

# ACBL-wide Charity Pairs – Tues. Evening, March 13, 2007

Bd: 1      ♠ K Q 9 8 3

Dlr: North      ♥ K J 8 7 4

Vul: None      ♦ 8 6 5

♣ –

♠ J 7 5 4      ♠ A 10 6 2

♥ 9 6      ♥ 3 2

♦ A K J      ♦ Q 10

♣ Q 9 8 7      ♣ A 10 6 5 2

♠ –

♥ A Q 10 5

♦ 9 7 4 3 2

♣ K J 4 3

Although this deal could be passed out at a few tables, there is far more likely to be a lot of action – and much blood spilt by E/W. If North opens 1♠, or gets to show both majors, the final contract is surely going to be 4♥, probably doubled. With the ♠A onside for the ruffing finesse, and both majors splitting, there will be no acceptable excuse for making less than 10 tricks – and some tables might even find a way to an eleventh trick. Conversely, if E/W find their club fit and climb to 5♣, the defense can take two hearts, a spade, two ruffs, and a trump trick – for down 800!

Bd: 2      ♠ 10 9 7 5 2

Dlr: East      ♥ 9 4

Vul: N/S      ♦ J 9 7

♣ 9 6 3

♠ J 3      ♠ A 8 6

♥ A Q J 10 5 3      ♥ 8

♦ 6      ♦ K 10 8 4 2

♣ K Q J 2      ♣ 10 8 5 4

♠ K Q 4

♥ K 7 6 2

♦ A Q 5 3

♣ A 7

The South hand is clearly too good for a 15-17 notrump (jackless 18-counts ought not to be down-valued). So South will open 1♦ and West will have to decide whether to go all the way to 4♥ at once, or walk the dog. I like the direct 4♥ call, which should be passed back to South. Since a double now is primarily for takeout, South must pass, reluctantly, and on any normal defense will collect +50. If South does double 4♥, North may pull to 4♠, where the defense should end up with either +100 or 200, and a fine result for E/W, I'm sure.

Bd: 3      ♠ A 10 2

Dlr: South      ♥ 10 5 4

Vul: E/W      ♦ 9 8 5 3 2

♣ A K

♠ K 7 3      ♠ 9 8 6 5 4

♥ K J 9 7 6 2      ♥ Q 8

♦ K 10 7      ♦ 6 4

♣ 10      ♣ Q 7 5 4

♠ Q J

♥ A 3

♦ A Q J

♣ J 9 8 6 3 2

South will open 1NT at many tables – a reasonable shot at Pairs. Even at unfavorable vulnerability West will show his hearts, and North will probably drive his side to 3NT. On a heart lead declarer needs one minor suit to behave – neither do, so as the cards lie the best South can do is strip off the black suits and endplay West for down one (many Souths will kick themselves for finessing in diamonds and going down two). By contrast, 5♣ is makeable, if declarer takes an early spade finesse and uses his entries properly. 5♦ may also bring home 11 tricks in the same fashion.

Bd: 4      ♠ 8 5 4

Dlr: West      ♥ A K J 8 7

Vul: Both      ♦ 10 9 6

♣ K 6

♠ K 7 3 2      ♠ A J 6

♥ 10 5 3      ♥ Q 6 4

♦ K 3      ♦ A Q 7 5

♣ 10 9 4 2      ♣ A Q 8

♠ Q 10 9

♥ 9 2

♦ J 8 4 2

♣ J 7 5 3

Unsound light opening bids can score goals, and today if North opens 1♥ he will make sure his partner finds the right attack against East's 3NT. But if North passes, E/W may bid unopposed to 3NT and leave South with a blind lead. On a club lead East should find his way home in his game – if he is careful – while a heart opening lead holds East to eight tricks (so long as North finds the expert play of putting the ♥J in at trick one, to preserve his entry). Any E/W pair who run into that combination of bidding and defense can rightly consider themselves 'fixed'.

Bd: 5      ♠ A J 7 5 3

Dlr: North      ♥ Q 8

Vul: N/S      ♦ Q 10 9 7 2

♣ Q

♠ 10 8 6 2      ♠ Q

♥ 6 2      ♥ A K J 10 7 5 3

♦ K 6 5 4 3      ♦ A J

♣ J 3      ♣ A 9 7

♠ A K 9 4

♥ 9 4

♦ 8

♣ K 10 8 6 5 4 2

Another possible light (or unsound!) opener for North – here some will choose to bid 1♠ because of the side-suit pattern. When East overcalls 4♥, might South stretch to bid 4♣? You can understand that action, even if the bid is technically indefensible. 4♥ has ten top tricks, though I suppose a few pairs will find a way to make more – on an unlikely squeeze? – or less, by running into a defensive crossruff. As to 4♣, that may well get doubled and set 500 or 800. Anyone bidding the E/W cards to 4NT and collecting +430 will doubtless rake in the matchpoints.

Bd: 6      ♠ J 10 7 2

Dlr: East      ♥ K 10 7

Vul: E/W      ♦ A 9 8

♣ 5 3 2

♠ K 9      ♠ 6 5 4 3

♥ J 9 5 3      ♥ A 6

♦ 6      ♦ Q 10 7 2

♣ K Q J 8 7 6      ♣ 10 9 4

♠ A Q 8

♥ Q 8 4 2

♦ K J 5 4 3

♣ A

N/S have a dizzying choice of games to play – four of them, to be exact. The fates of some of them are easy to predict; 3NT on a club lead will be down two or three, and 5♦ will probably go down at least one on a club lead. By contrast, the major-suit games are harder to figure out precisely. The bad trump break probably dooms 4♥, but at double-dummy there is no defense to 4♣. On the probable club lead declarer can ruff two clubs in dummy, and even on a trump shift he can bring home +420 for a likely clear top (bar those who set West 500 in a club contract).

Bd: 7      ♠ 4

Dlr: South      ♥ A Q J 10 8

Vul: Both      ♦ 10 6

♣ 9 8 6 5 4

♠ A 9 8 5 3 2      ♠ 10 6

♥ 7      ♥ K 9 6 4 3

♦ 8 7 3 2      ♦ A Q J 9

♣ Q 3      ♣ J 7

♠ K Q J 7

♥ 5 2

♦ K 5 4

♣ A K 10 2

Facing a strong notrump, the North hand is tough to describe. My choice would be to transfer to hearts and raise invitationally to 3♥. South might well bid 3NT now, though passing 3♥ would be understandable, if exceedingly unsuccessful! The point is that 3♥ on repeated diamond leads becomes impossible to handle. Meanwhile, 3NT by South on a low spade lead will let declarer win and finesse in hearts. Now (assuming he does not duck East's queen, then jack of diamonds) he has ten tricks; five clubs, three hearts, a spade, plus one in the wash.

Bd: 8      ♠ A K 10 7 3 2

Dlr: West      ♥ A Q 7

Vul: None      ♦ A 9 6

♣ 3

♠ 9 6 4      ♠ 8 5

♥ 8 6 5 4 3 2      ♥ K 9

♦ K 10 8 7      ♦ Q 4

♣ –      ♣ K 9 7 6 5 4 2

♠ Q J

♥ J 10

♦ J 5 3 2

♣ A Q J 10 8

On this wild deal N/S have the values to sniff at slam. While 6♠ goes down on the club ruff (and West has a classic Lightner double to attract that lead) might 6NT make for N/S? A red-suit lead will beat slam from the South seat, only a diamond lead sets it if played by North – so long as declarer makes his first move in the club suit a small one to the eight! The auction may have tipped him off to that play, if East has preempted in clubs. Mind you, some N/S pairs will score more than the value of their dubious slam by defending to doubled contracts in clubs – or even in hearts.

Bd: 9    ♠ A 7  
 Dlr: North    ♥ A 7 6 5 3  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ A 8 2  
 ♣ K 3 2  
 ♠ 10 6 3    ♠ K 9 4 2  
 ♥ Q 4    ♥ J 9  
 ♦ Q 10 9 6 4    ♦ J 7 5 3  
 ♣ 10 7 6    ♣ Q 9 5  
 ♠ Q J 8 5  
 ♥ K 10 8 2  
 ♦ K  
 ♣ A J 8 4

North has these days what passes for a clear 1NT opening, rather than a 1♥ bid. South will use Stayman and then jump over the 2♥ response to 4♦ to show short diamonds and a slam-try. That figures to get N/S to 6♥, which turns out to need no more than hearts to behave or some combination of favorable circumstances in the black suits. On a diamond lead North should draw trumps then take the spade finesse – the safe way to a 12<sup>th</sup> trick. Any declarer who plays on clubs before spades will make 13 tricks – but will probably not deserve their splendid result.

Bd: 13    ♠ A  
 Dlr: North    ♥ J 2  
 Vul: Both    ♦ K 10 7 6 4  
 ♣ A Q 9 4 2  
 ♠ K 9 7 6 4 2    ♠ J 10 3  
 ♥ 8 7 4 3    ♥ A K Q 9 5  
 ♦ 3    ♦ J  
 ♣ 10 3    ♣ J 8 6 5  
 ♠ Q 8 5  
 ♥ 10 6  
 ♦ A Q 9 8 5 2  
 ♣ K 7

The textbooks do not tell you what to do with the West cards after hearing the auction start (1♦) - 1♥ - (2♥) to you, with the last bid showing a good raise in diamonds. A simple 2♠ for the lead might be right; jumping to 4♥ is both dangerous and not that helpful to your partner, assuming your side ends up defending. In practice, though, the jump may work well enough, since N/S are cold for 5♦ while 5♥ (unless the defense somehow find their spade ruff) escapes for -500 and a huge matchpoint result.

Bd: 10    ♠ K 7 4  
 Dlr: East    ♥ Q 10 9  
 Vul: Both    ♦ 6 4  
 ♣ A J 6 5 2  
 ♠ 9 8    ♠ A Q 10  
 ♥ A 7 5 2    ♥ K 4 3  
 ♦ K 10 8 7    ♦ A Q 5 2  
 ♣ Q 10 7    ♣ K 9 4  
 ♠ J 6 5 3 2  
 ♥ J 8 6  
 ♦ J 9 3  
 ♣ 8 3

E/W will bid unopposed to 3NT after East makes a jump-rebid to 2NT to show 18-19 HCP. South's natural lead is a spade to the king and ace, leaving East needing to set up an extra club trick without letting North in for a second spade play. The best approach is to cash three diamonds ending in West, then to pass the ♣10. Even if North ducks, that still only appears to be ten tricks for E/W, with no obvious route to an 11<sup>th</sup>. But no doubt the travelers will show the odd 600 or 660, with excellent matchpoint scores going to whoever gets on the right side of those results.

Bd: 14    ♠ Q 9 7  
 Dlr: East    ♥ 8  
 Vul: None    ♦ Q 6 5 4  
 ♣ Q J 9 4 3  
 ♠ A 10 4    ♠ J 5 3  
 ♥ Q J 3 2    ♥ K 10 7 6 5 4  
 ♦ 9 7 2    ♦ K J  
 ♣ 7 6 5    ♣ A 8  
 ♠ K 8 6 2  
 ♥ A 9  
 ♦ A 10 8 3  
 ♣ K 10 2

When East opens 1♥ and South doubles, West has a hand between a preemptive and a single raise. The fourth trump will probably persuade most people to compete to 3♥, leaving it up to North to decide whether to act at the four level. If East plays 3♥ the defense have to be careful to ensure they do not get endplayed to open up spades – many pairs will fall from grace on defense. Meanwhile, N/S have decent chances for ten tricks in diamonds – and might even come to the same result in clubs, because declarer may be able to endplay East in diamonds to open up spades for him.

Bd: 11    ♠ 6 5  
 Dlr: South    ♥ K 10 4 2  
 Vul: None    ♦ K J 9  
 ♣ K Q 8 2  
 ♠ 9 4    ♠ Q J 7  
 ♥ 9 7    ♥ Q 5 3  
 ♦ Q 10 7 6 5    ♦ A 4 2  
 ♣ A 9 7 4    ♣ J 10 6 5  
 ♠ A K 10 8 3 2  
 ♥ A J 8 6  
 ♦ 8 3  
 ♣ 3

Playing Fast Arrival (not my favorite methods, but the norm these days) one would expect N/S to bid 1♠ - 2♣ - 2♥ - 4♦ - Pass. On a low diamond lead from West, declarer will insert the jack, and now the defense have their two minor-suit aces, and they may or may not get a trick in trumps, depending on how South chooses to tackle the major suits. Rather unfairly, with the queen and jack of spades onside, you can see how both spades and notrumps might score as well as the heart game. Sometimes virtue has to be its own reward for the accurate N/S bidders.

Bd: 15    ♠ K 9 5 4 3  
 Dlr: South    ♥ 6  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ K 9 7 6 4  
 ♣ 8 3  
 ♠ A J 6 2    ♠ Q 10 8  
 ♥ A 4    ♥ 9 8 3  
 ♦ A 5 3    ♦ J 10 2  
 ♣ K 10 9 7    ♣ A Q J 4  
 ♠ 7  
 ♥ K Q J 10 7 5 2  
 ♦ Q 8  
 ♣ 6 5 2

Even at unfavorable vulnerability, South has a classical 3♥ preempt. When West doubles for takeout, what is East to do? A pass without trump tricks is playing for tops or bottoms – but at the vulnerability it is not absurd (when it works!). Here E/W can collect +200; not a bad return against a questionable game. While 3NT by West makes a likely +430, since South has no entry, any suit game is exceedingly unpromising. Few will make game on the E/W cards, so defending 3♥ and registering +200 figures to score very nicely indeed.

Bd: 12    ♠ A 4 2  
 Dlr: West    ♥ 9 7 5  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ 7 2  
 ♣ K 8 5 4 2  
 ♠ Q 10 9 7    ♠ K 3  
 ♥ 8 3    ♥ A K Q J 10 4  
 ♦ Q 8 6 5 4    ♦ K J 10  
 ♣ 7 3    ♣ J 10  
 ♠ J 8 6 5  
 ♥ 6 2  
 ♦ A 9 3  
 ♣ A Q 9 6

E/W can make nine tricks in hearts, and would almost certainly do so if left to their own devices. But some East will do too much and go down in game, some Easts will do too little after South doubles 1♥, by selling out to a club partscore by North. Having said that, 3♦ by North on repeated heart leads might not do at all well. If declarer manages to create a trump loser for himself by ruffing the third heart high and then finessing against East, he may hold himself to seven tricks, for the kiss of death of -200.

Bd: 16    ♠ Q 6  
 Dlr: West    ♥ A 8 4  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ Q J 7 2  
 ♣ A K J 9  
 ♠ J 10 8 3    ♠ A K  
 ♥ Q    ♥ K J 10 9 7 5  
 ♦ K 10 9 4 3    ♦ 6 5  
 ♣ 7 6 3    ♣ 5 4 2  
 ♠ 9 7 5 4 2  
 ♥ 6 3 2  
 ♦ A 8  
 ♣ Q 10 8

East will overall North's strong notrump to show hearts, and South will surely compete in spades, after which it is not clear that anyone has anything more to say. As the cards lie, six tricks are the limit for N/S in spades on accurate defense. North would do better to play in notrumps, perhaps. Although E/W can certainly set him the same -100, it is easy to envisage the defense not finding their way to establish and cash out hearts – seven or even eight tricks are a distinct possibility. Conversely, +110 for East in a heart contract looks a piece of cake.

Bd: 17    ♠ K J 9 8 5  
 Dlr: North    ♥ Q 5  
 Vul: None    ♦ A 10 3  
               ♣ A 7 5  
 ♠ Q 10 7 4 3    ♠ 6 2  
 ♥ 10 7 6 4    ♥ K J 9  
 ♦ 7 6 5    ♦ J 4 2  
 ♣ Q    ♣ K J 10 8 3  
 ♠ A  
 ♥ A 8 3 2  
 ♦ K Q 9 8  
 ♣ 9 6 4 2

It is slightly easier said than done for N/S to reach their optimum contract, namely 3NT from the North seat; quite a few pairs will declare this contract the wrong way up, and be held to eight tricks on a heart lead. Even 3NT by North is not close to cold, given the bad spade break; though if East leads an interior club at trick one, declarer can build the ninth trick from the ♣9 easily enough. Since the deal requires careful declarer play, or careful defense, to go plus, the deal should reward those who play or guess well.

Bd: 21    ♠ A K 5 2  
 Dlr: North    ♥ K 8 7 5  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ K 5 4 3  
               ♣ J  
 ♠ 10 8    ♠ 6 3  
 ♥ A Q 2    ♥ J 9 6  
 ♦ A J 10 6 2    ♦ 7  
 ♣ K 10 6    ♣ A Q 9 7 5 3 2  
 ♠ Q J 9 7 4  
 ♥ 10 4 3  
 ♦ Q 9 8  
 ♣ 8 4

North will open 1♦, East will overcall 3♣, and what is West to do now? 3NT looks an unjustifiable gamble – and it would deservedly lose the first five spade tricks at almost every table (not too surprisingly). By contrast, if West passes 3♣ North will reopen with a takeout double, and South can introduce his spades, letting West compete to 4♣ and buy the contract there. +130 looks easy enough; indeed on the opening lead of the ♦8 declarer can exploit the diamond spots, to ruff out the diamonds for 11 tricks. Any East managing +150 will scoop the pot here.

Bd: 18    ♠ J 2  
 Dlr: East    ♥ K 3 2  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ K Q 8 2  
               ♣ A J 6 5  
 ♠ 6 5 3    ♠ K Q 9 8 4  
 ♥ J 10 8 5 4    ♥ A 9 7  
 ♦ A 4    ♦ 10 6  
 ♣ K 10 9    ♣ 8 7 3  
 ♠ A 10 7  
 ♥ Q 6  
 ♦ J 9 7 5 3  
 ♣ Q 4 2

In third seat some Wests may feel like opening the bidding (misguided as that might seem to be) but most Wests will pass and let North open 1♦, for East to overcall 1♠. From this point onwards N/S are likely to buy the auction in a diamond partscore, most probably 3♦. That contract is booked to lose a trick in each suit – no more no less. Meanwhile, can E/W do better if they declare the deal? Possibly yes; with only five top losers, whichever major they play in, it looks as if the more aggressive E/W pairs may compete to the three level and escape for -100.

Bd: 22    ♠ A Q 6 4 2  
 Dlr: East    ♥ K Q 4 2  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ K 5 3  
               ♣ 6  
 ♠ K 3    ♠ 8 7 5  
 ♥ 10 9 3    ♥ A 6  
 ♦ Q J 9 4    ♦ 7 6 2  
 ♣ J 9 5 3    ♣ 10 8 7 4 2  
 ♠ Q J 10 9  
 ♥ J 8 7 5  
 ♦ A 10 8  
 ♣ A K Q

Facing a strong notrump the North players will use Stayman and over the 2♥ response ought to jump to 4♣ – a slam try showing a splinter raise of hearts. South will sign off as firmly as decorum will permit, and North is clearly worth another bid still – indeed some may simply blast a slam by using Blackwood. Today 6♥ is the sort of slam you can take or leave alone – it probably needs both the spade finesse and friendly breaks in the majors (6NT is a much better spot, as it happens). Today 12 tricks make in every denomination, so the aggressive bidders will win out again.

Bd: 19    ♠ J 10 5 4  
 Dlr: South    ♥ A Q J 2  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ A 6 3  
               ♣ 7 4  
 ♠ A 9 6    ♠ K Q 8 3 2  
 ♥ 8 6 5 3    ♥ 10 9 4  
 ♦ K 8 7 5    ♦ 10 2  
 ♣ A 3    ♣ J 8 2  
 ♠ 7  
 ♥ K 7  
 ♦ Q J 9 4  
 ♣ K Q 10 9 6 5

South will open 1♣, leaving West a marginal takeout double. If West does double, North can redouble, but South will not look to defend, and is likely to repeat his clubs. That will get him to a club partscore – the same result that would arise at most tables if West passes initially. Of course N/S actually do very well in a club partscore (11 tricks can be made on some good views in the minors). Notrump partscores or games by North are harder to predict, though. If East leads a low spade he can hold North to just seven tricks, but many will kick off with a top spade, and do far worse.

Bd: 23    ♠ K Q 8 3  
 Dlr: South    ♥ J 9 4  
 Vul: Both    ♦ 9 8 3  
               ♣ Q 7 2  
 ♠ A J 2    ♠ 10 7 5  
 ♥ K 6 3    ♥ A Q 5  
 ♦ Q 2    ♦ A K J 6 5 4  
 ♣ A K 10 8 5    ♣ 6  
 ♠ 9 6 4  
 ♥ 10 8 7 2  
 ♦ 10 7  
 ♣ J 9 4 3

The West hand is almost good enough to treat as a balanced 18-19 (a good five-card suit and great controls) but most players will hog the contract and settle for simplicity by opening 1NT. Now how to value the East cards? Some might blast a slam – 6♦ or 6NT both look reasonable shots at pairs. Some will try to explore for slam, and may even end up no higher than 3NT if West cannot see beyond his doubleton diamond support. But the best contract of all is 7♦; it needs only a 4-3 club split to allow declarer to ruff out that suit for 13 tricks.

Bd: 20    ♠ A 8 7  
 Dlr: West    ♥ J 7 3 2  
 Vul: Both    ♦ Q 9 7 2  
               ♣ A 6  
 ♠ J 5    ♠ Q 6 4 3  
 ♥ Q 9 5    ♥ 6 4  
 ♦ J 8 5    ♦ K 10 6 4 3  
 ♣ Q J 7 3 2    ♣ 8 5  
 ♠ K 10 9 2  
 ♥ A K 10 8  
 ♦ A  
 ♣ K 10 9 4

In fourth chair South will open 1♣ (some might open 1NT but not many). The final contract will surely be 4♥ declared by North now, leaving East no clear-cut opening salvo. On a low spade lead the best line for 12 tricks is to cash the heart ace and king, repeat the spade finesse, then play on a crossruff. Conversely, on a passive minor-suit lead declarer may hold himself to just +620 by taking the trump finesse instead of playing off the top trumps. 4♥ by South on a top club lead will probably finish with 11 or 12 tricks.

Bd: 24    ♠ A Q J 9 7 3  
 Dlr: West    ♥ J 8  
 Vul: None    ♦ 9 8 7 3  
               ♣ 7  
 ♠ 10 6 4 2    ♠ K 8 5  
 ♥ Q    ♥ A 10 6 4 2  
 ♦ A 10 6    ♦ 5 4  
 ♣ J 10 6 5 4    ♣ 8 3 2  
 ♠ –  
 ♥ K 9 7 5 3  
 ♦ K Q J 2  
 ♣ A K Q 9

When South hears North open 2♠ ("Thank you partner!") he can follow the path of least resistance by passing, or he can take a shot at 3NT. In 2♠ East will probably lead a doubleton diamond, letting West win and get his heart ruff, after which the defense have only the ♠K to come, for +140 for declarer. By contrast, on a low club lead 3NT has seven minor suit winners, the ♠A, and surely at least one heart trick. In fact some declarers might find a way to a tenth trick if the defense get too active. But after a top club lead, maybe the defense can hold South to eight tricks.

Bd: 25    ♠ 7 6 3 2  
 Dlr: North    ♥ Q 4  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ 9 8 4 2  
 ♣ 10 9 2  
 ♠ 10 9 5    ♠ A K 8 4  
 ♥ J 5    ♥ A K 9  
 ♦ 7 6    ♦ K Q J 3  
 ♣ K 8 7 5 4 3    ♣ Q 6  
 ♠ Q J  
 ♥ 10 8 7 6 3 2  
 ♦ A 10 5  
 ♣ A J

Whether East opens 2NT, or has to open 2♣ and rebid 2NT, West will boost him to 3NT, apparently a very unappetizing looking contract. However on a low heart lead to the ♥Q and ♥A declarer will drive out the ♣A, and win the heart return. With the miraculous lie of the spade suit, East can actually bring home ten tricks by clearing clubs and using the ♠10 as an entry to dummy. But sensible declarers will play on diamonds, then spades – or vice versa. That line should also produce ten tricks in all likelihood (and probably a fine matchpoint score as well).

Bd: 26    ♠ Q 10 7 5 2  
 Dlr: East    ♥ Q 9 5  
 Vul: Both    ♦ A K 10  
 ♣ 8 7  
 ♠ 9 4    ♠ A J  
 ♥ K 8 3 2    ♥ 10 6  
 ♦ 8 7 3    ♦ Q J 9 6 5  
 ♣ K 9 6 5    ♣ A Q 10 3  
 ♠ K 8 6 3  
 ♥ A J 7 4  
 ♦ 4 2  
 ♣ J 4 2

After North hears 1♦ on his left and 1♥ on his right, should he bid – especially at this vulnerability? If he overcalls, N/S will surely compete to 3♠, if necessary. Best defense against that contract is to lead hearts at every turn (and for East to underlead his ♣A if necessary) to get the heart ruff. But that will not prove to be so easy to do – not to mention the fact that East may try a top diamond at trick one. +140 will be great for N/S, -100 may not be a tragedy, because some E/W pairs will be allowed to scramble +110 in one of the minors.

Bd: 27    ♠ 10 9 8 6 5 2  
 Dlr: South    ♥ 5  
 Vul: None    ♦ 8 7 2  
 ♣ A J 2  
 ♠ –    ♠ Q 4  
 ♥ K J 8    ♥ Q 9 7 6 4  
 ♦ J 10 9 5    ♦ A K Q 4  
 ♣ K 8 6 5 4 3    ♣ Q 10  
 ♠ A K J 7 3  
 ♥ A 10 3 2  
 ♦ 6 3  
 ♣ 9 7

When South opens 1♠ only the truly aggressive Wests will overcall 3♣ on a hand that is flawed by a weak suit, and extreme playability in both red suits. If West passes, though, bad things could happen to him, since North may steal the pot with a jump to 4♠, making an impressive +420. East has a decent hand, admittedly – but no way into the bidding. If West declares 5♣, a heart lead and continuation hold him to 10 tricks. Neither red suit plays any better against normal defense – but getting out for -50 or -100 will probably score E/W respectably enough here.

Bd: 28    ♠ 3 2  
 Dlr: West    ♥ J 10 9 4 3  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ 10 8 5  
 ♣ 8 6 2  
 ♠ J 6    ♠ 9 8 7 5  
 ♥ Q 8 5 2    ♥ A 7 6  
 ♦ K J 3 2    ♦ A 9 6 4  
 ♣ Q J 10    ♣ A 5  
 ♠ A K Q 10 4  
 ♥ K  
 ♦ Q 7  
 ♣ K 9 7 4 3

When East opens 1♦ in third chair, South's hand is not quite right for a double. It looks better to bid 1♠ and hope to catch up later. The auction will probably work out well enough for South to get both of his suits in at least once, but how many times will he bid his suits? South will be struggling to come to more than six tricks in spades, and clubs does not play a great deal better, while being a level higher. If E/W buy the contract they can probably scramble +110 in diamonds, even against repeated spade leads – but it may require declarer to guess out the hand pretty well.

Bd: 29    ♠ K  
 Dlr: North    ♥ 4  
 Vul: Both    ♦ A K J 9 5 3  
 ♣ A 10 9 4 3  
 ♠ Q 8 6    ♠ J 7  
 ♥ 9 2    ♥ A K J 10 6 3  
 ♦ 8 4 2    ♦ Q 10  
 ♣ Q 8 7 6 5    ♣ K J 2  
 ♠ A 10 9 5 4 3 2  
 ♥ Q 8 7 5  
 ♦ 7 6  
 ♣ –

North will open 1♦, East will overcall 1♥, allowing South to preempt to the limit in spades – whatever that is. A jump to 4♠ will surely silence most Norths, and South will find himself in a contract with no more than nine tricks – even if declarer guesses the diamond suit very well. A diamond partscore might do better; imagine a top heart lead and a switch to the ♦10 – wins, unblocks spades, ruffs a club, cashes the ♠A, then ruffs a heart to hand to draw trumps, and now has +130.

Bd: 30    ♠ A K 10 4  
 Dlr: East    ♥ Q 9 7 2  
 Vul: None    ♦ Q  
 ♣ K 8 7 2  
 ♠ 9 7 6 5    ♠ 8  
 ♥ A K 3    ♥ 10 8 6 5  
 ♦ A 8 6    ♦ 10 7 4 2  
 ♣ Q J 5    ♣ 10 9 4 3  
 ♠ Q J 3 2  
 ♥ J 4  
 ♦ K J 9 5 3  
 ♣ A 6

When West doubles the opening bid of 1♦ North will redouble, searching for blood. Indeed, N/S might end up defending 1♥ doubled. Best defense appears to collect 300 from that contract. But an easier and more lucrative way for N/S to go plus is to declare the deal instead, in 4♠. Even on repeated trump leads declarer can simply ruff one diamond in the North hand and draw trumps, to register +420. Any N/S pair who play 3NT will almost certainly regret it, because nine tricks are a struggle, and an overtrick looks impossible.

Bd: 31    ♠ 10 7 4 2  
 Dlr: South    ♥ Q 10  
 Vul: N/S    ♦ 10 8 6 2  
 ♣ 10 9 2  
 ♠ A K J 9    ♠ Q 8 5  
 ♥ K J 9 3    ♥ 8 6 2  
 ♦ Q 9 7    ♦ J 4  
 ♣ Q 7    ♣ A J 8 6 3  
 ♠ 6 3  
 ♥ A 7 5 4  
 ♦ A K 5 3  
 ♣ K 5 4

When South opens 1♦ West's normal action would be to overcall 1NT – despite holding both majors – though some Wests might prefer a double, or possibly a simple bid in either major. Doubling will get East to bid clubs (where even eight tricks may prove to be a struggle). By contrast, notrump from West will be held to +120 only on repeated diamond leads, admittedly the most likely defense. Neither major suit does any better for E/W; +110 is about the best West can do. On this partscore the difference of even 10 points may make a huge difference in each side's matchpoint score.

Bd: 32    ♠ K 9 3  
 Dlr: West    ♥ Q 8 6 3  
 Vul: E/W    ♦ K 8 5 4 3  
 ♣ J  
 ♠ A 10 6 4    ♠ Q J 8 5  
 ♥ 5 2    ♥ A 10 9 7  
 ♦ A 10 6    ♦ J  
 ♣ 9 8 4 2    ♣ K 10 7 5  
 ♠ 7 2  
 ♥ K J 4  
 ♦ Q 9 7 2  
 ♣ A Q 6 3

In third seat the standard opening with the East cards is 1♣; but Pairs experts might prefer one or other of the four-card majors. In practice E/W should probably find spades easily enough, where eight tricks seems approximately the expected result, one way or another. Since N/S can make nine tricks in diamonds, with some faint chances of a tenth if declarer gets a little help from his friends, this figures to be a tightly contested partscore. Any plus score here ought to matchpoint well enough, I suppose.