 if dummy leads the nine, or North can uppercut with the ♣10 on a fourth round of diamonds, or East will be stuck in dummy and South will get to ruff a heart. As it happens, E/W can win eight tricks at spades, but pairs who manage +110 at clubs may win most of the matchpoints.

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

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

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



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

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

This deal may see a partscore dogfight requiring good matchpoint judgment. West will open 1♥ in third seat, and North will overcall 1♠. East has four trumps, a side ace and a well placed ♠K, but with no shape, he will often raise only to 2♥. If South trusts his partner's vulnerable overcall, he might make a responsive double or try a bold 2NT bid. If instead South and West pass, North will bid 2♠, and East should compete to 3♥. If all pass, West will make his contract, pitching his diamond loser on the ♠K. We think +140 will be an uncertain result for E/W. Some N/Ss will go as high as 3♠ — perhaps if East jumps to 3♥ at his first turn. Then East will need to risk a penalty double to protect his side's likely +140, and if E/W get all their tricks, they will collect the desired +200.

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

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

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



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

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

E/W have 31 points in two balanced hands; they may try for slam but should stop short. If E/W's 1NT range is 15 to 17 points, West will open 1♦, and East can jump to 2NT if that bid is forcing. (Some pairs treat a 2NT response as invitational, a method we dislike.) West may raise to 4NT (quantitative, not Blackwood), but East has no reason to go on. South will lead a spade, and East can win with the king and play with skill and luck. If he takes the ♦AK next, he will lose two diamonds and the ♣A, making only four; but East can instead duck a diamond at trick two. North wins and returns a spade, and East takes the ace and then the ♦A. When South shows out, East can lead to the ♣K, then risk a finesse of the ♣10 to make two overtricks. E/W should get an 80% board for +660.

**Board 20**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

With West having passed, East may open a weak 2♦ in third position though his hand is quite suitable for a spade contract. That call will inconvenience South. If he settles for a 3♣ overcall, North may pass from fright instead of looking for a better spot with a 3♠ bid, and South will take 11 tricks with best play for +150. Other Souths will start with a double — an action that might locate a heart fit but is flawed by the lack of spade support. North will do well to bid no more than 3♠, and then South can convert to 3NT — which North will do even better to pass. After a diamond lead, South has 10 tricks to cash. Some Souths may simply gamble out a jump to 3NT over 2♦, hoping North will produce a trick. We predict that +630 will be worth 70% of the matchpoints to N/S.

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

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

♠ 6 3  
♥ Q 6 5 3  
♦ Q 9 8 7 4  
♣ 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

After Pass-Pass-1♦-Double, North will yearn to raise to 3♦, preemptive, but the vulnerability may deter him. East will advance 2♣, and West's raise to 3♣ will be passed out. The defense will start with the ♠KA and a spade ruff. East can win a diamond shift, draw trumps, pitch his diamond loser on the ♠Q, ruff dummy's last diamond and lead a heart to the jack — for a needless endplay since a second heart finesse would work. A few Wests may try 2NT over East's 2♣ response; they will regret it when North leads a diamond for down one. At tables where North risks that jump to 3♦ over West's double, West can double again after two passes. If East were inspired to shoot out a pass, E/W would be +200 for a top; but many Easts will run to 4♣, down one, giving N/S a good matchpoint score.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

East has 10 solid winners and reasonable defensive values, and almost all Easts will open with a game-forcing 2♣. A 1♦ opening may appeal to a few Easts, but if we opened 1♦, we couldn't stand the suspense of waiting to see if someone else bid. A typical auction will start 2♣, 2♦-3♦, 4♦ ... and then East can cuebid 4♠ to look for slam. It is usual to cuebid the cheapest ace in such a situation, but East will want to make it easy for West to show the ♠K; hence if West returns to 5♦ over 4♠, East can continue with 5♥, and if West were able to bid 5♠ to suggest the king, East could bid 7♦. As it is, we think most E/Ws will stop at 6♦, but those who stretch to 7♦ will make it when the spade finesse wins. E/Ws who are +2140 should score well.

**Board 23**South Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

West will scrape up 1♥, and North can overcall 1♠. Then most Easts will have to pass, though a few pairs may employ weak jump-shifts in competition, letting East bid 3♣. In any case, South should respect his partner's vulnerable overcall enough to support the spades, and we expect most N/Ss to reach 4♠. If East leads a heart, North can win in his hand, saving the ♥A as a later dummy entry, and take the ace, queen and king of trumps. He leads a low diamond to his jack, draws the missing trump and goes to the ♥A to lead a second diamond. He loses a club, a heart and a diamond for +620. Quite a few E/Ws will diagnose their sacrifice at 5♣, and the best N/S can do is double. A trump lead or early shift will hold East to nine tricks, but E/W may score above average for -500.

**Board 24**West Deals  
None Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

West opens 1♥, East responds 1NT. If South passes, West will rebid 2♦, East will raise to 3♦ and West will play there. As the cards lie, they can make 5♦ but will settle for +150. But over East's 1NT, some Souths will enter with 2♠. They really lack the high-card strength to justify that action, but its obstructive value is significant, and they aren't vulnerable. Sure enough, West can't act with his minimum; South's bid will shut out West's 2♦ rebid. If North passes, East could save the board for his side by backing in with a double (which West might interpret as for takeout since East's 1NT will have denied spade length) or 2NT (which West will probably treat as natural). Then E/W might be +150 again or +120, but if North competes to 3♠, E/W may sell out for only +50 and a matchpoint zero.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Some Easts, uncowed by the vulnerability, will open 2♥, and South may overcall 2♠. Some Souths will jump to 3♠ to show a strong hand; there are no "preempts over preempts." North can raise or bid notrump, and N/S will usually reach 4♠. If West leads a heart, South throws his diamonds on the A-K and then might like his position enough to lead a trump instead of risking a club finesse. If East rises with the ♠A to lead a club, South takes the ace, draws trumps and loses a club for +450. At tables where East passes in second seat, South will open 1♠, and North will respond 1NT or maybe 2♥. N/S should still get to 4♠ though we can imagine some pairs missing out. If West leads a club or a heart, South will take 11 tricks, but if West leads the ♦A, he holds South to +420, saving his side some matchpoints.

**Board 26**East Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

After 1♦, 1♥, few Norths will try 1♠, vulnerable, with such a weak hand. The danger is not that North will be mangled at 1♠ but that South will overcompete. But when East raises to 2♥ and two passes follow, North can try 2♠, knowing South has strength. Then we think E/W will push on to 3♥, and South should pass, not punishing partner for balancing. North leads the ♠K, and the defense takes two spades and shifts to clubs. West may reflect that North would have acted directly with ♠KQxxx, the ♥A and maybe a club honor. If West leads a trump to the king and ace, he will have a tough guess in trumps later and may lose to North's jack for down one. But if West judges to lead a trump from dummy to his queen and a second trump, he survives. Alas, some E/Ws will be +200 on defense, so +140 may score average.

**Board 27**South Deals  
None Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

This deal is hard to predict, with judgment calls at every turn. Some free-spirited Wests will open 2♠ despite the presence of four-card heart support, and if all pass, N/S will be plus on defense. If instead North is willing to overcall 2NT, East could find a double and be +300. If instead West passes as dealer, as we would, some Norths will open 1♠, and East will try 2♦. After two passes, North may reopen with a double, though his ♦K may be a worthless card. South will bid 3♣ or 2♠, and E/W are in line for a substantial plus. Some Norths may open 1NT, and East may use a gadget bid to show a diamond one-suiter. If N/S sell out to 2♦, E/W may be +110 for a decent result, but if N/S compete, E/W will have a chance to double for a big plus and most of the matchpoints.

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

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

♠ K Q 6 2  
♥ K 10  
♦ K 10 6  
♣ K Q 9 6



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

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

North will open 1NT on his aceless wonder, and East may toss in a heart bid: a natural 2♥ overcall, a bold preemptive jump to 3♥ or a conventional call to show a one-suited hand. In any case, N/S should handle the interference and reach 4♠; some pairs may use a transfer sequence to make North declarer with his ♥K temporarily protected. If South plays at 4♠ and West leads a heart, East takes two hearts and exits with a trump. Then South may need to place the ♦Q to make game, but by noting the play of the other suits, he can get a helpful count of the distribution. If North is declarer and East leads a trump, North can draw trumps and lead the ♣2 to his king and another club. When West wins and leads a heart, East can take two hearts but is then endplayed. N/S will need +620 to avoid a matchpoint zero.

**Board 29**North Deals  
Both Vul

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

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



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

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

We expect most N/Ss to reach 4♥. After 1♦-1♠, 2♣-2♥, 2NT ... South will want to continue bidding out his 5-5 pattern. Some Souths may like their high-card structure enough to jump to 4♥. Other Souths will settle for 3♥. North shouldn't treat that bid as forcing, but it could be a winning action if North's hand is unsuitable for a major-suit contract. As it is, North should like his minor-suit aces enough to raise to 4♥. If West leads a club, South can take the ace and play for the maximum: ♠A, spade ruff, club ruff, spade ruff, ♥K, club ruff, ♥A. When both majors break well, South will lose only a trump and a diamond. N/S must be +650 to get a strong matchpoint result.

**Board 30**East Deals  
None Vul

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

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



♠ K J 4  
♥ K Q J 7  
♦ Q 9  
♣ J 9 8 7

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

East has a cheesy 13 points with a few "honor tricks" — the kind of hand players years ago would have declined to open. In 2018, most Easts will open 1♣, West responds 1♦ and East bids 1♥. Then West might leap to 3NT, passed out; or he might try a "fourth-suit" bid of 1♠ since East's hand is not well defined and the best contract is uncertain. As it turns out, which player is declarer may be crucial. If West plays 3NT, North will lead a spade, and West will run off 12 tricks for +490. If East declares, South could hold him to nine tricks by leading a low club. That lead may be unattractive on the auction, but if South leads a heart instead, it's possible East will cash his red-suit winners and the ♠A, then finesse with his ♠J at the end and lose the rest, making only four for a matchpoint zero.



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

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

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



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

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

West will often open 1NT, encouraged by his three 10s. East would like to play in his best major-suit fit at the partscore level (unless West holds a magic hand such as KQ10, AQ10, A965, 763, in which case E/W might make game). Some Easts will issue a 2♣ Stayman response and try 2♥, invitational, when West rebids 2♦. West should pass. (In some partnerships, East's sequence may have a different meaning.) Other Easts may transfer with a 2♦ response and pass West's 2♥. In fact, E/W can make no game with best defense. If West is declarer at 2♥, North may lead the ♠9, and West should take only nine tricks even if he happens to play the trumps for no losers. But if North leads a low diamond, giving West two diamond tricks, West has a chance to be +170. We think E/W will score above average for +140.

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

♠ Q 2  
♥ Q 6 2  
♦ A K J 10 6 2  
♣ 10 2

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



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

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

When West opens 1♦, North may jack the auction up to 3♣ or even to 4♣. East will bid hearts at whatever level is necessary, and South can judge accurately to sacrifice at 5♣. If West passes the sacrifice around to East, implying a willingness for East to bid on, East can try 5♥, and N/S should go quietly, satisfied to have pushed their opponents to the five level. Eleven tricks are cold; East will lose a trump and a club, and +650 will be a common result. Some E/Ws will be allowed to play at 4♥, but a few will misjudge and double 5♣. North will get out for down three — down only two if E/W contrive to drop a trick on defense — and N/S may score quite well for -500.

**Board 33**  
North Deals  
None Vul

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

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



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

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

N/S have two routes to game. When North opens 1♥, South might stretch to treat his hand as a limit raise and jump to 3♥, after which North has an easy 4♥ bid. If instead South settles for a raise to 2♥, and West overcalls 3♣, North can try for game with 3♦, and South can accept with his super-maximum and might cuebid 4♣ in case North is interested in bigger things. E/W can't consider a 5♣ sacrifice, where they would be -500 for a zero. A lot will ride on East's opening lead against 4♥. If he leads a club in deference to a club bid by West, North can take dummy's ace, pick up the trumps, lose to the ♦A, pitch three spades from dummy on the diamonds and ruff his spade loser, making six. Easts who find the spade opening lead to hold North to +450 will win most of the matchpoints.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

If N/S have an unimpeded auction, they should reach slam easily. South can open 1♣, and North can flash an immediate slam signal with a jump to 2♠. (Weak jump-shifts, which some pairs use, may be more effective at matchpoints than at IMPs, but they can impede game and slam bidding at any form of scoring.) If South tries 2NT and North rebids 3♠, South can admit to spade tolerance with a raise to 4♠, and North can take control with Blackwood and bid 6♠, for +1430 or +1460, after South shows two aces. Wild preempts seem to be stylish these days, and based on how we have seen some experts operate recently, E/W may be in the auction. Some Easts may open 2♦, (very) weak, and West can raise. Many N/Ss will fail to overcome such a barrage and languish at game, giving E/W a good matchpoint result.

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

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

South has a borderline opening bid, at least in our old eyes. His high-card values are minimum and his long suit is ragged. But South does have adequate defense to open, and the vulnerability is friendly, so most Souths will start with 1♥ and rebid 1NT over North's 1♠ response. Then many Norths will jump to 4♠, East will lead the ♣J and North will take 10 tricks for +420. Even if East happens to lead the ♥K, and West overtakes, cashes the ♥Q and leads a third heart to promote a trump trick for the defense, North can make his contract by pitching his club loser. A few Norths may make a winning decision to raise 1NT to 3NT. North's pattern is semibalanced, and he has high honors in both minors. As it happens, South has the same 10 tricks with any lead and will rack up +430 for a fine matchpoint result.

**Board 36**West Deals  
Both Vul

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

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

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

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

Some Wests will open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣ over a 1♠ response (and maybe even over 1♥, though most experts would raise to 2♥). That plan is misguided: It distorts West's shape and fails to limit his strength to a minimum quickly. If East had Jxxxx, AQxx, Jx, xx, he would return to 2♦ — his hand would be too weak for 2♥, forcing — and a silly contract would result. West should open 1♣ and bid 1NT or 2♣ over 1♠. Then some Norths will preempt with 2♠ despite the "red" vulnerability, and East might try 2NT. Whether West will go on with his minimum is uncertain, but if he continues with 3♣, E/W might get to a minor-suit game. They might also reach five of a minor if North doesn't bid. We think 3NT will be a nervous contract, but with the ♥A and ♦K well placed, E/W can be +660 for a matchpoint top.