British Autumn Sim Pairs

Wednesday

5th October 2016

Welcome to the British Autumn Simultaneous Pairs. Thank you for playing. I hope you enjoy the event and also the commentary provided by a leading expert. The commentator for this set of hands is John Williams.

This is your last chance in 2016 to qualify for cash prizes. The leading pair drawn win £1000 and the same is the case for the first club drawn. There are other cash prizes. There will be a draw for major prizes at the AGM in late November and a full list will be published on the website.

You can find all the full details, results and last year's prize winners at **www.ebu.co.uk/sims/**

You can earn Blue points and they are awarded to the top third of the field. Don't be too impatient for the results! Provisional results will appear quickly but they won't be finalised and nor will the master point awards until all results are in and score corrections have been made. This can take up to three weeks. It really helps us if you can keep your scorecard for that period. Clubs should keep the travellers if still used.

Jeremy Dhondy, Chairman EBU

♠KQ85
♥J
♦Q106
♣A9652

♠J10963
♥1085
♦AK7
♣K7

♠74
♥AK6
♦J432
♣J843

♠A2
♥Q97432
♦985
♣Q10

HCP	
12	
11	9
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	2	-	-
S	1	-	2	-	-
E	-	1	-	1	1
W	-	1	-	1	1

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
	1♣	Pass	1♥
1♠	Pass	2♠	All Pass

All very delicate. North is likely to pass at his second turn, as his hand has become a defensive one and he lacks the power for 1NT: 2♣ is a possibility but the suit should surely be longer or stronger. East might bid 1NT at this point, intending to protect with 2♠ if N/S keep the bidding open (as South would with 2♥). His alternative action is to raise to 2♠ defensively at the first opportunity, which can't be taken too seriously by partner as he would make an unassuming cue bid with a stronger hand.

The hand plays well for South in 2♥, particularly if West starts with a give-away ♦A, so the trick is to go one down in 2♠ (even 2 down undoubled beats -110). The defence has to take care because the club suit is frozen and North equally can't lead a diamond to advantage, so options are limited and West is favourite to arrive at seven tricks for an excellent score (and if N/S bid on they will go minus).

♠AK943
♥76
♦AQ8
♣J54

♠J10
♥J10852
♦K76
♣A109

♠62
♥AK43
♦943
♣Q876

♠Q875
♥Q9
♦J1052
♣K32

HCP	
14	
9	9
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	3	-	3	1
S	-	3	-	3	1
E	1	-	1	-	-
W	1	-	1	-	-

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♠ **(All Pass)**

This is a frustrating hand for E/W. East in particular may feel the urge to break silence at some stage with a take-out double, which is okay in one sense, in that his side has an excellent heart fit, but if they play in it at the 3-level they could score very well undoubled but very badly against opponents prepared to chance a penalty double: the defence has only to cash ace and king of spades and exit with a trump to leave declarer poorly placed (if he plays on clubs the defence can exit in the same suit and there is no quick entry to the East hand to enjoy the 13th card and discard one of the three losing diamonds – unless a trump entry has been saved for just such a rainy day).

Playing in 2♠, declarer has an easy route to nine tricks. Either the defence play clubs to his advantage or he has time to discard one on a long diamond.

♠1085
♥-
♦AJ765
♣AJ1052

♠94 ♠J76
♥AQ972 ♥K86543
♦Q32 ♦8
♣Q74 ♣K98

♠AKQ32
♥J10
♦K1094
♣63

HCP		
	10	
10		7
	13	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	6	6	-	6	1
S	6	6	-	6	1
E	-	-	2	-	-
W	-	-	2	-	-

Board 3 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♠
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠ (All Pass)

There may be some wishful thinking in the above auction! Note that 3♦ is forcing after the use of fourth suit and that 5♠ would ask for good trumps. However, bidding to slam is adventurous to say the least and those who do will certainly score very well. Even the lower-scoring 6♦ will surely score well above average. E/W have a big heart fit but the danger of finding it is that N/S may well be propelled in the right direction. The play is comfortable enough for N/S in any strain provided no one finds the club lead. However, if they do, the diamonds need to be guessed correctly and that's asking a lot. I suspect that even 4♠+3 will be highly respectable, as will any penalty exacted against over-enthusiastic bidding by E/W.

♠Q72
♥952
♦A8742
♣A8

♠AJ653 ♠K108
♥A83 ♥KQJ7
♦3 ♦Q1095
♣KQ105 ♣76

♠94
♥1064
♦KJ6
♣J9432

HCP		
	10	
14		11
	5	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	2	5	5	3
W	2	2	5	5	3

Board 4 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

This looks like a common-sense auction to the best spot and everything will depend on locating ♠Q – or not.

In a two-way finesse position against silent opponents there really is nothing to go on so it's purely a matter of luck as to which defender declarer plays for the missing key card (and the anti-percentage line of laying down the two top trumps isn't a satisfactory alternative here). Really studious declarers might delay their choice in the hope of finding out more about the hidden hands but even that doesn't help. In fact it's downright unhelpful to discover (if you can) that North holds both minor-suit Aces: that might persuade you to decide that South is then more likely to hold ♠Q – wrong!.... If half the field score 620 and the other half 650, the misguess is fairly costly.

♠J7
♥QJ874
♦A4
♣A762

♠AKQ4 ♠9652
♥A65 ♥K3
♦92 ♦QJ75
♣K843 ♣Q109

♠1083
♥1092
♦K10863
♣J5

HCP		
	12	
16		8
	4	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	1	-	3	3
W	3	1	-	3	3

Board 5 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1♥	Pass	Pass
Dbl	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

North will open the bidding with no great enthusiasm and West will double for take-out after two passes (note that a 1NT overcall in the pass-out seat is normally played as 10-14 (give or take a point or two) so there are two reasons to prefer the double – the other being the excellent 4-card major. Should East bid 1♠ or 2♠? There's no hard-and-fast rule as to the strength needed to jump, so partnership agreement comes into play. Most would agree that this is a borderline decision here. 1NT is certainly a possible alternative and will score a goal if it leads to 3NT and a good guess in the club suit. By contrast, 4♠ is against the odds and any who bid and make it can count themselves very lucky.

This is a nasty little hand to judge well and the traveller will reflect that.

♠AKQ109732
♥QJ3
♦5
♣9

♠84
♥K2
♦Q1064
♣108432

♠65
♥A10985
♦A32
♣QJ5

♠J
♥764
♦KJ987
♣AK76

HCP	
12	
5	11
12	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	3	4
S	-	1	-	3	4
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Board 6 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		1♥	2♦
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Many will pass East's 11-count, though just as many will consider it too chunky to pass. When East does decide to open, quite a few will pass with the South hand and perhaps as some will decide to risk an overcall. These actions matter very little really as all roads probably point to 4♠ by North. The winning choice on all counts is to play in no-trumps, where game is guaranteed and ten tricks the likely outcome (there is a tiny chance of East leading ♦2, misguessed by North and holding the contract to nine tricks after a heart switch).

What of 4♠? Well, most of the time it will make (♣Q is a tempting lead). The same low diamond lead followed by a misguess and a heart switch, leads to one down, as does a low heart lead, or even ace and another heart followed by a diamond switch and a heart ruff. How likely is any of that? Not very, I fancy. Still, there is an undoubted opportunity for either side to score a spectacular goal – or own goal!

♠KQ6
♥A10
♦97
♣AQ6432

♠83
♥KQ742
♦AKQJ8
♣K

♠J92
♥8653
♦6432
♣95

♠A10754
♥J9
♦105
♣J1087

HCP	
15	
18	1
6	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	-	-	5	2
S	5	-	-	5	2
E	-	3	3	-	-
W	-	3	3	-	-

Board 7 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
1♥	2♣	Pass	Pass
2♦	3♣	3♥	3♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

N/S may well need divine intervention to reach game in clubs or spades because, after a 2♣ overcall by North, his partner will do well to raise clubs pre-emptively or to introduce his moth-eaten spade suit later, secure in the knowledge of an easy bolt-hole in clubs, if needed. The trick for E/W is to let the auction drop as quickly as possible, though it's very hard for West not to re-open in the auction shown. If North elects to overcall 1NT rather than 2♣ there is a possibility of the auction dying in 2♠. Even 3NT is a possible resting-place for N/S: a triumph on a heart lead, a disaster on a diamond. Note that if N/S do reach 4♠ or 5♣, 5♥* represents an excellent sacrifice whilst doubling the 4♠ or 5♣ will cost all the match-points. This is a great hand which will produce a variety of results and maybe lead to joy or grief on either side.

♠4
♥J984
♦AKJ75
♣J72

♠8632
♥A1072
♦Q83
♣K3

♠KQ975
♥5
♦10962
♣984

♠AJ10
♥KQ63
♦4
♣AQ1065

HCP	
10	
9	5
16	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	4	5	-	3
S	4	4	5	-	3
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Board 8 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Should North respond 1♦ or 1♥ to partner's 1♣? Well, 1♦ leaves him in a less than ideal spot if partner rebids 1♠ as he's not quite strong enough for a "responder's reverse", even with a passed hand, given the suit is so poor. In fact it matters little here, as South is sure to rebid 1♥ over 1♦, so it's difficult to envisage a contract other than 4♥ and it seems to be irrelevant as to who plays it.

The hand therefore revolves around the play of the trump suit. There are 11 tricks available, provided a second trump loser is avoided but that owes more to good luck than good judgment. There is also possible merit in setting up clubs prior to broaching trumps. It's likely that those who emerge with 450 in the plus columns will score pretty well!

♠Q4
♥J109
♦QJ10
♣KJ982

♠K109875 ♠632
♥3 ♥8752
♦92 ♦K865
♣10763 ♣A5

♠AJ
♥AKQ64
♦A743
♣Q4

HCP	
10	
3	7
20	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	5	-	3
S	5	5	6	1	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 9 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

There will be those who identify a heart fit, either via an opening which promises 20-22 high card points including a 5-card suit, or via the use of 5-card Stayman by North. Either 3NT or 4♥ can yield 12 tricks, thanks to the diamond position, provided South is declarer. Played by North on a spade lead, 4♥ is still OK for 11 tricks but 3NT offers only nine (though that's the least likely of all outcomes).

Those who bid 6♥ by South will register a very lucky near-top, with 6NT taking all the match-points. However, despite the 5-card suit and all those good intermediates, any Norths who invite slam – and any Souths who accept the invitation – are risking a minus score, which is only justified if they are desperate for a good result. A maximum of 32 high card points in the two hands isn't quite enough otherwise. Bearing this in mind, the key decision at match-points is whether to play in hearts or no-trumps.

♠AKJ743
♥Q54
♦A2
♣AK

♠6 ♠Q1092
♥AJ1093 ♥86
♦106 ♦J93
♣J9864 ♣Q752

♠85
♥K72
♦KQ8754
♣103

HCP	
21	
6	5
8	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	6	1	4	5
S	-	6	2	4	5
E	1	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Board 10 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

South may have a weak 2♦ opening available, or West a 2-suited gadget, either of which will lead to a completely different auction. Otherwise, North has an awkward choice of opening bid – 2NT or whatever system dictates as a strong hand with long spades (opening 1♠ risks partner passing with game available). It matters little which choice is adopted, provided the end result isn't a 4♠ contract (or, worse, 6♠).

As can be seen, the winning action is to reach 6♦, which needs only a 3-2 trump break to succeed. Getting there is another matter - perhaps North opens 2♣ and South decides he has enough to jump to 3♦? (unlikely) or North opens 2NT and South more or less bashes slam – in which case it had better be in diamonds!. So the big winner is 6♦ and next best (as so often) is 3NT.

♠1084
♥Q763
♦AK
♣J1095

♠J975 ♠AQ6
♥105 ♥94
♦86532 ♦1097
♣64 ♣KQ832

♠K32
♥AKJ82
♦QJ4
♣A7

HCP	
10	
1	11
18	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	1	5	2	4
S	3	1	5	2	4
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

The end result will always be 4♥ and it's purely a matter of how you get there: an old-fashioned 1♥-3♥-4♥ or something like the auction above, where 2NT shows a high-card raise to at least 3♥, after which South might be reluctant to sign off immediately and mark time with either 3♠ or 3♦, neither of which will get him beyond game (hopefully).

The play is equally easy to predict: on any lead declarer can win, draw trumps and discard a spade on the third diamond winner, the kindly trump break allowing access to dummy for a spade towards the king and 11 tricks.

Anything other than +450 to N/S will be a slight surprise.

♠ -
♥ 965
♦ A932
♣ 987653

♠ J1097 ♠ A32
♥ K10874 ♥ AQJ32
♦ K8 ♦ 74
♣ KQ ♣ A104

♠ KQ8654
♥ -
♦ QJ1065
♣ J2

HCP		
	4	
12		15
	9	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	4	-	-	-
S	-	4	-	-	-
E	-	-	3	-	2
W	-	-	5	-	3

Board 12 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

A similar sequence to the hand above, showing the possible advantage of the 2NT manoeuvre on more constructive hands. East might well consider himself worth a small flutter at his second turn with 3♠ or a more clear-cut 4♣ but partner surely won't be interested in slam even then. Some Souths will no doubt consider taking action with such good shape but the vulnerability is discouraging. Ten tricks are possible in diamonds so 5♦* is a theoretical save against 4♥: this only works if E/W take limited money but they are perhaps more likely to push on to 5♥ painlessly and 6♦ would finally prove too costly.

+450 to E/W will surely be the popular score, all things considered, though one or two Souths might just emerge a hero with -200. If so, well done!

♠ Q64
♥ 63
♦ 82
♣ KQ10952

♠ 10982 ♠ AK3
♥ KQJ104 ♥ 982
♦ 75 ♦ KJ6
♣ 83 ♣ AJ64

♠ J75
♥ A75
♦ AQ10943
♣ 7

HCP		
	7	
6		16
	11	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	2	-	-	-
S	2	2	-	-	-
E	-	-	3	2	1
W	-	-	2	1	-

Board 13 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	1♣	1♦
1♥	Pass	1NT	2♦
Pass	Pass	2♥	All Pass

I guess we all know that 1♥ by West in this auction normally promises a 5-carder: bearing this in mind, East can raise hearts – but to what level? In any case, 1NT describes the point count and shape better. 1NT can be held to seven tricks, provided South ducks hearts twice, and that would represent a good score for N/S. However, many Souths will persist with 2♦ (after all, they've paid their entry fee and are entitled to bid) but this leaves East with an easy 2♥ raise, content in the knowledge that he's shown his hand accurately.

This is an excellent competitive hand which will produce a variety of results – mainly plusses to E/W but one never knows!....

♠ K82
♥ 7
♦ Q43
♣ AQ7532

♠ J9 ♠ AQ543
♥ QJ6532 ♥ K104
♦ A1095 ♦ J72
♣ J ♣ 96

♠ 1076
♥ A98
♦ K86
♣ K1084

HCP		
	11	
9		10
	10	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	-	-	-	1
S	2	-	-	-	1
E	-	2	4	1	-
W	-	2	4	1	-

Board 14 : Dealer East : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
2♥	3♣	3♥	All Pass

This hand illustrates clearly the value of weak two bids: without the ability to open the bidding himself West would have to stand aside and hear North open 1♣, his partner overcall 1♠ and South show his high-card club raise with 2♠ or 3♣ (accordingly to system style). It's very doubtful whether he'd get into the auction now. Yet his side has a comfortable ten tricks available in hearts, thanks to the spade finesse and kindly diamond position.

However, if the bidding starts as shown above, South will do very well to avoid pushing E/W into game or suffering a penalty in 5♣, though 4♣ might just buy the contract for a small minus. Some N/S pairs will have the luxury of +110 for 3♣ making but after a weak 2♥ opening, there may be some much less satisfactory scores on their side of the traveller!

♠KJ84
♥K72
♦Q32
♣952

♠A97653 ♠Q10
♥63 ♥QJ1095
♦965 ♦AJ74
♣KJ ♣Q3

♠2
♥A84
♦K108
♣A108764

HCP	
9	
8	12
11	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	1	-	1	3
S	4	1	-	1	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 15 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			1♣
2♠	3♣	All Pass	

This is a pig of a hand for N/S if their opponents are playing weak jump overcalls (as most do these days). If a double of 2♠ is for penalties North would certainly consider it (though it's a bit thin and only to be contemplated at pairs). Otherwise – given that double is usually for TO - he has a nasty choice between pass and 3♣. After a pass it's anyone's guess as to what might happen but +50 for one down would look poor on the traveller. It's just possible that East might decide to push the boat out with 3♠, in which case a penalty double now would score well. After a simple 1♠ overcall North is sure to bid 1NT, leading to a likely part score in clubs.

Actually, it's a pig of a hand anyway, in the sense that N/S have an easy 3NT thanks to the magic lie of the cards. Anyone who bids it deserves his top for derring-do alone but that seems unlikely, so N/S scores are more likely to vary between +300, +130, +100 and +50. Annoying!

♠Q42
♥J97
♦Q83
♣10752

♠1098 ♠A765
♥AQ5432 ♥K108
♦J52 ♦AK9
♣J ♣KQ8

♠KJ3
♥6
♦10764
♣A9643

HCP	
5	
8	19
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	2	4	4	4
W	1	2	4	4	4

Board 16 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

This will be a popular auction leading to an easy 11 tricks unless North is sufficiently inspired to find a spade lead (or to an unlikely 12 if North opts for a diamond and declarer has the courage to run it). Ten tricks in 4♥ is sure to score quite poorly.

There will be those who bash 3NT either directly or via an enquiry as to opener's trump quality. They will be rewarded with a minimum return of 630 (660 without a spade lead). However, East has to have sufficient confidence in partnership methods to insist on no-trumps: otherwise, if there is a hole in hearts, a spade lead could be horribly damaging, in theory.

Without a weak two opening being available, game in hearts or no-trumps is available to E/W just as easily, so it's likely to be the determined pairs specialists who top the charts.

♠QJ432
♥2
♦K987
♣764

♠- ♠K107
♥KQ87 ♥J109654
♦J105432 ♦A
♣J105 ♣Q83

♠A9865
♥A3
♦Q6
♣AK92

HCP	
6	
7	10
17	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	-	4	-
S	3	-	-	4	-
E	-	1	4	-	-
W	-	1	4	-	-

Board 17 : Dealer North : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	1♥	Dbl
3♥	3♠	Pass	4♠
5♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

The auction shown above is far from cast in stone: firstly, does East open 1♥ or a weak 2♥? There is a case for either. Whatever is chosen, does South overcall in spades with such a modest suit or double first? These days many expert tournament players make simple overcalls at the one-level on quite strong hands, though the traditional method is to double and then bid a suit to show a hand too strong for the original overcall. Then again, how many hearts does West bid at his turn? Surely 4♥ at least if partner has opened a weak 2♥, otherwise the size of the pre-empt is a matter for partnership style. It would seem that N/S should always find their way to 4♠, against which only the staidest of opponents would fail to save in 5♥. That's the biggest test of all if it arises because South has the chance to ruin everything by bidding on: it's very unlucky that there are three unavoidable losers. There'll be a few sorry red faces here, I fancy.

♠9842
♥A984
♦K83
♣AK

♠K
♥KQ1062
♦AJ64
♣432

♠A1073
♥J7
♦107
♣QJ1076

♠QJ65
♥53
♦Q952
♣985

HCP	
14	
13	8
5	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	1	-
S	-	1	-	1	-
E	3	-	3	-	1
W	3	-	3	-	1

Board 18 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♦	Pass	2♥	All Pass

The auction is as near to automatic as any you'll find in this event (anyone who contemplates bidding over 1♥ with the North hand hasn't been reading the right books).

Some defenders may rush to cash ace and king of clubs, in the hope that partner either has the queen or is able to give a ruff. However, it's clear from counting points that partner is by no means certain to have an entry for either opportunity so it must be better to lead a low trump straight away (and cash the ace when next on lead) to stop declarer ruffing any diamonds in dummy. There is a trump, a diamond and two clubs to be enjoyed in defence and the only hope of a fifth trick is picking up a second diamond. Those who manage it should score well.

♠A3
♥KQ75432
♦J82
♣6

♠6542
♥A
♦A95
♣A9873

♠K109
♥J98
♦KQ763
♣54

♠QJ87
♥106
♦104
♣KQJ102

HCP	
10	
12	9
9	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	1	3	-	1	1
W	1	3	-	1	1

Board 19 : Dealer South : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
1♣	3♥	All Pass	

The North hand would be a tad too strong for an opening 3♥ pre-empt (particularly bearing in mind the outside ace) but once partner has passed and right-hand opponent has opened the bidding, it would be daft not to exert maximum pressure. East is in a very difficult position after the 3♥ pre-empt: a double would suggest a 4-card spade suit (and more points), no-trumps a proper heart holding (and more points) and 4♦ an altogether stronger hand. Any diamond contract above the three level is doomed: a trump looks to be the best lead but even after ♣K or a heart the defence can recover by winning ♠A and switching to a trump.

The only way E/W can capitalise on their assets is for West to double 3♥ in the pass-out seat and for East to leave the double in. That way there is a likely +300 for the defenders. However, East needs to have passed smoothly at his first turn in order to prevent any question being put to the tournament director later and, in any case, West has to convince himself that the double is justified.

♠Q9
♥J82
♦Q9652
♣982

♠AK42
♥Q3
♦K1074
♣J73

♠J8753
♥K4
♦83
♣A1065

♠106
♥A109765
♦AJ
♣KQ4

HCP	
5	
13	8
14	

Makeable contracts					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	2	-	-
S	-	-	2	-	-
E	3	1	-	4	2
W	3	-	-	3	2

Board 20 : Dealer West : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
1NT	Pass	2♥	Dbl
3♠	All Pass		

We can assume that 2♥ will normally be a transfer bid and the double will show hearts. Some Souths might prefer a bold 3♥ to the double but West, with a near-maximum and 4-card spade suit, is likely to bid 3♠ either way. This will end the auction unless N/S get over-heated and incur a penalty in 4♥, though this seems unlikely.

3♠ is comfortable enough thanks to the kindly trump break and position of ♦A. Those who don't use transfers can make ten tricks in spades when it's played by East, either because South leads a helpful ♣K or by end-playing South later after eliminating his diamonds and trumps. It follows that when a spade contract is played by West, an initial club lead from North solves any later problem. +170 will score very well for E/W.

♠K3
♥AJ64
♦Q10863
♣76

♠J104
♥95
♦A954
♣10943

♠A765
♥K32
♦K7
♣AK52

♠Q982
♥Q1087
♦J2
♣QJ8

HCP	
10	
5	17
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	3	1	-	2	1
W	3	1	-	2	1

Board 21 : Dealer North : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	2NT	All Pass

Such fiddly little boards can play a large part in the destination of pairs tournaments. There is clearly a case for West passing 1♠ out but aggressive players rarely heed such advice (and probably gain on balance). There is equally a case for East passing the 2♠ raise (which is preferred to a 1NT response on grounds of the ruffing value) but that could be silly if partner is topside for his bid. It must also be pointed out that if E/W adopt a passive approach, N/S are unlikely to defend at the one level and, once they intervene, they have an excellent chance of locating their heart fit. This will push E/W into 2♠ in some auctions, where they should scramble home.

So in sum, E/W can gain a small plus from defending 2♥, a comparatively major plus from making 2♠ or a small minus from going overboard in 2NT. The big prize is reserved for anyone bold enough to get 200 from 2♥ doubled!

♠J9542
♥82
♦KJ942
♣K

♠1086
♥A10
♦A106
♣J10873

♠AQ73
♥KJ94
♦Q73
♣42

♠K
♥Q7653
♦85
♣AQ965

HCP	
8	
9	12
11	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	1	1	2	3
W	1	1	1	2	3

Board 22 : Dealer East : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		1NT	All Pass

With four relatively Cautious Cuthberts around the table this will be a frequent auction and the number of tricks achieved will vary considerably: the maximum, double-dummy, is nine but that depends on dropping the bare ♠K, which seems unlikely to say the least, unless South has entered the bidding and declarer can judge at some stage that he's therefore overwhelmingly likely to hold that card.

Many Souths will have a system bid to protect over 1NT and some will be unable to resist the temptation to use it, arguing that the vulnerability is in their favour: this is something of a false assumption (a penalty is a penalty at any vulnerability and is likely to outscore anything available from a part score). Here, for example, an aggressive E/W combination can reap a rich harvest if West simply relies on his side's known superior point-count.
Another excellent pairs hand offering a variety of results – some of them dramatic.

♠Q865
♥109
♦943
♣K843

♠AK1072
♥J2
♦Q1086
♣J10

♠J4
♥AKQ73
♦AKJ72
♣7

♠93
♥8654
♦5
♣AQ9652

HCP	
5	
11	18
6	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	-	-	-
S	2	-	-	-	-
E	-	6	6	4	1
W	-	6	6	4	1

Board 23 : Dealer South : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♦	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♦	All Pass

West's opening bid will be venturesome for some of us, routine for others. The 2♠ rebid will be through gritted teeth. When East game forces with 3♦, some Wests will use a "fast-arrival" 5♦ bid in preference to an apparently encouraging 4♦: it's a matter of agreed partnership style in some sense but, in the context of seeing things through, 4♦ is a sensible option – remember that he's already shown a minimum opening, has four good trumps, an ace-king and hopefully a now useful ♥J. Over the alternative 5♦ bid, East has to shut his eyes and bid one for the road.
So will 6♦ win all the match-points? Perhaps not quite: it will certainly score well but the big winner will be anyone who prefers 6♥ – naughty but nice!

♠A
♥7543
♦Q763
♣10962

♠J53 ♠KQ972
♥J1082 ♥9
♦95 ♦AJ104
♣AJ74 ♣K83

♠10864
♥AKQ6
♦K82
♣Q5

HCP	
6	
7	13
14	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	1	-	-
S	-	-	1	-	-
E	2	-	-	3	2
W	2	-	-	3	2

Board 24 : Dealer West : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	Pass	1♠	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♠	All Pass		

This board should represent a reasonably untroubled episode after the stressful slam-bidding exercise just passed (or not!) The auction might be curtailed if West prefers a direct 2♠ raise to 1NT. South will be chafing at the bit with those strong hearts and 14 high card points but, in all honesty, what can he do? – to double for take-out and hear a 2♣ response from partner would leave him even more frustrated.

A spade part score is certainly the top spot for E/W, with nine tricks looking possible and ten not impossible if all goes well and/or the defence slips slightly. Leading the a first round of trumps from dummy carries an important premium in that the ace beats thin air. It's not clear that this will always transpire, however, when the defence starts with two rounds of hearts, so +110 will feature occasionally on the traveller.

♠A642
♥Q5
♦Q109
♣KQ108

♠87 ♠KQJ95
♥KJ42 ♥107
♦6543 ♦KJ7
♣J53 ♣A64

♠103
♥A9863
♦A82
♣972

HCP	
13	
5	14
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	1	-	-
S	1	-	1	-	-
E	-	-	-	1	-
W	-	-	-	1	-

Board 25 : Dealer North : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	All Pass	

Hands up all those who bid 2♠ over the opening 1NT! Ouch! This might be a winning action on some occasions but is odds-against otherwise. East's hand is primarily defensive: how much more comfortable it will feel on occasion to lead ♠K against 1NT, rather than toil in 2♠ (whether doubled or not) opposite an unsuitable dummy!

It might seem superficially that after an initial pass and a transfer to 2♥, 2♠ is now somehow a safer action. But that's not so: the South hand is still unlimited and may well have an axe poised. The key to it all, despite the robust trumps, is the lack of a sixth spade: it's that that makes the difference so often between a playable and an unplayable spot.

Here the proof of the pudding is that N/S are unlikely to make a heart contract, and E/W are equally unlikely to make one in spades. QED.

♠K532
♥Q1053
♦1072
♣72

♠A6 ♠1084
♥AK962 ♥J87
♦AJ93 ♦KQ
♣K5 ♣J10843

♠QJ97
♥4
♦8654
♣AQ96

HCP	
5	
19	7
9	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	3	4	1	2
W	3	3	4	1	2

Board 26 : Dealer East : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		Pass	Pass
1♥	Pass	1NT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♥	All Pass

1♥ is the best opening bid available to West (anything stronger is fraught with danger). We have seen a number of hands recently where responder has to decide between a 1NT response and a direct raise with only 3-card support: in truth there's no hard-and-fast rule to help (certainly a direct 2♥ here would by no means be a mistake). 2♥ would shorten the auction whilst 1NT requires partner to make a game-forcing rebid (or risk missing game) on something of a wing and a prayer. All is well, however, when East confesses to 3-card heart support: 4♥ looks the right option, rather than 3♥ which could be through gritted teeth, and describes this ace-less collection well.

4♥ plays comfortably – provided declarer makes the standard safety-play of a low trump towards the jack. Otherwise, ouch!

♠432
♥1093
♦J1098
♣K83

♠KJ875
♥K72
♦K53
♣102

♠A9
♥AQ86
♦A42
♣AQ95

♠Q106
♥J54
♦Q76
♣J764

HCP	
4	
10	20
6	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	5	5	7	7	7
W	5	5	7	7	7

Board 27 : Dealer South : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
Pass	Pass	2NT	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4NT	All Pass		

This sequence is best played as invitational in no-trumps. West is showing 11-12 high card points with a 5-card spade suit. If he held a stronger hand (doubtful here of course when he has already passed) he would need to investigate the best slam by next bidding at the 4-level (whether this is natural or a cue-bid is a matter for partnership agreement).
There is even a good case for re-bidding 3NT rather than 4NT. It's only the fact that partner might have fitting cards that makes even an invitation acceptable. What do I know? The suggested sequence is based on the premise that slam with a 10-count opposite 20-22 requires opener to be either maximum with no fit or to have a fitting hand with good spade support and good controls. So here I'd be among those lamenting the fact that with hearts 3-3 and both spades and clubs behaving perfectly, no less than a grand slam will do (in either spades or no-trumps). So much for science!

♠107
♥J
♦AJ863
♣108543

♠653
♥K8642
♦92
♣AQ6

♠K42
♥10953
♦54
♣KJ92

♠AQJ98
♥AQ7
♦KQ107
♣7

HCP	
6	
9	7
18	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	6	1	5	3
S	2	6	1	5	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Board 28 : Dealer West : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♦
All Pass			

The first point to make here is that South is just short of a game-forcing 3♦ rebid and must rely on partner keeping the bidding open over 2♦ with a suitable hand. North is eminently suitable for such an action here and what's more – however he views South's 3♥ bid (cue-bid or no-trump enquiry?) – he's fully entitled to insist on playing in diamonds. South's raise to slam is now no more than an exercise in partnership trust. Perhaps the trust is a mite unjustified in this instance, in that slam depends on a successful spade finesse. However, having got as far as 5♦, boats have been pretty much burned: game in diamonds will surely score very moderately, so if you're not going to play in 4♠ you might as well go for the big one.
Or perhaps the auction envisaged is overly based on a sight of all four hands!

♠932
♥96
♦95
♣AKQJ65

♠AK6
♥KJ754
♦AK742
♣-

♠Q10854
♥A
♦Q1086
♣1093

♠J7
♥Q10832
♦J3
♣8742

HCP	
10	
18	8
4	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	7	3	7	1
W	-	7	3	7	1

Board 29 : Dealer North : All vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Dbl	2♣	2♠	3♣
4♣	Pass	4♠	All Pass

Short of North opening 3♣ and South raising pre-emptively to 4♣ (or even jumping to 5♣!), South needs to jam the auction somehow, however risky the enterprise: it's evident that West may very well have a powerful hand and needs to be denied the chance to express it freely (if 1♣ is passed round he'll have a wealth of suitable options).
Perhaps the auction above errs on the fanciful side but it's maybe plausible enough to suggest that in the face of unbridled enterprise, E/W may just subside in game – a pity for them when they have 13 easy tricks in diamonds or spades.
E/W are to be congratulated if they reach slam, particularly if they do so after a serious bombardment. If they fail, N/S may have reason to be proud of themselves!

♠AQ53
♥6
♦972
♣AK982

♠K976
♥Q74
♦K1054
♣105

♠4
♥A109853
♦AQJ3
♣Q3

♠J1082
♥KJ2
♦86
♣J764

HCP	
13	
8	13
6	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	-	-	3	2
S	4	-	-	3	2
E	-	2	3	-	-
W	-	2	3	-	-

Board 30 : Dealer East : Love all

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
		1♥	Pass
1♠	2♣	2♥	3♣
3♥	All Pass		

Another extremely delicate competitive auction (it's a pity that so many of these occur among the later boards which many of us don't get to play). North would like the security of a sixth club to justify his intervention but five good ones, a singleton and well-placed spades make pass pretty much unthinkable. Is South worth 3♣ in competition? (Just about, particularly if he has a stronger way of showing a good raise.) West is now in the hot seat: it's easier to bid 3♥ if partner has introduced diamonds rather than rebid his 6-carder. East then has to resist any temptation to bid on, which should be possible: (a) partner might himself have had a stronger way of bidding a forward-going 3♥ and (b) the club holding looks like waste paper – as indeed it is.

N/S seem unlikely to bid on in clubs, for fear of pushing E/W into a making game. In fact they need to guess trumps to even make the part score...

♠AJ72
♥AQ1098
♦3
♣975

♠8543
♥73
♦AQ96
♣J63

♠10
♥K62
♦KJ875
♣AK108

♠KQ96
♥J54
♦1042
♣Q42

HCP	
11	
7	14
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	2	2	-
S	-	-	2	2	-
E	2	4	-	-	2
W	2	4	-	-	2

Board 31 : Dealer South : NS vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
			Pass
Pass	1♥	2♦	2♥
3♦	3♥	4♦	All Pass

The auction pictures all four players bidding to the limit of their hands. The key to lift-off is East's first bid: many purists would argue for a pass, bearing in mind the broken 5-card suit, but the well-placed ♥K, the good second suit of clubs and the singleton spade combine to suggest that this is not the time for undue caution.

Once East has elected to intervene, and supposing that his partner is prepared to raise diamonds, it might be tempting to sell out to 3♥. However, 4♦ would be unlucky to fail and has a major possible plus factor in that any attempt to buy the hand in 4♥ will meet a deserved and heavy fate.

There should be no difficulty in wrapping up ten tricks in diamonds, of course.

♠J875
♥KQ63
♦Q
♣A954

♠Q1094
♥10
♦K9632
♣K72

♠A2
♥AJ942
♦8
♣QJ1086

♠K63
♥875
♦AJ10754
♣3

HCP	
12	
8	12
8	

Makeable contracts	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	-	-	-
S	-	1	-	-	-
E	3	-	1	-	1
W	3	-	1	-	1

Board 32 : Dealer West : EW vulnerable

West	***North***	***East***	***South***
Pass	1♣	1♥	All Pass

Does North have a proper opening bid? Probably not. Is that likely to stop him opening the bidding? Probably not. Assuming he does, East will surely overcall 1♥, content to defend thereafter if possible. Does South have a sound bid available? Probably not, unless system allows, and this time it's more likely that discretion will otherwise overcome valour. In which case it's difficult to see how either West or North can improve the shining hour.

One advantage of North's bold action is that if he does decide to open, 1♣ is (a) the most flexible choice and (b) the one which keeps the opposition out of their best fit. 1♥ will prove a sweaty affair but a profitable defensive cross-ruff doesn't quite materialise, meaning that declarer is favourite to prevail – just.

How the scores pan out is impossible to predict.