

ACBL-wide Charity Game — Tuesday Evening, Nov. 21, 2017 — Set 126569

Bd: 1 ♠ Q J 10 8 6 2
 Dlr: North ♥ J 6
 Vul: None ♦ A K Q
 ♣ Q 7

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

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

When North opens 1♠, East must pass smoothly. South will respond 1NT, and North should go low now, rebidding 2♠ not 3♠. (He needs his partner to cover three losers; and if he can do that, South will surely bid over 2♠.) When South passes 2♠, West might contemplate balancing – some will actually do so. Today, though, West would be wise to pass. N/S are cold for 5♦ with diamonds 2-2; worse, if the defenders do not cash out, N/S can make +420 via the ruffing spade finesse. Meanwhile, 2♠ rates to lose two heart and four spade tricks, for down one.

Bd: 5 ♠ Q 8 7 5 3
 Dlr: North ♥ K 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 7
 ♣ 10 8 7 3

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

♠ A K 6 4 2
 ♥ 10 6 3
 ♦ A 8 4
 ♣ 6 4

N/S have a big spade fit but should beware at this vulnerability of getting too high. With the ♥A offside, they cannot avoid five losers. E/W have the balance of the points, with two attractive red-suit fits they might consider playing game in. If you can find the ♦J, you can make 4♥ easily, but after a spade lead, the timing is more complex than it may appear. You might set up a diamond trick while drawing two rounds of trumps, planning to pitch a loser on the clubs. Still, E/W can certainly come to 420 in either red suit and could even collect 450 in hearts.

Bd: 2 ♠ 9 7 3 2
 Dlr: East ♥ K 10 6 3 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ —
 ♣ 9 5 3 2

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

♠ J 8 6
 ♥ A J 4
 ♦ J 8 6 4 3
 ♣ J 8

After his side's auction starts: 1♦-1♠-2♣, West ought to bid 2♥, fourth suit forcing. If his partner had a singleton heart, E/W might make 6♦ but go down in 3NT. East will now rebid 2♠ – consistent with two or three, trumps. Now might E/W reach their only makeable game; the unlikely 4♠ contract on the 4-2 fit? The problem with both 5♦ and 3NT is obvious, but at least in theory 3NT by West may be the best game. It comes home when hearts are 4-4 or the ♥AK are together – and maybe if North has honor-third in hearts, and declarer reads the position.

Bd: 6 ♠ K 8 7
 Dlr: East ♥ K 9 7
 Vul: E-W ♦ K Q 10 5
 ♣ A 5 2

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

♠ Q 9 5
 ♥ A J 8 3
 ♦ 7 4 3
 ♣ K 6 4

At most tables North will open a strong notrump in fourth seat. Facing 15-17, some Souths may use Stayman, some may quite reasonably drive to game in notrump. After a spade lead from East, it feels normal for North to take an immediate heart finesse. Disaster! West will win and return a spade, setting up that suit while East still has the ♦A. There are far more successful approaches for declarer, involving playing on diamonds before hearts. Nevertheless, at single dummy I'd expect far more Norths to go down in 3NT on a spade lead than to come home.

Bd: 3 ♠ K 10 9 7
 Dlr: South ♥ 8 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 9 6 5 4
 ♣ A 6

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

♠ 6 5 4 3
 ♥ A K Q 7 6
 ♦ Q 10 3
 ♣ 9

Few Souths will pass here, at favorable vulnerability. After a 1♥ opening, N/S will find spades, and E/W will in turn compete in clubs. The high cards are fairly equally divided, with East having the longest suit, while N/S have the boss suit. So it is unclear who will win the battle or the war. E/W have four losers in clubs (and in some variations might take the spade finesse unsuccessfully to try for 10 tricks). Meanwhile, N/S can just about bring home +140 in spades, though the 4-1 trump break may cause some difficulties. Any plus score for either side won't be terrible.

Bd: 7 ♠ J 4
 Dlr: South ♥ J 8 7
 Vul: Both ♦ A 8 6 5 3 2
 ♣ 6 3

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

♠ A Q 7 2
 ♥ 10 3
 ♦ Q 9
 ♣ A J 8 7 5

After South opens 1♣ and North responds 1♦, East will double, letting South rebid 1♠ to show real clubs plus spades. West might stretch a long way to join in with 2♥ now. Best defense against 2♥ is to attack spades. The defenders can take two spades and a ruff, then cross to the ♣A for the fourth spade, promoting a trump trick for down one. Of course, many Norths will lead clubs initially; now N/S may not manage to take as many as five tricks. N/S can collect +90 from diamonds, even on a heart lead and low diamond shift, if North guesses the trump position.

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

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

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

Facing a 1♠ opener, South will invite game in spades, with North perhaps putting on the brakes in 3♠. With a blind lead, East does best to kick off with the ♦9. That allows West to win and shift to hearts, then East can revert to diamonds. North can arrange to rise with the ace, draw trumps, cash off the hearts, then exit in diamonds, hoping for the club endplay, but he will be out of luck today. If E/W hold declarer to +140, they beat all the pairs letting through the 10th trick in partscore or game; but many N/S pairs will get too high here or misguess spades, and go minus.

Bd: 8 ♠ A 8 5
 Dlr: West ♥ 10 7 3
 Vul: None ♦ A Q 5 4
 ♣ A K 10

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

♠ 7 6 3 2
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ Q 8 7 6 4

If West passes initially, then balances in hearts over a strong notrump, North should be able to double for takeout. Now N/S can compete in either black suit. With both key red-suit honors onside and spades splitting 3-3, N/S look to be able to come to +140 in 2♠, one way or another. Equally, clubs plays painlessly for +130. That same lie of the cards means E/W must be careful not to go overboard; West will struggle to take even seven tricks in hearts. If E/W stay silent throughout, then N/S will end up in notrump, where they can come to +150 on a diamond lead.

Bd: 9
Dlr: North
Vul: E-W

♠ K Q 10
♥ A J 7 6
♦ 10 9 6
♣ J 5 4

♠ 9 8 6 5 2
♥ 9 5 4
♦ K 5 3
♣ K 2

♠ J 7 4
♥ 10 3
♦ Q 8 7 4
♣ 9 7 6 3

♠ A 3
♥ K Q 8 2
♦ A J 2
♣ A Q 10 8

Finally, a deal where N/S will have an unopposed sequence. South will open 2NT in third chair, and probably be raised to 3NT by North, who really has no reason to explore for higher things; if he invites slam, South will reject the idea – though in fact slam is not terrible today. This deal also demonstrates why finding the 4-4 major-suit fit isn't always a good idea. Despite the club finesse losing, 3NT plays for the same number of tricks as 4♥. Collecting +460 from the notrump game will deservedly beat all the pairs reaching slam or those who declare hearts.

Bd: 13
Dlr: North
Vul: Both

♠ K 9 5 3
♥ J 5 2
♦ 10 5
♣ A 7 6 3

♠ A 6 2
♥ A 10 9 4 3
♦ Q 8
♣ 10 9 5

♠ J 10 4
♥ K Q
♦ 7 6 4 2
♣ K Q 8 4

♠ Q 8 7
♥ 8 7 6
♦ A K J 9 3
♣ J 2

Few Souths will pass in third chair; most are going to open 1♦ (or preempt to 2♦, which works well today). Now West will overcall 1♥. North can double, and East should redouble now – whether that shows extras or a top heart honor. South might remove himself somewhat uncomfortably to 1♠ now, after which it is far from clear where the music will stop. According to Deep Finesse both 2♥ and 2♠ cannot be defeated, but in practice neither contract looks at all attractive. Accordingly, -100 rates to be a more common traveler entry than +110, in all probability.

Bd: 10
Dlr: East
Vul: Both

♠ Q 10 9 3
♥ 9 4 3
♦ J 7
♣ J 9 3 2

♠ 8 7 6 4
♥ 8 5
♦ A 5 4
♣ K 7 6 5

♠ A J
♥ K 6 2
♦ K 10 8 2
♣ A Q 8 4

♠ K 5 2
♥ A Q J 10 7
♦ Q 9 6 3
♣ 10

When East opens 1NT, South can overcall 2♥, to show hearts, or maybe hearts and a minor. West has a straightforward negative double (takeout, consistent with just competing for the partscore). East can now pick a minor or rebid 2NT. The latter keeps open his side's most likely game, but will end the auction here. On the lead of a heart intermediate, East will win and need one of the minors to behave for him. Today the cards do not appear to cooperate. -100 looks to be a normal result for E/W, but anyone making 2NT by guessing clubs should earn their fine score.

Bd: 14
Dlr: East
Vul: None

♠ 7 5 2
♥ K
♦ J 9 6 3
♣ 9 8 7 4 3

♠ J 8
♥ J 10 8 6 5 3 2
♦ –
♣ A Q J 6

♠ A K Q 10 6 3
♥ 7
♦ K 8 2
♣ 10 5 2

♠ 9 4
♥ A Q 9 4
♦ A Q 10 7 5 4
♣ K

E/W have two eight-card fits, one of them a 7-1 fit, one a 6-2 fit. There is no particularly logical reason why they ought to be able to work out that spades will play better than hearts, in that sometimes the long suit in the weak hand makes extra tricks. This time, though, there are four top losers in hearts when that suit doesn't break, while 4♠ takes six spade winners and four club tricks. This seems more a question of luck than judgment though (and if you end up in the wrong suit, you can use that excuse, free of charge).

Bd: 11
Dlr: South
Vul: None

♠ K 8 6 3
♥ Q J
♦ K Q J 9
♣ 8 4 2

♠ 10
♥ 10 9 5 4 3 2
♦ 7 6 2
♣ A J 3

♠ 9 5 4
♥ 8 6
♦ A 4 3
♣ K Q 9 7 6

♠ A Q J 7 2
♥ A K 7
♦ 10 8 5
♣ 10 5

Facing a 1♠ opening bid, many Norths will blithely drive to game with a Jacoby 2NT response. However, this hand is considerably short of the values for that call, despite its 12 HCP; the action risks having South go overboard, looking for slam. Not to worry today: on this occasion, all routes lead to 4♠. Now all South has to do is make it, and the cards lie in such a fashion that it is truly difficult to see how even the wildest declarer could achieve any number of tricks but 10. If you manage more, write to the bulletin. If fewer..keep it to yourself.

Bd: 15
Dlr: South
Vul: N-S

♠ A 10 6 3
♥ A
♦ K 10 9
♣ Q J 10 8 2

♠ K Q J
♥ Q 4 3
♦ 8 4 3 2
♣ 7 6 4

♠ 9 5 4 2
♥ J 9 7 6 5
♦ Q J
♣ K 9

♠ 8 7
♥ K 10 8 2
♦ A 7 6 5
♣ A 5 3

A few people will act with the South cards (even if the hand does have two aces and a king, it doesn't look like an opening bid to me – but I know I am old-fashioned). Whether or not South opens, though, N/S may well climb to 3NT, where the remarkably favorable lie of the suits should allow them to come to 11 tricks if they guess diamonds. Indeed anyone who climbed to 6♣ – not recommended – could bring that contract home by ruffing a spade in the short hand and playing both minors for no loser.

Bd: 12
Dlr: West
Vul: N-S

♠ 9 7 2
♥ K Q J 7
♦ 10 9 5 2
♣ A 5

♠ Q J 5
♥ 5
♦ A Q 6 4 3
♣ J 10 4 2

♠ 10 8 3
♥ 8 6 3
♦ K J 8
♣ K Q 8 7

♠ A K 6 4
♥ A 10 9 4 2
♦ 7
♣ 9 6 3

In fourth seat, unless playing Flannery, South will open 1♥. Some Wests will double now, but it seems whatever West does, North will invite game strongly and South is likely to reject any game try his partner makes. That would be wrong (or at least unlucky) today. If South could ever get to show his short diamonds, then North might work out how well his cards fit and bid on to 4♥. That contract is cold with spades 3-3, though repeated trump leads might embarrass declarer if that were not the case. Reaching game here ought to produce a fine result for N/S.

Bd: 16
Dlr: West
Vul: E-W

♠ 5
♥ A 10 9 4 3 2
♦ K 7 4 3
♣ K 5

♠ 10 7 6 4 3 2
♥ K J
♦ 5
♣ Q 10 7 3

♠ Q 9 8
♥ 7
♦ A J 10 8 2
♣ A 9 8 4

♠ A K J
♥ Q 8 6 5
♦ Q 9 6
♣ J 6 2

West must pass in first seat here; the vulnerability and weak spades argue against preempting. Conversely, the North cards might be opened at the one or two level – but whatever you do, please don't pass here. If North opens 1♥, N/S will surely play 4♥. However, South is not going to drive to game if facing a weak two. Partscore makes in either major, while 4♥ can only be defeated by the defenders maneuvering two diamond ruffs. After a spade lead, for instance, declarer can guess to finesse to discard his club losers and give up three tricks in the red suits.

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

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

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

When North opens a strong notrump, South will be torn between transferring and passing the 2♥ response, or inviting game by following up the transfer with a call of 2NT. With two honors in the long suit and a sure entry on the side, the hand looks just about worth the invitational sequence. Of course, if North breaks the transfer by bidding more than 2♥, N/S must arrange to play 4♥ by North. If 4♥ is declared by South it goes down in flames at once on the diamond ruff. By contrast, 4♥ by North can only be defeated by force on an initial club lead.

Bd: 21 ♠ 9 7 4 3 2
 Dlr: North ♥ J 6 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ A J 6 4
 ♣ 3

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

♠ Q 10 6
 ♥ A 8 3
 ♦ Q 9 5
 ♣ K Q 9 8

West must risk overcalling 1NT over South's 1♣ opener; passing or bidding a four-card suit are equally misdescriptive, and "Too dangerous is no excuse!" After that call, North may risk intervening with 2♠ — especially if it systemically shows spades and a minor. If, however, North passes and leads a spade against 1NT, West will be in deep trouble. Say he takes the spade in hand and plays ♥K; South could win and shift to ♦Q! That holds West to five or six tricks. 2♠ by North on the lead of ♥10 may struggle home with +110, since West will be endplayed at trick two.

Bd: 18 ♠ A J 8 4 2
 Dlr: East ♥ J 6 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 8 2
 ♣ 10 4

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

♠ —
 ♥ A 8 4 2
 ♦ A 10 7 4
 ♣ A 9 7 3 2

Some will open the South hand 1♣, a sizable number would prefer to start with 1♦ then rebid 2♣; and I suppose a few might opt for 1♥. Of the three seven-card fits, hearts is the least profitable strain, while diamonds handles much better than clubs. You can arrange to ruff out or set up the clubs, even if the opponents lead and continue trumps. A typical sequence of plays in 2♦ on the lead of ♥10 will be for South to win the ♥A and duck a club. Declarer can then arrange to ruff at least one club in dummy and scramble nine tricks.

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

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

♠ 6 2
 ♥ Q 10 4 2
 ♦ A K 4 3 2
 ♣ K 3

When East opens 1♠ (he is too strong to open 4♠,) South can exploit the vulnerability by risking a 2♦ overcall or by doubling. Whatever South does, West rates to raise to 3♠, suggesting shape not high cards, since a cuebid (or 2NT) shows a good hand. Now both sides will compete to become declarer. It seems right for North to bid on over 4♠, to 5♥ or 5♦. 5♦ is laydown, 5♥ very hard to beat — a diamond lead allows East subsequently to underlead in spades for the ruff. E/W do have a good save in 5♠, so long as no one doubles.

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

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

♠ A 4 3
 ♥ A 9 6 2
 ♦ 9 7 5
 ♣ K J 4

Most Souths will be persuaded by their two aces and a king to open 1♣. Will West double that? I suspect most will hold their nose and do so. North should respond 1NT, getting his general values across nicely, and East has a very tough call now. If his partner delivers the shape he promised, East would surely be comfortable enough at the two level. As it is, E/W may struggle to escape for down one in 2♥ but would do even worse in the 4-3 spade fit. All this on a deal that might have been passed out 50 years ago. Penalties of 100 or more will be common here.

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

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

♠ K J 3
 ♥ 8 7 6 4
 ♦ Q
 ♣ A Q 9 6 3

The South cards represent a reasonable if light 1♣ opener — it is hard to put too much value on that singleton ♦Q. When North responds 1♠, South will raise to 2♠ and North has enough to gamble out 4♠. How bad can it be? Alas for him, a heart ruff defeats it out of hand. Meanwhile N/S have 10 tricks available in hearts, because the defenders cannot arrange a ruff in spades. This looks to be nothing more than bad luck for N/S. However, even if South passes initially, it is very hard to get to hearts rather than spades here.

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

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

♠ J 10
 ♥ J 10 8 7 4
 ♦ J 4
 ♣ 9 8 7 4

Predictions are always dangerous, but this board is surely going to be relatively flat around the room. After West opens 1♠, East is going to drive the hand to 4♠, one way or another. Some will risk getting to the five level, but with trumps 2-2 you can avoid being penalized for your irrational exuberance today. The most likely variant contract, one that will probably be punished severely, is for East to attempt 3NT. After a heart lead from South, the defenders can take at least three tricks and should surely score very well for so doing.

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

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

♠ A J 6
 ♥ 9 8 5
 ♦ A J 8 5 3
 ♣ K 5

Few will preempt with the West cards (holding a weak six-card suit and both majors isn't a recommendation for action,) so East will probably get to open 1♦ in third seat. Despite holding the balance of high cards, N/S may now be frozen out altogether. But E/W want to make sure to play a suit contract, not notrump; West should be able to escape to clubs after his partner rebids 1NT, though there is no universally agreed method to do so if 2♣ is artificial. In clubs, E/W have a painless 130; spades is far more of a struggle, and even +110 appears to be quite a feat.

Bd: 25 ♠ 83
 Dlr: North ♥ A Q J
 Vul: E-W ♦ 10 7 3
 ♣ K J 8 6 4

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

♠ 9 7 6 5
 ♥ 8 6 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ 3 2

You'd expect North to pass here, but even if he does open 1♣, E/W will surely end up in 3NT, whether East overcalls 1NT or in a suit. That contract makes a likely 11 tricks on any lead but a heart. If North passes, E/W will bid unopposed either to 3NT or a diamond slam. They have plenty of values, but two virtually inescapable losers if they play diamonds. So long as the defense is reasonably passive and does not give away a heart or club trick unnecessarily, declarer simply has too much work to do to bring slam home.

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

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

♠ K 10 8 6
 ♥ K J
 ♦ A K 8 6
 ♣ K 5 4

At some tables East will open light, or open with a two-suited call. Most Easts will pass, and South will start proceedings with 1NT. Now East should balance to show hearts, or hearts and a minor, if he can. You'd expect South to be able to double for takeout (if you play this sequence as penalty, change your methods). North might initially be happy to convert the double to penalty, especially if he was told his side had three trump tricks; but it seems to be impossible to defeat 2♥x today. 1NT by South on a diamond lead is likely to prove equally comfortable.

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

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

♠ K 10 2
 ♥ A 9
 ♦ Q 7 6 4 2
 ♣ 9 8 6

When East opens 1♣, there is a weak case for South overcalling here. Still, the action is questionable with such a weak hand and a poor suit, especially when the call takes up no space. One way or another, though, the bid won't have much impact. West will introduce his two suits and force East to select which major they should play game in. As the cards lie, both 4♥ and 4♠ (though not 3NT) make easily enough. However, in theory it looks as if it might just be possible to survive a bad spade break in hearts, but not if spades are trump.

Bd: 30 ♠ J 8 5 3
 Dlr: East ♥ Q J 7 2
 Vul: None ♦ K Q J 8
 ♣ 2

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

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

East is too good for a strong notrump so will open 1♣, letting South overcall 1♠. Now North will cuebid to show a limit raise in spades. If N/S reach 4♠, the contract hinges on negotiating the trump suit for one loser. After a club lead to the ace and a heart shift, South might work out that East is balanced, but either too weak or too strong for 1NT. However, he may be unable to work out which at the critical moment, even if there are clues to suggest East has most of the missing HCP. Of course, East might still have ♠AQx rather than his actual holding.

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

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

♠ 9 5 3 2
 ♥ A 10 5 4
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ 8 6 2

E/W rate to have an unopposed auction in which East will respond 1♦ to 1♣, and West will produce a simple raise. Now the key is to avoid playing 3NT, but also to stop short of slam. That shouldn't be too hard, since E/W are missing two aces, but we've all seen such accidents happen, especially in competition. If North bids hearts, he will make it simpler for his opponents to avoid the notrump trap. Additionally, there is always the danger of going for a penalty of 500 if one tries to push the opponents around too much.

Bd: 31 ♠ J 7
 Dlr: South ♥ J 10 8 6
 Vul: N-S ♦ K Q 10 6
 ♣ A 10 3

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

♠ K Q 6
 ♥ A 9 3
 ♦ 8 7 5 4 2
 ♣ J 5

Most Wests will open 2♠ here; the spade spots aren't ideal, but the vulnerability should encourage you to preempt if you can. North doesn't have nearly enough to double facing a passed partner, and surely no one else has a reason to bid. After a top diamond lead against 2♠, West can win the ace and return a diamond, hoping N/S will open up hearts or clubs. Now declarer might find a way to come to eight tricks, if the defenders help set up an extra trick for him. The matchpoint difference between -50 and +110 will be very significant for E/W.

Bd: 28 ♠ K Q 8 4
 Dlr: West ♥ 8 6 5 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ 7 6
 ♣ 8 7 3

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

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

You really want to avoid getting too high in spades here by playing 3NT from West. That ought always to generate at least +430 against anything but the most hostile of club breaks. You might also consider 6♣ today, which comes in at around 50% (barring a defensive ruff) and succeeds easily when clubs break. Curiously, East can take as many as 11 tricks in spades by ruffing four clubs in his own hand, then taking all the red-suit winners and exiting in diamonds. In the four-card ending North will ruff but can be held to just one further trump trick.

Bd: 32 ♠ A 5 3
 Dlr: West ♥ A Q 3 2
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 6 5
 ♣ K Q 4

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

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

North is not good enough for a 2NT opening bid, so he will bid 1♣, over which East may well jump to 2♠. West might now raise to 3♠ or pass. If he passes, N/S could find their way back into the auction, and reach game in diamonds or notrump. However, if West ups the ante to 3♠, it may not be so obvious for N/S to take any further bids. It is hard to imagine anyone selling out to 3♠ on a deal where their side can make slam, but it is far from clear that anyone would have done anything particularly cowardly.