

# **1<sup>st</sup> Borders Charity Simultaneous Pairs**

Hand commentary

Thursday 6 July 2017

The 1<sup>st</sup> Borders Charity Simultaneous Pairs has been organised by the Peebles Bridge Club in association with a number of bridge clubs in the Scottish Borders.


The commentary is provided by Paul Gipson, a Grand Master at the Berwick Bridge Club. It is assumed that most participants will be playing Acol, with a weak no trump and weak two bids in the majors.

The hand diagrams include a double-dummy analysis of makable contracts and the par on the board. Par is the score that, double-dummy, is the best for both pairs on the hand. If a pair bids more than par, then they can get a worse score. It is often unrealistic to achieve par because the players cannot see all 52 cards, unlike the computer!

**Board 1**

North Deals

None Vul

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

NS 3♥; NS 3♣; NS 1N; NS 1♠; EW 1♦; Par +140

A highly competitive deal to start with. I recommend opening 1♣ even though 1♥ would probably be more successful on this hand. After a 1♣ opening and East's 1♠ overcall South should make a negative double to locate the heart fit. With a partial spade fit West can safely introduce his diamond suit. North's 2♥ should not finish the auction as West will compete further with 2♠, but North should take the push to 3♥.


Those who open 1♥ will get an immediate raise, but West might find an innovative spade raise with just the doubleton honour to push North-South a level higher.

North should make five heart and four club tricks for his contract, the auction highlighting the likely distribution.

**Board 2**

East Deals

N-S Vul

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


EW 2N; EW 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 3♦; Par -120

West's weak 1NT will start and end the auction, but even the strong no trumpers will get to the same point even though North will overcall 1♠. Despite the weak black suits, the hand is about how many overtricks West can manage to eke out.

**Board 3**

South Deals

E-W Vul

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


EW 2♥; NS 3♦; NS 3♣; EW 1♠; Par +110

At favourable vulnerability I think South has a comfortable 3♣ opening bid and this is likely to push East-West overboard into 4♥, independent of whether West doubles or East balances. If South passes initially, then East-West will still do well to keep low enough to get a positive score on the board.

**Board 4**

West Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 5N; EW 4♠; EW 5♦; EW 5♣; EW 2♥; Par -660

East will open 2NT or, perhaps, some Benjy variant to show a balanced 20-21 HCP. West would be more interested in looking for a minor fit with shortage in the hand, so everyone will raise quickly to the no trump game.

South will lead a spade as this looks safest and the opponents did not seek a major fit. Declarer should lose just the minor kings and make eleven tricks. A slam that needs two finesses out of three to work is actually 50% and a reasonable proposition, but in this case it would need two of three finesses and some good breaks, so best avoided.

**Board 5**

North Deals

N-S Vul

	♠ 7	
	♥ A Q 10 6 4 2	
	♦ 6 4	
	♣ 9 6 4 2	
♠ K 6 5 4 3 ♥ K 9 5 3 ♦ 8 ♣ Q 5 3	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	♠ Q J 2 ♥ 8 ♦ A J 7 3 2 ♣ A K 10 8
	♠ A 10 9 8	
	♥ J 7	
	♦ K Q 10 9 5	
	♣ J 7	

EW 3♠; EW 2♣; NS 1♥; Par -140

At unfavourable vulnerability this should be a weak 2♥ opening bid for most pairs. East has a tough decision, but the extra values compensate for the lack of a fourth spade and double is significantly better than a 3♦ overcall. West has to choose between responding 2♠ and 3♠ (pass being too dangerous). The ♥K suggests caution, the fifth spade suggests aggression, but matchpoint caution should win in the end. Those with methods like Lebensohl face a similar decision between a quiet 2♠ and a more aggressive, invitational, 3♠. Those who take the low road will score best.

**Board 6**

East Deals

E-W Vul

	♠ 10 8 5 2	
	♥ Q 9 8 6	
	♦ Q 5 2	
	♣ 4 3	
♠ A Q J 9 6 ♥ A 7 ♦ K 10 7 ♣ K Q 9	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	♠ K 7 ♥ 5 2 ♦ 9 6 4 3 ♣ J 10 8 7 6
	♠ 4 3	
	♥ K J 10 4 3	
	♦ A J 8	
	♣ A 5 2	

EW 3♠; EW 4♣; NS 2♥; EW 1N; EW 2♦; Par -140


If South opens a weak 1NT, then West will double and North will try to escape showing both majors. West needs to resist the temptation to bid no trump and settle for showing his long suit.

South will often open 1♥ and West has a simple double since the hand is too strong for a 1♠ or 1NT overcall. At favourable vulnerability, North should raise pre-emptively to 3♥ and this will go back to West. A second double will result in East bidding 4♣ which will make an important overtrick if South leads a black suit. The defence will need to be careful not to concede ten tricks in any spade contracts.

**Board 7**

South Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 3♦; EW 1♥; NS 1♣; Par -110


Another partscore hand and East-West may struggle to get into the auction after North's 1♠ opener and South responds 1NT and gets to play there. West needs to lead a minor to beat this but is more likely to lead a heart and declarer will be able to establish a third heart trick. The vulnerability will probably stop West from overbidding their hand.

It will be more interesting if North opens 1NT, as both East and West may feel the need to enter the auction. It will be expensive if they fail to find their diamond fit.

**Board 8**

West Deals

None Vul

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


NS 5♠; NS 5♥; NS 3N; NS 3♦; NS 2♣; Par +450

North-South will reach a major game but a weak 2♠ opener will test partnership agreements: is 3♥ forcing<sup>1</sup>? Those who play in hearts and ruff clubs will get an unexpected bonus when the ♥Q drops. Making eleven tricks in any contract will get a good score.

**Board 9**

North Deals

E-W Vul

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

NS 6♠; NS 2♥; NS 1N; NS 1♣; Par +980


Anyone who makes twelve tricks will score very well with no need to actually bid the small slam to get a good matchpoint score. The lack of high-card points and the shortage in partner's suit should keep everyone out of slam, except those who believe the hands are fixed in simultaneous events (they are not!).

I expect most will bid 1♥ – 1♠ – 4♣ (splinter<sup>2</sup>) – 4♠- Pass.

**Board 10**

East Deals

Both Vul

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

NS 2♠; EW 2♥; NS 3♦; NS 3♣; Par +110


East will open 1♥ and South should double with four spades and an opening bid, although 1NT is an attractive alternative. West should pass a double (as 1NT shows 8-10 points over it) and North will bid a simple 2♣.

Whatever decision South makes East will get to bid 2♥ and then North will need to double or bid 2NT to show both minors to find North-South's fit. North-South will probably go down in 3♦ and the challenge is to ensure that it is just down one to beat East's +110 in 2♥. As always at matchpoints, -200 will score very badly.

**Board 11**

South Deals

None Vul

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

EW 5♥; EW 4N; EW 2♠; EW 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -450


A light 1♠ opening by South will not cause East-West any problem and they should settle safely in the heart game. If South passes and West opens a weak 1NT, then East may see if they have a 4-4 fit before bidding game in hearts. The East hand is far too powerful to just invite, although West has an easy acceptance even if East makes this mistake. Some may test their partnership methods with an auction like 1NT- 2♦ (transfer) - 2♥ - 2♠<sup>3</sup>!

The defence should have no difficulty taking two tricks.

**Board 12**

West Deals

N-S Vul

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

W 5♥; E 4♥; EW 4♦; NS 2♠; EW 2♣; Par -450

After West opens 1♥, North must decide how high to pre-empt at unfavourable vulnerability. At teams I think 4♠ is right, but at matchpoints a more conservative 3♠ is likely to be chosen. East has an easy 4♥ over the lower pre-empt, but over 4♠ it is a far more difficult decision. Double is probably the percentage action, looking for +500 rather than +450 - five tricks is easier than eleven!

**Board 13**

North Deals

Both Vul

<p>♠ K 10 8 ♥ A 9 7 ♦ K 10 7 6 3 ♣ Q 8</p>	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</span> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</span> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</span> <span>S</span> </div>	<p>♠ Q ♥ 10 3 2 ♦ Q J 4 2 ♣ K J 6 4 3</p> <p>♠ A J 7 6 ♥ K 8 5 ♦ 9 5 ♣ 10 9 5 2</p> <p>♠ 9 5 4 3 2 ♥ Q J 6 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ A 7</p>
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EW 2♠; EW 1N; EW 1♦; NS 1♣; Par -110

In today's competitive world, South will probably open 1♠ and finish in 2♥ in a non-competitive auction: -200, the 'Kiss of Death' in matchpoints, and a poor score awaits. The more faint-hearted will pass and leave West in 1NT, probably scoring -90, and be pleased with an above-average score.

When South opens 1♠, North is not strong enough to respond 2♣ with a misfit and singleton spade. The problem with responding 2♣ is that 1♠-2♣-2♥ is forcing for one round and North has no descriptive bid. Better to respond 1NT and be maximum for that bid.

**Board 14**

East Deals

None Vul

<p>♠ K J 10 8 ♥ J 9 6 4 ♦ A K 5 ♣ 10 4</p>	<div style="background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</span> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</span> <span style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</span> <span>S</span> </div>	<p>♠ Q 9 2 ♥ 7 5 3 2 ♦ J 10 9 4 ♣ A K</p> <p>♠ A 7 6 4 ♥ K 10 ♦ Q 3 ♣ Q 9 5 3 2</p> <p>♠ 5 3 ♥ A Q 8 ♦ 8 7 6 2 ♣ J 8 7 6</p>
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EW 3N; EW 2♠; EW 2♣; EW 1♥; Par -400


Realistically the challenge for East-West is to go positive on this hand. Even making eight tricks in no trump will score well if you avoid game. Those who upgrade the East hand to an opening bid will be going down in 4♠, meaning that the rest of the field in 3♠ will be scoring better than they expect.



**Board 15**

South Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 2♥; EW 1N; NS 1♠; NS 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -110


South's 1♠ opening bid will be passed around to East. The balancing principle of 'transferring a king' means that East should treat his hand as 18 HCP, so double is indicated over 2♥ which could be a far weaker hand.

West will respond 1NT and East should probably pass this at matchpoints but I suspect few will. An undisciplined 2♥ shows a stronger hand and should be raised by West: this will be too high on this layout.

**Board 16**

West Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 4♠; EW 3♥; EW 2N; EW 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -620

West has a classic weak two opener and, depending on partnership style, East will bid game directly or bid 2NT asking for range and suit quality.

Everyone should get to game and the defence needs to take both minor aces before declarer is able to take discards on the hearts, otherwise they will get a very poor score.

**Board 17**

North Deals

None Vul

	♠ J 4	
	♥ J 8 6 5 4 2	
	♦ A Q 8	
	♣ Q 6	
♠ A Q 10 7 5 ♥ A 3 ♦ J 10 6 4 3 ♣ 8	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">           N W     E S         </div>	♠ K 6 2 ♥ K 10 9 7 ♦ K 9 ♣ K 9 5 2
	♠ 9 8 3	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 7 5 2	
	♣ A J 10 7 4 3	

E 5♠; W 4♠; EW 3N; EW 3♦; EW 1♥; NS 1♣; Par -450

North's hand is not really suitable for a weak two bid, with poor suit quality and outside points, but few seem to care these days. When North opens then West will balance with 2♠ and East should show a good raise with a 3♥ cue bid<sup>4</sup>, getting the partnership to the higher scoring spade game. Those who try for a matchpoint 3NT will be very disappointed on a low club lead.

**Board 18**

East Deals

N-S Vul

	♠ K J 10 8 5 4	
	♥ 3	
	♦ 7 5	
	♣ 8 7 6 3	
♠ A 6 2 ♥ K J 10 5 2 ♦ J 10 6 2 ♣ 5	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">           N W     E S         </div>	♠ 7 ♥ A 9 8 7 6 ♦ Q 9 4 3 ♣ K 10 2
	♠ Q 9 3	
	♥ Q 4	
	♦ A K 8	
	♣ A Q J 9 4	

NS 4♠; EW 3♥; NS 3♣; NS 1N; EW 2♦; Par +300; EW 5♥×-2


After South's 1♣ opening bid and a 1♥ overcall, North should bid 1♠ with the excellent spade suit – no excuses of 'I only had four points' please.

At this vulnerability East should put on maximum pressure with 4♥. With North marked with heart shortage, it is not unreasonable for South to bet on North having five spades and bidding 4♠ directly. But double is more prudent, showing a good hand with no clear bid, and is more likely to find the right contract – here, North has an easy 4♠ bid. The double may also prevent East-West finding their five-level sacrifice.

**Board 19**

South Deals

E-W Vul

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


NS 5N; NS 5♥; NS 5♦; NS 3♠; NS 3♣; Par +460

South's weak 1NT will remove most of North's slam ambitions and they'll settle for the heart game, although slam is actually a good proposition if you just look at the North-South hands. The club loser can be disposed off on the ♠K and then you just need a favourable diamond layout. Those looking for 'slams at sims' will be disappointed.

**Board 20**

West Deals

Both Vul

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

NS 6♠; NS 3♥; NS 4♣; EW 3♦; NS 1N; Par +1100; EW 7♦×-4

After North opens 1♣ East may be tempted to make a weak jump overcall with only three major-suit cards and this will help West find the 5♦ sacrifice, especially if North-South bid to the spade game as they should. South should bid his hand as the 5-loser hand that it is and not worry about just holding nine high-card points, and may well take the push to 5♠ if North has supported.

The key to making decisions at the 5-level level is governed by two rules:

1. The 5-level belongs to the opponents.
2. When in doubt, bid one more.

As often happens, any South making 12 tricks will get a very good matchpoint score without risking bidding the slam itself.

**Board 21**

North Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 3♠; NS 3♥; EW 3♦; NS 1N; NS 2♣; Par -140

A competitive hand between the majors and spades always win. East will open 1♠ and South will normally overcall 2♥. West has a nice hand but is not worth a limit raise and I prefer 2♠ rather than a pre-emptive 3♠ with the defensive ♣AK. North may raise hearts and West will make the final call with 3♠.

Some Souths may be able to make an intermediate jump overcall of 3♥, encouraged by the vulnerability. Now West is forced to bid 3♠ and both North and East should make disciplined passes. If North-South do compete to 4♥, then West must make a penalty double to protect his partscore and score the magic +200.

**Board 22**

East Deals

E-W Vul

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

EW 4N; EW 4♥; EW 2♠; EW 3♦; Par -630


The South hand is not appropriate for a second-hand pre-empt with excellent support for both majors, so East-West will have a free run to 4♥ after West opens 2NT (or equivalent). The 4-1 trump break means that a club lead is as effective as getting a diamond ruff at trick one to hold the contract to ten tricks.

Those who are looking for a matchpoint top by playing in no trump rather than a suit will do better this time.

**Board 23**

South Deals

Both Vul

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

EW 3♠; NS 2♥; EW 3♦; EW 2♣; Par -140


Another non-classic weak two for South, but if you do not open such hands then you will have a long wait to ever open a weak two and, overall, life will be easier for the opponents.

If North passes the 2♥ opener, East must judge between a balancing 2NT<sup>5</sup> with a doubleton heart or double with only three spades. Double would be my choice and 2♠ from West should finish the auction. If North makes a pre-emptive raise, then double by East may result in West overbidding with two worthless jacks to give a good score to North-South.

**Board 24**

West Deals

None Vul

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

EW 7♠; W 6N; W 6♣; E 5N; EW 4♥; E 5♣; N 2♦; S 1♦; Par -1510

Pre-emption is a two-edged sword and here West's likely 3♥ or, my choice, 4♥ will not be music to partner's ears. East is completely fixed over 4♥ and will probably pass, but over 3♥ can bid a forcing 3♠<sup>1</sup> and should catch a raise from West; bidding slam over this raise is my definition of an optimist, despite success here.

My sympathies to any East-West pair who bid 6♣ by East, only to fail on a heart lead and the bad trump break.

**Board 25**

North Deals

E-W Vul

<p>♠ Q J 10 8 4 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ J ♣ Q 10 8 6</p>		<p>♠ A 5 2 ♥ A 9 5 ♦ Q 10 5 2 ♣ A 9 5</p> <p>♠ 9 6 3 ♥ J 10 8 7 6 4 2 ♦ 4 ♣ J 4</p> <p>♠ K 7 ♥ — ♦ A K 9 8 7 6 3 ♣ K 7 3 2</p>
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NS 6N; NS 6♦; NS 5♣; NS 1♠; EW 1♥; Par +990

The vulnerability will probably keep East and West quiet, giving North-South a free run on this hand. The North hand is almost too good for a weak no trump, but the flat distribution balances the three aces. Many struggle with minor-based hands after 1NT, but this is a good hand for the method where you transfer to diamonds and then bid shortage. Alternatively a natural and forcing 3♦<sup>6</sup>, showing some slam interest, would do the job. If you can do either of these, then the North hand looks very slam-suitable and some may get to the perfect-fit slam.

**Board 26**

East Deals

Both Vul

<p>♠ 5 3 ♥ K J 8 7 ♦ A K 2 ♣ K 7 5 2</p>		<p>♠ 10 9 7 6 4 2 ♥ 6 5 ♦ 10 ♣ A 9 6 3</p> <p>♠ A Q 8 ♥ A Q 9 3 2 ♦ Q 8 5 ♣ J 10</p> <p>♠ K J ♥ 10 4 ♦ J 9 7 6 4 3 ♣ Q 8 4</p>
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EW 5♥; EW 4N; EW 3♣; EW 2♦; NS 1♠; Par -650


One of the problems with Acol is the lack of a game-forcing raise. Some have adopted the American Jacoby 2NT and others the British Baron 2NT as a balancing game-forcing, but traditionalists will respond 2♣ to East's 1♥ planning to make a delayed game raise.

However when East rebids 2NT, showing a strong no trump, West can bid a forcing 3♥ and they can start investigating a slam. Cue bidding should highlight the weakness as slam is very poor, needing two finesses. Congratulations to the pairs who stop in a safe 4♥, given the danger at the 5-level.

**Board 27**

South Deals

None Vul

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

NS 3N; NS 3♠; NS 2♥; NS 3♦; EW 1♣; Par +400


The South hand is too strong<sup>7</sup> for a weak no trump, so the auction will start with 1♠. Presumably any West who overcalls 3♣ will play there, as their partner will have seen this type of hand before, but it is more normal for North to respond 1NT and East to overcall 2♦. If South doubles to show a strong no trump, then North will happily pass and score well on what will be a partscore hand for everyone.

Any East who stays quiet should do well.

**Board 28**

West Deals

N-S Vul

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

EW 6♣; EW 5N; EW 4♠; EW 5♦; EW 2♥; Par -920

If West opens and rebids clubs, then East will probably force to the excellent small slam. Some may decide to open 1♦, so that they can rebid 2♣ over a 1♠ response, and they will do well to play in the best suit. At this vulnerability, North should push aside any thoughts of making a Michaels Cue Bid with such poor suits.

The key to scoring well at matchpoints is avoiding negative scores and this (random) set seems to penalise aggression more than many would. Never be afraid to take a plus score!

<b>RECAP</b>				
	<b>N</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>W</b>
Average HCP	9.09	9.88	11.59	9.44
Balanced	11	13	12	16
Voids/singletons*	3/14	3/7	1/12	2/9
Suit with 7+	2	2	3	2
*Number of voids/number of singletons in all hands				

## Notes

1. Most experts play that a new suit after partner's opening pre-empt is forcing for one round. But, as always, the key is to have a partnership agreement.
2. In the non-competitive auction 1♥ – 1♠ – 4♣, the unnecessary jump to four clubs is normally played to show 4-card support for partner's suit, values for game, and shortage in the bid suit – a splinter bid. Some may play this as Gerber, but the splinter is more useful for bidding slams and you can always ask for aces later in the auction.
3. The auction 1NT – 2♦ (transfer) – 2♥ – 2♠ is often used to show at least five hearts and at least four spades, with invitational values or better. So it is **forcing** for one round. This will give you the space to show six hearts and four spades.
4. A cue bid in a competitive auction is often used to distinguish between a moderate and strong raise in partner's suit. In the auction (2♥) – Pass – (Pass) – 2♠; (Pass) – 3♥ shows a very good raise.
5. After a balancing 2NT bid, you should play **system on**. That is, play the same methods that you play when partner opens 2NT, typically Stayman and transfer bids.
6. How do you play a 3♦ response to partner's opening 1NT?
7. The hand AQxxx AJx 10xx Kx is too strong for a weak no trump because it is maximum in points, many of your honours are connected (located in the same suit) increasing their value, and you have a good 5-card suit. You also have no rebid problems since you can pass a 1NT response and rebid 2NT over a two-level response.