Bridge England Sim Pairs

Thanks to our commentators:

Andy Bowles          Sally Brock
Fiona Brown          David Burn
Jeremy Dhondy        Gunnar Hallberg
Frances Hinden       Graham Osborne

Wednesday
3rd February 2016
Thank you for taking part in this Bridge England Simultaneous Pairs. I hope you have enjoyed the event and will take pride in having supported our international teams.

2015 was a good year with all our teams making their way through to the knock out stages in the World Championships. Our Women’s team continued their excellent form and gained a bronze medal. Our Open team finished 4th after two agonising close matches.

This event is to specifically raise funds for our Junior Teams. We have, for the first time, a team who will represent England at U16 level in the World Championships to be held in Italy in August. Our U26 team have also qualified.

The EBU provides funding for these teams. Other important areas, such as development and teaching also require support and that means that the international budgets are never as large as we would wish. The players receive no personal payment from the EBU and have each committed much time and energy to representing their country at the bridge table.

I very much hope you have enjoyed the hands and the expert commentary, much of which has been supplied by the players who will be playing for our country this year. I also hope that you will continue to support this event and encourage your club to continue participation.

Jeremy Dhondy
February 2016
This is a hard hand to bid especially if you don’t play inverted minors. I can imagine quite a few sequences going 1♦-3NT making 11 tricks on a diamond lead and 12 on a heart lead. E/W may help by bidding diamonds too aggressively and being doubled. A score of +500 should be above average for N/S.

If your side play inverted minor raises then there is a better chance of reaching the excellent 6♠. If North moves over 3NT then, after a couple of cue bids, 4NT is usually whatever version of Blackwood you play. That should lead to the slam.

West should have little trouble wrapping up ten tricks in 3NT. After a heart lead to the King and Ace (say), it looks best to test the clubs and, when they split, cross to troubled overbidding route if you were not a passed hand. If East rebids no spades, it looks best to test the clubs and, when they split, cross to West sh.

If East passes on the first round, then in response to 1♥ he can bid 2♠ because if partner rebids 2♥, as he will on many hands, East can now afford 2♠. This would be a distinctly overbidding route if you were not a passed hand. On this occasion West rebids no-trumps and you can afford to check for a spade fit before passing 3NT. If you are playing a Strong NT system, it should still lead to 3NT via Stayman.

Win the heart return, cash ♠Q and overtake ♠J to score three hearts. If North moves over 3NT then, after a couple of cue bids, 4NT is usually whatever version of Blackwood you play. That should lead to the slam.

If you play Acol, don’t be tempted by 1♥ on the West hand because of the bad hearts. It will be difficult to show your shape later if the auction develops. If West opens 1♥, should North overcall 1♠? It doesn’t take much room and it isn’t a good suit. However, it does give partner the ability to bounce the auction if he has a fit. No game is making for E/W on any sensible defence but it will be quite hard to stop short, irrespective of whether North intervenes or not.

If North leads a spade, the only chance is to run some diamonds and hope something goes wrong in the defence but a ninth trick will be hard to concede. In theory, the defence can choose to cash top clubs and switch to a heart which would lead to 3NT–4 but I can’t see that being a likely defence. Strong no-trumpers are also likely to get to game via 1NT - 3NT.
### Board 4: Dealer West: All vulnerable

**West** | **North** | **East** | **South**
---|---|---|---
Pass | 1♦ | 1♠ | Dble
Pass | 2♦ | Pass | 3♠
Pass | 3NT | All Pass

The first close decision falls to South. Should he bid 2♥ or double? With such a poor suit the decision to double looks right. When North rebids 2♦ it is clear for South to raise to 3♦.

North might look for the minor suit game at teams, but with two outside aces and known diamond support opposite, trying for the no-trump game looks right, and there are nine top tricks.

5♦ would be a comfortable make on (e.g.) ♦K lead. You win, draw trumps and soon discard a spade loser on ♦K. You just lose a spade and a top heart.

### Board 5: Dealer North: N/S vulnerable

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

What a horrible misfit! Often poor players never stop bidding when there is a misfit, but a much better rule is to stop as soon as you can. Some might choose to open the East hand with 1♠, but it usually works out best to open your longer suit. West starts by bidding his longer minor, but, when East rebids hearts, a modest 2NT is best and that will end the auction.

Although Deep Finesse may make that contract easily enough, it might not be so easy for a flesh-and-blood declarer. A diamond contract would be a little more comfortable if E/W can contrive to get there.

### Board 6: Dealer East: E/W vulnerable

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

A long auction to the top spot. The first three bids are clear. Then it is easy for North to bid his good 3-card spade suit (South won’t raise as he himself can’t have four). South is not quite sure what to bid next as he would like to show (a) his club stopper, (b) his seventh diamond, and (c) his strong doubleton heart holding. Instead he bids a fourth-suit forcing 3♠ to find out more about North’s hand. North shows the delayed diamond support, South the delayed heart support, and North, with no real slam ambitions, settles for the major-suit game.

With both red suit finesses failing, it will be hard to score more than +420.
Board 7: Dealer South: All vulnerable

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2♣ (?)</td>
<td>4♥</td>
<td>4NT</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>5♥</td>
<td>Dble</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Pass

Is the South hand worth opening 1♥? Not really – the spade pips are dreadful and ♥KQ doubleton is not worth five points. However, a weak 2♣ is worse because it has so much outside the spade suit, and it feels wimpish to pass with six spades. West has a similar problem – a 6-5 hand makes him want to bid, but he also has a dreadful suit and the singleton ♦K is not an asset. 2♠ is more tempting if it shows specifically hearts and diamonds, but it is more common to play it as hearts and another.

North’s 4♥ is a splinter, setting up a forcing pass, but East has an astonishingly good hand and can see that even 6♥ might make. 4NT initially asks for partner’s minor, but followed by 5♥ can show a good 5♥ bid. 5♥ is (disappointingly for East) one off, but 4♠ is making. I expect a number of N/S pairs will bid on to 5♠, also one off.

Board 8: Dealer West: Love all

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<tr>
<th>West</th>
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<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♣</td>
<td>Pass (?)</td>
<td>1NT</td>
<td>2♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>3♥ (?)</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dble</td>
<td>All Pass</td>
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A lot of decisions in the auction. Love all is the time to bid a lot, but North’s heavy spade holding and bad clubs are both off-putting, as is the fact that 2♠ is a ‘non-exclusive’ overcall; i.e. it does not take up any room. South has fewer high cards but more shape and much better pips in his suit. West has 15 HCP but nothing to bid. East has an obvious 2♠ bid, and the spotlight falls on North. He won’t want to pass out 2♠ which might well make, so tries 3♥. West was also expecting to make 2♠ so can’t pass out 3♥.

The match-points on this auction will depend on the play: if E/W can take 3♥ doubled two off, that is +300 and a top while +100 is a bad board. West will have to switch to trumps at some point, even away from his ♥KJx, to get the maximum number of tricks.

Board 9: Dealer North: E/W vulnerable

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1♦</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2NT (?)</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>3♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3NT</td>
<td>All Pass</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

East must not open his hand a weak 2♣, particularly in second seat vulnerable; that shows a better suit and fewer high cards outside. West has a difficult rebid as his hand is too strong for 3♠. 2NT may be the least of all evils. East still has the wrong hand to insist on playing in spades. 3NT is a fine contract and only a spade lead (or switch) will hold it to nine tricks. Most results are likely to be from 3NT making 9-11 tricks for E/W but, in an alternative match-point universe, I have a lot of sympathy for a 1♣ opening in third seat by South. The vulnerability is right for a very light opening, and he has a suit he definitely wants led. This will not be a success if the auction continues 1♣ – (Dbl) – Pass – (Pass ). South would have nowhere to go to escape a large penalty, but East may not think his pips good enough to pass the double.
Board 10: Dealer East: All vulnerable

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<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
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<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1NT(12-14) Dble</td>
<td>2♦*</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Dble (T/O)</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redble**</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>2♠</td>
<td>Dble***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Pass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Clubs and a higher suit
** Bid your other suit, partner! (bidding a suit would show 5 cards)
*** Penalty

E/W may escape if North bids 2♥ over 2♠ but with extra values there is a big upside to making a second double. We suggest playing the first double after the opponents run as take-out and subsequent doubles as penalty. 2♠ will probably score -800. Those playing a strong NT will open 1♠ and are likely to defend a heart part-score.

Board 11: Dealer South: Love all

<table>
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<tr>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1♣</td>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>2♠*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4♠**</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>4♠***</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4♠***</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>4NT</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5♠</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>5♦</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6♥</td>
<td>All Pass</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

* 2♠ is not ideal and a slight underbid. I would double if this denied four spades.
** 4♠ a descriptive bid showing 1 or 0 clubs, 4+ hearts and a good passed hand.
*** 4♠/4♣ 1st or 2nd round control
5♠ 1 keycard
5♦ 1 Q ask

How many pairs will bid 6♥? It will need good partnership judgment. West, as a passed hand, is happy to splinter and, if his partner is good enough to cue-bid 4♦, to make an aggressive cue-bid of 4♠. Given the opponents’ bidding and West’s bidding, West is very likely to have a club void. The fitting spade values now make slam look attractive. South may well double. With hearts breaking 2-1, the play is a stroll.

Board 12: Dealer West: N/S vulnerable

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<th>West</th>
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<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>Dble*</td>
<td>2♥</td>
<td>Dble**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3♠***</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>4♠****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Pass</td>
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</table>

* This double will not be to everyone’s taste but it shows our values, four spades and puts us in a good position to compete.
** A classic responsive double because you are too strong to bid 2♠ or 3♠ and partner hasn’t guaranteed 4♠ so bidding 4♠ is risky.
*** Bidding 3♥ here is effective because it makes it much more difficult for the opponents and the vulnerability is on your side.
**** My preference with partnership agreement would be to double 3♥ rather than bid 4♠. However partner will bid 3♠ and we will be in the same contract.

On the singleton diamond lead, you will win in hand and play ♠K (East has shown up with ♦K; West is known to have ♠A and ♥K) A crafty declarer will be able to make 12 tricks by finessing ♥Q and running ♠10.
Board 13: Dealer North: All vulnerable

West  North  East  South
Pass  1NT(12-14)  2♠

3♥  3♠  All Pass

This will be a popular auction at tables occupied by sensible people. Some hard hitters will end up in 4♥ by E/W or 4♠ by N/S. Although careful defence will beat 4♠, the top score for N/S will be 790 for bidding and making game in spades, doubled by East. One way of holding a spade contract to nine tricks is by playing a forcing defence, i.e. ♥A followed by a diamond to the ace and a heart back.

Playing a weak NT, vulnerable, is in my opinion fine at pairs. It creates a lot of positive swings and only a few telephone numbers.

Board 14: Dealer East: Love all

West  North  East  South
Pass  Pass  Pass
Pass  1NT  Pass  2♠
Pass  3NT  All Pass

3NT will be reached in many different ways. Strong or weak NT, playing Walsh* or upgrading North’s hand to 18-19 will still lead to the superior contract. The favourite lead will be a heart, low or the Jack, make your choice. Ten tricks can be made double dummy. Declarer has to start by giving up a spade trick! If East wins to play a diamond through, now declarer can set up that suit. In another scenario, declarer just gives up a club. It’s a nice ‘tempo’ hand.

* Bidding shorter major, in preference to longer minor, on a 6-10 HCP hand.

Board 15: Dealer South: N/S vulnerable

West  North  East  South
Pass

2♥  Pass  4♥  All Pass

At a first glance this looks quite boring, but a closer inspection reveals an exciting scenario. Receiving the ♥K lead in 4♥, you have to decide if the club finesse should be taken or not. It’s all about ambition. If you found it hard to get out of bed this morning, you ought to settle for 11 tricks.

Assuming you jumped out of bed, looking forward to a jolly day, take the finesse, move up the leader board when it wins and put a happy grin on your face. If you can’t stand risking a finesse for an extra overtrick, my advice would be: Stay in bed, reading Simon’s How to lose at bridge.

Punters who reach slam will get an enormous score thanks to the lucky layout.
Board 16: Dealer West: E/W vulnerable  

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<th>West</th>
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<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1NT</td>
<td>All Pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

South will lead a heart around to declarer’s King. Rather than expose the location of his high cards by playing spades, declarer should probably play diamonds at trick two. If he plays a diamond to the nine and North’s ten, North will attack clubs, hoping to find his partner with the King or ten. To cater for the possibility of South’s holding ♥10xx, he should switch to the Queen, preparing to smother the Jack on the next round. Declarer will win, play a diamond to the ace, and another diamond to North’s Queen. Now N/S’s signals will be put to the test.

If North plays ace and another club, declarer will finish with nine tricks. If South manages to convey that he doesn’t have ♥10, North will play a heart and the defence will cash out to hold the contract to eight tricks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Makeable contracts</th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦  ♥  ♠  ♣ NT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 8</td>
<td>N 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 10</td>
<td>S 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 10</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>1 1 3 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP W</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>1 1 3 2</td>
<td></td>
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Board 17: Dealer North: Love all  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1NT</td>
<td>Pass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At love-all, playing match-points, you should accept any excuse for coming in over 1NT. Natural overcallers will bid 2♣; pairs that play Astro or one of its variants will reach 3♣; exponents of Multi-Landy may have to take their chances against 1NT.

If North makes the natural lead of ♥10, that gives West the information he needs to make an extra heart trick, by covering with the jack and later leading to the eight. Even on a non-heart lead, an astute declarer may avoid three heart losers. Once North has shown up with ♠A and ♠J, South is marked with all remaining high cards for his 1NT opening, so West knows his only chance in hearts is to lead to the eight. West also wants to ruff a spade, but ruffing a spade before touching trumps fails as the cards lie – North will win the first trump and play his fourth spade, giving South a ruff. Instead, West may play a trump to the jack early. If North wins that, declarer can ruff a spade and then take another diamond finesse. A very clever North could thwart that plan by ducking the first diamond.

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<th>Makeable contracts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦  ♥  ♠  ♣ NT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 5</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 14</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 13</td>
<td>E 1 1 3 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP W</td>
<td>W 1 1 3 1</td>
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Board 18: Dealer East: N/S vulnerable  

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
<th>South</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>1♥</td>
<td>1♣</td>
<td>3♥</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4♣</td>
<td>Dble</td>
<td>All Pass</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Many different auctions are possible, depending on whether East opens, how high E/W compete, and how well N/S judge the auction. N/S can make 4♥ but no more. E/W have a cheap save in 4♣.

If they find that, it may be hard for N/S, with their double fit, to resist competing to 5♣ or 5♥. However, North, with all his values in clubs, may judge to defend 4♣. On this occasion he’d be right.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>♦  ♥  ♠  ♣ NT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>HCP 9</td>
<td>N 2 4 4 - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 7</td>
<td>S 2 4 4 - -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP 13</td>
<td>E - - - 2  -</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCP W</td>
<td>W - - - 2  -</td>
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A close decision for North with 12 HCP and useful middle cards in each suit, but pairs scoring demands some caution in game bidding. South has a nice 5-card suit but the rest of his hand is not so good. All the same, I expect with 13 HCP most will take a shot at game. A heart lead runs to the queen and declarer will have 11 easy tricks with the aid of the diamond finesse.

Against strong no-trumpers, after a 1NT opening, some Wests may try an aggressive overcall of 1♣. Now the contract is more likely to be played by North. East’s heart lead will be through the Queen and declarer will end up with only ten tricks and a poor score for the declaring side.

This hand has the potential to be an interesting part-score battle. The weak NT opening is passed round to South who protects with 2♥, perhaps showing hearts and a minor for some pairs. East, in turn, now has a protective decision. Some may go quietly with a pass. With better spades, you could try 2♣ (showing four cards only since you passed the 1NT opening) but here a double is more flexible, taking a slight chance on the diamond suit. Over 2♣, North too has a decision, with three-card heart support and a ruffing value, but the strong spades argue in favour of defending.

A club lead against 2♠ should secure six tricks for the defence. 2♥ by N/S can be defeated if the defence find their diamond ruff, but (say) ♠Q lead to the Ace and a trump switch will not be good enough.

For the third deal running, the bidding may well commence with a weak NT and again an interesting part-score contest may develop. South has a marginal double but with a singleton ♠K and, with partner being a passed hand, overcalling is certainly reasonable. West tries a negative double, locating the spade suit. North only has one HCP but a good shape and 4-card support for partner and thus chances pushing the opponents higher.

Holding a spade contract to eight tricks requires North getting two ruffs in diamonds and thus the lead of ♠A which will be out of the question unless E/W have announced a diamond fit during the auction. More normal will be E/W scoring nine tricks in a spade contract but if the defence slips and allows declarer a tenth trick, they will score poorly.
A 9 3 ♣ 8 ♠ 9 2 ♥ 8 7 6 4 3
♣ K Q 9 8 6 4 3
♥ J 8 7
♣ A Q J 10 7 5 3
♥ K 9 6 2
♠ A 10 8 7 6 4
♣ K Q 6
♥ J 8 7
♣ 10 5 4
♥ 4
♠ 7 5 2
♣ A Q 10 7 6 4
♥ 2
♠ K J 9 8 5
♣ 10 9 8 5
♥ Q 7 6 2
♠ Q 8 5 3
♣ J 10 9 3
♥ A K J 8 5
♠ K 9 3
♥ A K 8 5
♣ J 6 3
♥ 9 4
♠ AK85
♥ 1087654
♠ J1094
♠ 65
♠ K10985
♣ Q76
♥ Q2
♠ Q32

HCP  Makeable contracts
13 NT
11 2 3 -
9 3 - 1 -
6 3 - 3 -

A ♠ 9 3 ♥ 8 ♦ KQ9863 ♣ 3
♠ A87
♥ AJ10753 ♦ K962
♣ A10 ♠ J
♥ 2 ♦ JK985
♠ 1054
♥ 4
♠ 752
♣ AQ10764

HCP  Makeable contracts
9 NT
16 N - 3 -
12 E - 5 -
6 W - 5 -

A ♠ Q74 ♥ 1032 ♦ A J
♥ AK87
♠ 2 ♥ J63
♥ 9 4 ♥ AKJ85
♠ 1087654 ♥ K93
♠ J1094 ♠ 65
♠ K10985 ♥ Q76
♥ Q2
♠ Q32

HCP  Makeable contracts
18 NT
12 S - 3 -
9 E - 5 -
6 W - 5 -

A ♠ J85 ♥ K8 ♦ A94
♥ KQ982
♠ A10762 ♥ A1093 ♦ QJ654
♣ Q 853
♠ J106 ♥ A5
♠ Q4
♥ 72
♠ KJ10762 ♠ 743

HCP  Makeable contracts
13 NT
11 S - 3 -
9 E - 3 -
6 W - 3 -
Not much to say about the auction, though I suppose it is possible that East might bid more slowly (perhaps with an eye on 3NT). Not much to say about the play either – South leads ♦2, North switches to a heart, 620 for E/W.

There exists, though, one possibility. South might lead ♦3, pursuant to the MUD convention. Why anyone plays this at all, let alone in partner’s suits, has always been a mystery to me.

North, who does not know whether East’s ♦Q is a false card or that South holds ♥A, might try to cash a second diamond in the hope of a doubleton with South and a trump promotion. Not exactly a triumph for inglorious MUD.

With 5/5 shape and crisp honours, West has a normal opening, which should silence North. Despite his 14 HCP, the vulnerability is unattractive for North to enter with his weak 5-card suit and dubious kings and queens. West rebids his second suit and East has an obvious pass. The standard lead against this auction is a trump since the bidding suggests that declarer will be trying to ruff his first bid suit in dummy. Few will start with ♥K, although on this layout it does not cost. The defence should hold declarer to nine tricks providing they avoid the ♥A lead.

How will those that try the unsound 2♥ overcall fare? Well, East should be silenced since a double would show four hearts, and if South raises to 3♥ passed back to East, he can double now for penalties which will result in the magic +200 for E/W and most of the match-points.

The very good fit, with no wasted values in clubs, means that E/W can make 6♥, by throwing two diamonds on the spades and then ruffling a diamond in dummy. However, E/W would be doing very well to reach this slam. A spade slam would not be quite so wise. Its only chance is for South to be on lead and try ♥A.

In the meantime, N/S can make nine tricks in clubs, so 5♥ is a cheap save against game if they find it. Of course, E/W can compete to 5♥, and N/S’s save may even help E/W to find their heart slam.
This is a hand made in hell. Accidents will be prevalent with N/S finding it hard to reach the excellent 2NT contract. In my experience some Easts will overbid their dreaded 4-4-4-1 hand. What suit to open with is a matter of style and system. Personally I will pass, planning to enter the fray later, if suitable. Opposition are vulnerable, lots of bad things may happen to them, so I’m biding my time. There will be plenty of different scores on this deal, ranging from +300 N/S to +500 E/W. At least, that is my prediction.

- T/O denying 4 cards in spades is my preferred treatment.

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3NT by North should be the contract at almost every table whether playing weak or strong NT.

East has no attractive lead to make. A diamond is unattractive with a high risk of conceding a trick and I would not lead a club into a NT opener who has denied a major so I think ♥3 is the best of a bad lot.

Declarer has only eight tricks but the defence will probably have to concede a ninth. Unless West finds the unlikely diamond switch when in with the ♥Q, East will end up being end-played at some point in the defence and having to open the diamond suit or give a club trick, in which case +600 looks like the par score.

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Both East and West have a five-card major, but the best contract is definitely 1NT. Playing a weak NT, East has no good rebid if he opens 1♥. After 1♥ - 1♣, a 1NT rebid traditionally shows 15-17, and any other rebid makes playing in a horrible 5-2 heart fit a live possibility.

As responder, it is normal to transfer out to a five card major opposite a 1NT opening, particularly with an unbalanced hand. This hand, however, with no high cards in spades, extra high cards and Qx in a side suit, looks very suitable for play in 1NT. The main argument for transferring, particularly at IMPs, is that you might reach a good game: envisage ♥Axx ♥Kxx ♥Ax ♥Kxxx opposite when game only needs trumps 2-2 or the diamond finesse.

Although N/S can make 2♥ (if only they could reach it), +90 to E/W will be popular.
This might work better for strong no-trumpers. If North opens a strong NT, South would surely bid 2♣, intending to pass North’s response. When North bids 2♦, there is no real reason for East to wander into a live auction, and now 2♦ will be passed around to West. Maybe he might try 3♠ at the favourable vulnerability, but that would be pretty brave with so little.

On the auction given, the 1♦ opening allows East into the auction. Even if South makes a pre-emptive diamond raise, West has enough to compete with 3♥ and that should end the auction.

The key to this hand is whether South decides to look for the heart fit after the 1NT rebid. Those who play some sort of check-back 2♦ bid after a 1NT rebid may well unearth the 5-3 heart fit whereas the bashers will raise to a successful 3NT. 4♣ should fail on best defence because E/W can organise one trump, two diamonds and a club ruff. It will be two off on a club lead if declarer finesses in trumps.

In 3NT, the best E/W can do, in principle, is take three diamond tricks and a heart. If declarer plays ♠A early, it may pay East to play the nine on this trick. Seeing it as a possible singleton, declarer might cross to ♠K (getting the bad news) and then have no further entry for a second heart finesse. Instead, he should perhaps reason that he needs two club entries for heart finesses and so the only 4-1 club break he can cope with is when East has four.
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