P A V L I C E K   S C H O O L   O F   B R I D G E

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Analyses 7T05   **ACBL Instant MP Pairs**   by Richard Pavlicek

The 36 deals in this collection were played September 15, 1999 in the 13th annual "Instant Matchpoint" Pairs, a continent-wide event conducted by the American Contract Bridge League. The analyses were written by Richard Pavlicek and originally published in a souvenir booklet given to each participant after the game.

Regardless of whether you played in this event, these analyses provide instructive reading with many tips on bidding and play. To benefit even further, prepare these deals in duplicate boards (or have someone else do it) and *play them*. Determine your matchpoint scores from the tables (top is 100) then compare your bidding and play with my write-up.

Original Letter

July 1, 1999

Dear Bridge Players:

I hope you enjoyed playing in the 1999 ACBL Instant Matchpoint Pairs, an annual event begun in 1987 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our ACBL. Regardless of how well you did, try to find time to compare your results with my analyses in this booklet. You might garner some tips to improve your bridge game, and occasionally may discover that your own success topped my prediction.

Besides the analyses of the deals, I have included some goodies in the boxes at the bottom of the pages (beginning after Board 8). Some of these are instructive, like the quizzes on when to cover an honor, and others are just for entertainment. But they all come with my "money-back guarantee": You may as well enjoy them because I guarantee you'll never get your money back.

This was a wild set of deals. After Board 32 you will find a statistical analysis, which shows the average HCP and hand freakness for each player. East had the most HCP (11.08 average HCP per deal) and South the fewest (9.42 average), but South more than made up for this by having the wildest hand patterns. But there is no cause for alarm. On the facing page is a 13-year analysis of all the deals since this event began, and it does show a closeness to theoretical expectations.

I welcome any feedback — questions, criticisms, or whatever — about the analyses. If you wish a reply, please contact me by e-mail (see letterhead). Also, if you have access to the Internet, check out my Worldwide Web site (see letterhead) where you will find lots of complimentary bridge material.

Richard Pavlicek

```
              ♠ Q 5
              ♡ K 10 8 6
              ◇ Q 10 8 5 4
              ♣ 7 6
♠ A 9 3                        ♠ J 10 8 7 2
♡ 9 7 5          N             ♡ —
◇ K J 9 7     W     E          ◇ 6 3 2
♣ Q 5 4          S             ♣ A K J 8 2
              ♠ K 6 4
              ♡ A Q J 4 3 2
              ◇ A
              ♣ 10 9 3
```

Fasten your seat belts for an exciting set of boards. We begin with a deal on which *both sides* can make a game. Here's a sequence I like, especially if East-West:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♡
Pass	2 ♡	3 ♡	4 ♡
4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl (AP)

East's passed-hand Michaels cue-bid (showing five spades and an undisclosed five-card minor) is a little aggressive but justified by the heart void. West senses a good fitting hand and saves in 4 ♠, or so he thinks. South thinks so too and doubles, but it can't be beat.

In spades, after a heart lead ruffed and the ♠ J to the queen, 10 tricks are easily made, and the defense must be careful to stop an overtrick. If North returns another heart, declarer can ruff and lead a *diamond*, then negotiate a third heart ruff for a neat dummy reversal. If North returns any other suit, the entries are lacking.
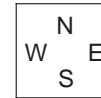
In hearts, 10 tricks are available by setting up North's long diamond (necessary if West leads trumps). A few may get the ♠ A lead and no club shift for 11 tricks.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 1

	100		91		49	-50	28	-420	12
+650	99	+420	79	+150	48		22		9
	98		65	+140	45	-100	20	-450	8
+590	97	+300	64		42		19		7
	96		63	+100	40	-140	18	-590	5
+500	95	+200	62		38		17		2
	94		61	+50	36	-170	16	-690	1
+450	93	+170	55		34		15		0

```
              ♠ J 4
              ♡ 4 2
              ◇ A 10 8
              ♣ K 10 9 8 7 2
♠ 7 3 2                        ♠ K Q 5
♡ K J 10 9 5     N             ♡ A 8 6 3
◇ Q J 2       W     E          ◇ K 7 6
♣ A 6            S             ♣ Q 5 4
              ♠ A 10 9 8 6
              ♡ Q 7
              ◇ 9 5 4 3
              ♣ J 3
```

Many standard bidders will follow this route:

West	North	East	South
		1 ♣	Pass
1 ♡	Pass	2 ♡	Pass
4 ♡	All Pass		

West's jump to game is a bit optimistic — perhaps he should invite with 3 ♡ or a help-suit try of 2 ♠ or 3 ◇ — but we've all done worse things. Whether a game is good probably depends on the degree of fit, although trying to be too scientific may help the opponents.

The defense can shine here. Four hearts can be beaten if North leads the ♠ J and South *ducks*, which is surely the right play lacking a side entry. Even if the lead were a singleton, South couldn't benefit by winning the ace (North's only ruff would be declarer's loser). After any other lead (except ◇ A, then ♠ J) 10 tricks are easily won by drawing trumps and establishing the ♣ Q.

The only unbeatable game is 3 NT and again the key is a spade duck, but this time by declarer. No matter who plays it, North's ♠ J must be allowed to win the first spade lead to break the defenders' communication.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 2

	100		72	-180	63	-450	6
+150	99	-110	71		62	-460	5
	98	-120	70	-200	61		4
+100	97		69		60	-500	3
	96	-140	68	-400	59		2
+50	84	-150	67	-420	31	-800	1
	74		66	-430	8		0
-90	73	-170	64		7		

About the Author

Richard Pavlicek of Fort Lauderdale FL is one of the leading ACBL bridge players. He has won 10 North American championships including the coveted Vanderbilt Cup (1983, '86 and '95), the Reisinger Trophy ('82, '83, '84, '90), the Grand National Teams ('73, '97), and the Open Swiss Teams ('92).

Mr. Pavlicek is the author of a variety of bridge booklets and lesson materials including his *Bridge Tutor* software for personal computers. He and his wife Mabel are successful bridge teachers in the South Florida area.

For the 13th year in a row, Pavlicek, a respected bridge analyst, will focus his highly skilled critical examination on each of the 36 deals in the ACBL Instant Matchpoint Pairs.

Board 3

South Deals   **E-W Vul**

```
              ♠ 10 9 7 6 4
              ♡ K 8 4 3 2
              ♦ 2
              ♣ 4 2
♠ 8 2                          ♠ A K Q J 3
♡ A              N             ♡ 10
♦ A 10 8 7 6 3  W   E          ♦ Q J 4
♣ A 8 7 6        S             ♣ Q J 10 5
              ♠ 5
              ♡ Q J 9 7 6 5
              ♦ K 9 5
              ♣ K 9 3
```

Fast and furious! You pay your entry fee and take your shots. Here is one gallery:

West	North	East	South
			2 ♡
3 ♦	5 ♡	6 ♠	All Pass

After South's weak two-bid, North has many tactical options, but I don't like a timid 4 ♡. At least 5 ♡ takes away East's opportunity to use Blackwood. Another possibility is to bid 4 NT as a Blackwood *psych*, which might almost be convincing when South shows no aces. No, East has just too much to be fooled here.

As East I would fight fire with fire and take my shot in 6 ♠, which North is happy to defend with five trumps. Too bad, it's cold with a heart lead: Draw four rounds of trumps and run the diamonds; you need the diamond finesse but not the club finesse. Curiously, if South led *either minor* against 6 ♠, I would fear a singleton and hop with the ace — ugh, down one when trumps go 5-1. But I guess it would serve me right for being a matchpoint hog, not playing in diamonds.

In diamonds (or with trepidation in notrump) 13 tricks are available, but declarer might make only 12 playing for a spade-club squeeze instead of the club finesse.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 3

	100		88		76		45		19
+200	99	-170	87	-500	74	-680	36	-1390	13
	97		86		73		31		6
+100	95	-200	85	-600	71	-720	30	-1430	5
	92		84	-620	65		29		2
-50	91	-230	83		59	-800	27	-1660	1
	90		82	-640	54		25		0
-100	89	-300	79	-650	49	-1370	22		

Board 4

West Deals   **Both Vul**

```
              ♠ A 8 5 4 3
              ♡ Q 5
              ♦ A 8 5
              ♣ A J 3
♠ Q 7                          ♠ K 6
♡ A K 9 8 7 6    N             ♡ J 10 3 2
♦ 4 2           W   E          ♦ K Q 7
♣ 10 9 6         S             ♣ 8 7 4 2
              ♠ J 10 9 2
              ♡ 4
              ♦ J 10 9 6 3
              ♣ K Q 5
```

Many North-South pairs will reach 4 ♠, perhaps after this sequence:

West	North	East	South
2 ♡	2 ♠	3 ♡	4 ♠
All Pass			

North's spade suit is rather skimpy for an overcall of a weak two-bid, but it's probably the least of evils. East competes to 3 ♡, and South takes a shot at game since 3 ♠ might be strained in competition.

Four spades is likely to fail, but the play is interesting. Assume a heart lead and a diamond shift, ducked to East; then a club return. Declarer does best to cash the ♠ A, ruff a heart and win his remaining clubs. Then exit with a trump to endplay East. But what if East unblocks the ♠ K under the ace? No problem: Cash the ♦ A before exiting with a spade then *West* will be endplayed. Neat, but maybe not realistic.

At double-dummy 4 ♠ can always be set. Do you see how? East must lead a *trump* (either will do). Then when West wins the first heart and returns a diamond, East can *cash his spade* and exit with a heart to foil any endplay. Remember this the next time you hold king-doubleton in declarer's trump suit. Yeah, right.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 4

	100		77	+140	48	-110	10		2
+800	99	+300	76		38	-120	9	-670	1
	98		75	+120	37		8		0
+650	97	+200	74	+110	36	-140	7		
	96		73	+100	34		6		
+620	88	+170	66	+90	33	-200	5		
	79		60		32		4		
+500	78	+150	59	-100	21	-500	3		

Instant Scoring

To find your matchpoints, look up the *North-South* score in the chart. If the score is not listed, select the *dotted line* at the place that score would rank. If you played N-S, your matchpoints are shown. If you played E-W, subtract the number shown from 100.

For example, suppose you were E-W on Board 3 and bid 5 ♠ making six. Your score is +680, so N-S is -680. Look up -680 in the chart to find 36 matchpoints for N-S. As E-W you get 100 - 36 = 64 matchpoints.

North Deals	**Board 5**	N-S Vul

```
                  ♠ K J 6 4
                  ♡ —
                  ◇ K 6 5 4 3
                  ♣ K 7 4 2
   ♠ Q 8 7                        ♠ 10 9 5 3 2
   ♡ A J 5 3 2        N           ♡ 10 9 8 4
   ◇ 8 7           W     E        ◇ A 10 9
   ♣ A 6 5            S           ♣ 10
                  ♠ A
                  ♡ K Q 7 6
                  ◇ Q J 2
                  ♣ Q J 9 8 3
```

A heart barrage may make it tough for North-South to reach their best spot. Here is one successful route:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1 ♣
1 ♡	Dbl	3 ♡	Pass
Pass	4 ♡	Pass	5 ♣
All Pass			

North's negative double shows four spades, and East makes a weak jump raise. When this is passed back to North I don't like doubling again (too likely to be converted to penalty) so I would cue-bid 4 ♡, allowing for the possibility to play in spades. South then chooses the obvious game.

In clubs, 11 tricks are easy unless West is inspired to lead a diamond and East *ducks* — unrealistic, perhaps, because East would expect a singleton. Declarer can still survive with careful play: Win the ♠ A; heart ruff; ♠ K throwing a diamond; then lead a diamond (*not* a trump). Declarer now has a successful crossruff (with a ruffing heart finesse) unless the defense plays ace and trump; then the diamonds can be used.

Those who play in 3 NT should not be pleased, going down two after a heart lead and accurate defense.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 5				
............100	 87	 43	-100.......26	4
+800 99	+600 72	+130......40	-110.......18	-470 3
.............98	 58	+120......37	 17	2
+750 97	+500 57	+110......36	-140.......16	-500 1
.............96	 56	+100......35	 15	0
+660 95	+300 55	 34	-200.......10	
.............94	 54	+50........33	6	
+630 91	+150 49	 32	-300.........5	

East Deals	**Board 6**	E-W Vul

```
                  ♠ 10 5 4
                  ♡ 10 3
                  ◇ 10 6
                  ♣ A 10 9 6 4 3
   ♠ K J 9 7 3                     ♠ A 6 2
   ♡ A Q 8            N            ♡ 9 6 4
   ◇ 7 4 3         W     E         ◇ A K 9 8 2
   ♣ 8 7              S            ♣ K 5
                  ♠ Q 8
                  ♡ K J 7 5 2
                  ◇ Q J 5
                  ♣ Q J 2
```

Most East-West pairs should end up in 4 ♠. I would bid this way:

West	North	East	South
		1 ◇	1 ♡
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		

West's 1 ♠ response shows five (a negative double would show four) and East routinely raises. I think the West hand is now worth a game bid, treating the ♡ A-Q behind South as if it were A-K. Nonetheless, many will just invite and East probably should accept anyway.

The friendly layout makes 11 tricks routine. Assuming a heart lead, just draw trumps and duck a diamond.

Those who play in notrump are blessed with the same 11 tricks on a heart lead. But after a *club* lead won by the king, declarer can win only 10 for an inferior result. Curiously, if North were to win the ♣ A at trick one and continue clubs, declarer can prevail for the 11th trick — on the spades South is squeezed out of his remaining club, then a diamond is ducked to South (if North plays the ◇ 10 first, win it then duck a diamond).

"This is *Houston*, Mission Control, to Richard: Please return to earth."

North-South Matchpoints — Board 6				
............100	-110 92	 64	-500.......41	5
+200 99	-120 91	-200.......55	 40	-680 4
.............98	-130 90	-210.......47	-600.......39	-690 3
+100 97	-140 89	-230.......46	-620.......35	2
.............96	-150 85	-240.......45	-630.......31	-800 1
-50 95	 80	 44	 30	0
.............94	-170 74	-300.......43	-650.......24	
-100 93	-180 65	 42	-660.......10	

About the Awards

Matchpoint awards are determined by actual results when these deals were played in a foreign tournament. Occasional adjustments have been made by Mr. Pavlicek when he felt the results were biased by non-American systems or inferior bidding or play.

To further minimize the influence of scoring inequities — and who doesn't think their own score should be better? — the N-S and E-W pairs in this event are ranked independently with separate overall winners in each group.

♠ A 9 6 2
♡ 4 2
◇ Q 6 3 2
♣ Q 6 3

♠ Q 7 4 3   ♠ K 10 8
♡ 6   ♡ 10 7 5
◇ A 10 7 5 4   ◇ K J 8
♣ 8 5 2   ♣ A J 9 7

      N
   W   E
      S

♠ J 5
♡ A K Q J 9 8 3
◇ 9
♣ K 10 4

Here is a standard auction to the borderline game for North-South:

West	North	East	South
			1 ♡
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	3 ♡
Pass	4 ♡	All Pass	

North's raise to 4 ♡ is a close decision but correct in my view. Chances are good that at least one of North's queens will be useful (South's shortness is most likely to be in spades) and the presence of a doubleton heart instead of one would sway me to bid. A case could also be made to try 3 NT, but that appears too dangerous with North's tenuous stoppers.

In hearts, barring a gift, winning 10 tricks depends on the club finesse which works. If West leads a spade (or ◇ A then a spade), North's entry will be driven out early and declarer must immediately lead a club to the 10. Failure to do this allows the defense to prevail.

If North plays in 3 NT, only a spade lead (or a diamond lead and timely spade switch) can beat it. But even after a friendly club lead, declarer can be held to nine tricks for an inferior result. If declarer tries for 10 by leading a second club, East shifts to a low diamond.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 7

............100		+600 44		+140...... 28		2	
+790 99		 43		 27		-300......... 1	
..............98		+400 42		+110...... 26		0	
+660 97		 41		+100...... 25			
+650 96		+200 40		 24			
..............95		 39		-100....... 14			
+630 94		+170 34		 4			
+620 69		 29		-200......... 3			

♠ K Q J 9 5 3
♡ 9 5
◇ J 8 3
♣ 8 7

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

      N
   W   E
      S

♠ 8 7 6 2
♡ 7 6 2
◇ A K 9 5
♣ A 10

A sensible weak two-bid by North is likely to produce this auction at many tables:

West	North	East	South
Pass	2 ♠	3 ♡	3 ♠
4 ♡	All Pass		

The winning decision by South is to sacrifice in 4 ♠, however, this feels wrong holding three top tricks on defense, as too many times you will defeat their game. It is also possible that 4 ♠ could be cold (e.g., give North a stiff heart and ◇ Q-x-x), but my philosophy is that North is allowed to bid 4 ♠ with a suitable hand after South's raise. Hence, when he fails to do so the odds are overwhelming it will fail.

In hearts, 10 tricks are routine and it's hard to imagine any scenario for more or less.

In spades, the play is more interesting. If East carelessly leads three rounds of hearts, declarer can win 10 tricks with the lucky diamond lie. Of course, a club shift by East is a standout and completely safe, then declarer is held to nine tricks. Note that in the diamond suit the *double finesse* (leading the jack) is the best percentage play. Even after the club shift, this is better than trying to drop the ◇ Q singleton or doubleton.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 8

............100		 92		 77		-140.......51		43	
+590 99		+170 91		+50...... 71		-150.......50		-400 42	
..............98		 90		 66		 49		-420 22	
+530 97		+150 89		-50......... 65		-170.......48		2	
..............96		+140 88		 61		 47		-590 1	
+420 95		 87		-100....... 58		-200.......46		0	
..............94		+110 86		 54		 45			
+300 93		+100 81		-130....... 52		-300.......44			

Cover a Queen?

In 3 NT the *queen* is led from dummy and you are next to play. Assume your only concern is to win the most tricks in the suit shown, and declarer cannot have six cards. What do you play?

1. Dummy: Q 4 2   You: K 5 3

2. Dummy: Q J 9 8   You: K 2

Answer

1. Play the king. If declarer has A-J-10 your king is dead, so the only sensible plan is to cover and hope partner has something in the suit. 2. Play the two. The only case that matters is when declarer has the ace and partner the 10, then your best chance is to duck and hope declarer leads the jack next trying to smother 10-x in partner's hand.

♠ Q J
♡ 6 5 3 2
♢ 2
♣ A K Q 10 9 4

♠ A K 10 8 7 5   ♠ 9 6 4 2
♡ J 10 8 4   ♡ A K Q
♢ Q   ♢ A J 8
♣ 8 2   ♣ J 7 6

```
  N
W   E
  S
```

♠ 3
♡ 9 7
♢ K 10 9 7 6 5 4 3
♣ 5 3

Aggressive preemptive bidding is the hallmark of a winning player. How many diamonds would *you* bid with the South hand in this situation?

West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	Dbl	5 ♢
5 ♠	All Pass		

At favorable vulnerability I like *five* to put some real pressure on the opponents. Notice how uncomfortable this makes it for West; he would have an easy 4 ♠ bid over anything less, but now he has to grope at the five level. This time it is right to bid, but next time he might look foolish.

In spades, 11 tricks are routine regardless of the lead (unless for some strange reason *East* becomes declarer and South leads a diamond). Darn! It would be nice if I could switch the ♠ J and ♠ 3, and make West pay with an uppercut on the third round of clubs.

In diamonds, South can easily win eight tricks — just lead a diamond to the king — so the bid was right on the money for a good save. Hmm… I wonder if West would have bid 6 ♠ if South jumped to 6 ♢. We'll never know, but I suspect they might be calling the paramedics for North instead.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 9

............100	 92	 81	15	2
+200 99	-150 91	-500...... 75	-710........14	-1100 1
.............98	 90	 68	13	0
+100 97	-170 89	-620....... 66	-800........10	
.............96	 88	 64		
-50 95	-200 86	 17	-850.........5	
.............94	 83	 17	4	
-100 93	-300 82	-680....... 16	-990.........3	

♠ J 7 5 3
♡ A K Q 10 8 4
♢ 6 4
♣ A

♠ K 8   ♠ A 10 9 6
♡ J 6 5   ♡ 9 7 3 2
♢ Q 9 8 3 2   ♢ J 7
♣ 8 7 3   ♣ 9 6 2

```
  N
W   E
  S
```

♠ Q 4 2
♡ —
♢ A K 10 5
♣ K Q J 10 5 4

It is easy to get overboard on the North-South cards, which have a lot of potential but fit poorly. Here is a sound auction:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1 ♣
Pass	1 ♡	Pass	2 ♢
Pass	3 ♡	Pass	3 NT
Pass	4 NT	All Pass	

South barely has the values for a reverse bid (a jump to 3 ♣ is also reasonable). Over 3 NT North senses the misfit and judges well to make a quantitative invitation in notrump, which South rejects. Some players would treat 4 NT as Blackwood here, but my rule is this: If our side has bid notrump as a natural bid and no major suit is agreed, then 4 NT is natural.

As West, would you lead the unbid suit? If you don't, declarer has all 13 tricks (and a 14th to spare) when the ♡ J comes down. And imagine if you were on lead against 6 NT. Would you find it then? Another thing that makes me wonder: In the past scores I noticed that eight North-South pairs bid 6 NT and won *exactly* 12 tricks. Does this mean that West led the ♠ K and then shifted? It boggles the mind.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 10

............100	+1370 ... 85	+660...... 41	18	4
+1470 96	 84	+650...... 33	+200.......17	-200 3
+1460 91	+720 75	+640...... 29	16	2
+1440 90	+710 59	+630....... 28	+170.......15	-500 1
+1430 89	 47	+620....... 25	14	0
.............88	+690 47	+600....... 21	+130.......13	
+1390 87	+680 45	 20	12	
.............86	 44	+260....... 19	-100.......11	

```
              ♠ Q 9 3 2
              ♡ A 9 8 6 4
              ◇ 7
              ♣ Q 7 2
♠ A K J 8 4                      ♠ 10 7 6
♡ Q              N              ♡ K 10 3
◇ Q 9 8 5 2    W   E           ◇ K J
♣ K J              S            ♣ 10 8 6 4 3
              ♠ 5
              ♡ J 7 5 2
              ◇ A 10 6 4 3
              ♣ A 9 5
```

West will usually buy this one in spades after a little competition:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♠	Dbl
3◇	3♡	3♠	All Pass

After South's passed-hand takeout double, West bids his second suit as a game try, North competes in hearts, and East in spades.

West can win eight tricks in spades. The defense has three aces and a natural trump trick, and North is entitled to a diamond ruff whether he pursues it or not. Declarer has to play diamonds early himself.

In hearts, North can win nine tricks. Assume a spade lead and a trump shift (best) won by the ace. If declarer starts a crossruff by ruffing a spade, he will fail — East overruffs the third diamond and cashes the ♡ K. One winning line is to negotiate three spade ruffs by leading a club to the queen early, but this seems presumptuous of a bad diamond break. Better I think is: ◇ A; diamond ruff; club ace; diamond ruff and overruff; ♡ K; spade return (best) ruffed; then a *club* and West is endplayed — either the ♠ Q or the ◇ 10 will win a trick.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 11

............100	 92	 35	9	-500 1
+500 99	+150 89	-50......... 34	-140.........8	0
.............98	+140 86	 33	-150.........7	
+300 97	 85	-80......... 32	6	
.............96	+110 84	-90......... 31	-170.........5	
+200 95	+100 72	-100......... 30	4	
.............94	 58	-110....... 19	-300.........3	
+170 93	+50 47	-120....... 10	2	

```
              ♠ K Q 7 5 4 2
              ♡ A 6
              ◇ —
              ♣ 8 7 6 5 2
♠ J 8 3                          ♠ 10 9
♡ K 7 3            N            ♡ 10 4
◇ A J 7 6 5 4 3  W   E          ◇ K Q 9 8
♣ —                S            ♣ A K Q J 3
              ♠ A 6
              ♡ Q J 9 8 5 2
              ◇ 10 2
              ♣ 10 9 4
```

With 3-3 in the majors, the West hand is not ideal for a preempt, but one can't wait for perfect hands:

West	North	East	South
3◇	3♠	5◇	All Pass

It is also sensible to open 2◇ (weak) or even 1◇, but these will lead to the same futile contract and phantom save. (As shown, perhaps South should double.) I guess the moral is to wait for those perfect hands and *pass*.

In diamonds, routine defense will take four fast tricks. After the ♠ K lead, South should probably overtake and lead the ♡ Q for an easy cash-out. The danger in not overtaking is that North might lead the ♡ A next.

In spades, after a high club lead, North can win nine tricks with best play. This is easiest if East leads four rounds of clubs — discard from South on a low club and ruff the last club high. If East shifts to diamonds, ruff and lead clubs to do the same. If East shifts to trumps at any time, win the ace, finesse hearts, draw trumps and set up a club. What about a club ruff at trick two and a trump shift? Oops! Ace and a heart now nets 10 tricks. Curiously, North can be held to just eight tricks after *any opening lead but a club*, but if East ever found this they might lock him up and throw away the key.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 12

............100	+50 62	 38	-420.......14	-800 5
+300 96	 47	-170....... 36	 12	4
.............93	-100 46	 34	-500.......11	-920 3
+150 92	-110 45	-200....... 33	 10	2
+140 91	 44	 32	-550.........9	-1090 1
.............90	-130 42	-300....... 31	8	0
+100 85	 40	 30	-650.........7	
.............78	-150 39	-400....... 26	6	

Cover a Jack?

In 3 NT the *jack* is led from dummy and you are next to play. Assume your only concern is to win the most tricks in the suit shown, and declarer cannot have six cards. What do you play?

1. Dummy: J 10 7   You: Q 9 2

2. Dummy: J 10 7   You: A Q 2

Answer

1. Play the two. If declarer holds the A-K nothing matters. The critical case is when partner has the king, then if you cover your side may win only one trick; but ducking will assure two tricks.
2. Play the ace. Assuming declarer has the king, playing the two is an immediate loss, and playing the queen loses when declarer has K-8 (any length).

♠ 8
♡ A K Q 7
♢ A K 9 8 5 3 2
♣ 4

♠ A J 6 5
♡ 6 4 3 2
♢ —
♣ K Q J 9 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 3 2
♡ J 10 9 8 5
♢ Q J 4
♣ A 8

♠ K Q 10 9 4
♡ —
♢ 10 7 6
♣ 10 7 6 5 3

Good bidding will not be rewarded here due to a bad trump break. I like this sequence:

West	North	East	South
	1 ♢	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♣	2 ♡	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	3 ♢
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♣
Pass	5 ♢	Dbl	All Pass

North's reverse bid is forcing, and South repeats his meaty spade suit. (After opener's reverse, most experts play that responder should rebid any five-card major with a weak hand.) North next cue-bids to elicit more information, and after the welcome diamond preference, uses Blackwood en route to 5 ♢. Note that 6 ♢ would be a sound contract if South held either black ace.

Ouch! The bidding was *too* accurate and a shrewd East player would double, expecting his side to have two cashable aces plus a trump trick. And so it is; 5 ♢ is down one, with nothing to the play.

A lesson to be learned here is that, to win at bridge, you have to be in the right place at the right time. No matter how well you bid or play, it seems that fate has the edge.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 13

............100	92	-100........52	-800..........1
+1100.....99	+200......91	27	0
..............98	90	-200.......17	
+800......97	+130......85	6	
..............96	80	-300..........5	
+710......95	+110......79	4	
..............94	+100......78	-500..........3	
+500......93	77	2	

♠ J 10
♡ 9 7 5 2
♢ K 7 6 2
♣ 7 3 2

♠ Q 4 2
♡ A J 3
♢ Q J 10 8 4
♣ K J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 9 5
♡ K Q 10 6
♢ 9
♣ A 10 9 6 4

♠ A 8 7 6 3
♡ 8 4
♢ A 5 3
♣ Q 8 5

Most East-Wests will get to 3 NT, though the paths will vary. Here is one sensible route:

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

Some Easts will rebid 2 ♡ over 2 ♢, but I prefer 2 NT since West would use a negative double with four hearts (unless he intended to bid hearts himself later).

After a spade lead to the king, declarer does not have time to develop diamonds so it is logical to attack clubs. I think *low to the jack* is best because: (1) South bid and is more likely to hold high cards, (2) if North held the ♣ Q it would often be four-long and uncapturable, and most convincing, (3) I can see all four hands. After this start, 10 tricks are routine, and some will steal 11.

If *West* plays 3 NT, the ♠ J lead is troublesome. The right play is the *king* (assuming South bid spades) which South wins, and a spade is returned. Maybe West should infer that South would not lead a spade from the 10 and hop with the queen. But more often he will duck and be held to nine tricks; though he might still finagle 10 by getting clubs right if the defense fails to cash out.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 14

............100	-100......86	-180.......78	13
+150......99	-110......85	77	-450.......12
..............98	-120......84	-200.......76	-460..........6
+100......96	-130......83	-210.......75	2
..............95	-140......82	74	-490..........1
+50........90	-150......81	-400.......68	0
..............88	80	-420.......58	
-90.........87	-170......79	-430.......34	

♠ K Q J 8 3
♡ Q 5 3
◇ K 9 3
♣ A Q

♠ 7 5 2   ♠ 9
♡ A K 10 8 2   N   ♡ J 6
◇ A 5   W   E   ◇ Q 10 8 7 2
♣ 10 9 4   S   ♣ K J 8 5 2

♠ A 10 6 4
♡ 9 7 4
◇ J 6 4
♣ 7 6 3

The bidding could take many turns here, but this looks normal to me:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♡	1♠	Dbl	Pass
2♣	Dbl	Pass	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♣	3♠ (AP)

North's hefty overcall fits the modern style, and East doubles to show the minors; South wisely passes at the vulnerability, and West bids his better minor. North then doubles to show a strong overcall, and South has an easy takeout to spades. East competes, and so does South.

In spades, North can win eight tricks. Routine defense starts with three rounds of hearts and a diamond to the ace. If West returns a diamond the play is easier: Win the king, draw trumps and exit with a diamond to end-play East. If West instead returns a *club*, North must win and lead all his trumps to effect a squeeze throw-in.

Some Norths will play in 1 NT or 2 NT. Assume the ♡ J lead. If West ducks or continues hearts, eight tricks are available (lead to the ◇ K). The killing defense is a *club* at trick two, which holds North to six tricks.

In clubs, 10 tricks can be won on the friendly lie.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 15

............100	+120 88	-100....... 48	..............27 0
+500 99	+110 80	-110....... 34	-200........19
..............98	+100 70	33	9
+300 97	+90 67	-130....... 32	-300..........6
..............96	+80 66	-140....... 31	4
+150 95	65	-150....... 30	-500..........3
+140 92	+50 63	29	2
..............89	60	-170....... 28	-800..........1

♠ K 10 5 2
♡ K Q J 5
◇ 10 7 5
♣ A 2

♠ A Q 9   ♠ 7 3
♡ 8 2   N   ♡ 10 9 6 3
◇ A Q   W   E   ◇ J 8 6 4 3 2
♣ K Q J 8 6 3   S   ♣ 7

♠ J 8 6 4
♡ A 7 4
◇ K 9
♣ 10 9 5 4

The smart money here is on defense, as most contracts will be set. A typical auction:

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

After the takeout double South's jump is borderline but justified I think with the well-placed values. West competes to 3♣, a dangerous bid which South would double, but he escapes when North raises spades. Not pretty, but realistic.

Alas, the ◇ K turns out to be useless, and the limit in spades is eight tricks. After the ♣ K lead to the ace, heart to the ace and a spade, West can win and continue clubs (high, then low) to leave declarer without resource. Note that if declarer ruffs with the ♠ 10, cashes the ♠ K and leads hearts, West must not ruff.

Those Wests who play in clubs will not enjoy it either. Assume the ♡ K lead, a low heart to the ace and a trump shift (four, king, ace) then a heart ruffed. If West cashes the ♣ Q-J he can be held to six tricks with sharp defense. West can do a trick better by winning only one top club and exiting with the ♠ 9 (or ace then nine) eventually throwing South in lead a diamond.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 16

............100	87	+100....... 51	-110.......12	-300 3
+800 98	+200 81	+90....... 46	11	2
..............97	75	45	-130.......10	-500 1
+530 96	+170 74	-50......... 38	-140.........9	0
..............95	73	-70......... 30	-150.........7	
+500 94	+140 67	28	6	
..............93	62	-90......... 27	-200.........5	
+300 92	+110 59	-100....... 20	4	

Cover a Ten?

In 3 NT the *ten* is led from dummy and you are next to play. Assume your only concern is to win the most tricks in the suit shown, and declarer cannot have six cards. What do you play?

1. Dummy: 10 3   You: K 5 2

2. Dummy: 10 9 7   You: K J 2

Answer

1. Play the king. If declarer has A-Q-J-9, nothing matters. Against all other holdings your play either gains a trick or breaks even. Note that even 9-x-x-x in partner's hand will be promoted if you cover. 2. Play the king. This is essential to get all your tricks in the event partner has A-8-x; and if he has as little as 8-x-x, you will eventually get one trick.

♠ 10 8 7 6 4 3 2
♡ 8 6 2
◇ K 8
♣ 3

♠ 9 5   ♠ A K J
♡ 10 7 3   ♡ K Q 9 4
◇ Q J 7 3   ◇ 6 2
♣ K 10 6 4   ♣ A Q 9 8

W N E S

♠ Q
♡ A J 5
◇ A 10 9 5 4
♣ J 7 5 2

Some Norths will cast their fate to the wind and open 3♠ (or maybe 2♠). A more traditional auction:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♣	1◇
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
1 NT	2♠	3 NT	All Pass

This is far from clear-cut, however, as there are many alternatives. West might raise clubs instead of bidding notrump; North might bid spades earlier, and East might bid only 2 NT or double 2♠.

In notrump, nine tricks can always be made by *West*. There are seven top tricks assuming declarer plays clubs right and doesn't take a first-round spade finesse (ouch), and it is easy to develop two more in the red suits.

If *East* plays 3 NT, the defense can prevail. South must lead a *low* diamond, then if an honor is played from dummy, North wins and returns the eight which South overtakes. But what if declarer plays low from dummy at trick one? The winning defense now has a double-dummy flavor: North must shift to a *heart*, then the defense can develop five red-suit tricks before declarer can develop two. If North does anything else, declarer can succeed with accurate play. Try it.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 17

............100	 91	-50..........51	-150.......33	-430 5
+500 99	+150 88	50	32	4
..............98	 86	-90..........49	-200.......31	-500 3
+470 97	+110 85	-100..........46	30	2
..............96	+100 76	-110.......41	-300........29	-800 1
+300 95	+50 68	-120.......36	28	0
..............93	+50 60	-130.......35	-400.......17	
+200 92	 52	-140.......34	6	

♠ A 10 7 6 5 2
♡ K 9 7 3
◇ 7
♣ J 7

♠ Q 9 8   ♠ J
♡ J 8 2   ♡ 10 4
◇ 5   ◇ A J 9 8 6 4 2
♣ A K 9 8 5 4   ♣ Q 6 2

W N E S

♠ K 4 3
♡ A Q 6 5
◇ K Q 10 3
♣ 10 3

Almost every East player will preempt. Indeed, this case could be found in a textbook — unlike North on Board 17, found only at the zoo. A normal auction:

West	North	East	South
		3◇	Pass
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠ (AP)

South might give a fleeting thought to 3 NT, but wisely avoids that disaster after a club lead. (Actually, North probably should remove 3 NT to 4♡ anyway.)

In spades, assuming no gifts (like the ◇A lead and no club shift), North should win exactly 10 tricks. The only problem is the trump suit, and the second-round finesse is strongly indicated, not only by restricted choice but also by the known diamond division.

Those who stumble into 4♡ have a better chance for overtricks since the defense must now cash their clubs. For example, East might lead his singleton spade giving declarer 12 tricks with routine play. This illustrates the advantage of having the evenly divided suit as trumps and the unevenly divided suit to provide discards.

East-West have a profitable sacrifice in *clubs*, though it's unrealistic to find. Declarer can win only eight tricks (just enough) with the foul diamond layout.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 18

............100	 90	 61	48	-100 11
+990 99	+660 89	+300.......58	+150.......46	-110 6
..............98	+650 84	 57	+140.......42	5
+800 97	 79	+230.......56	40	-200 4
+790 96	+620 71	 55	+100.......30	3
..............95	+600 64	+200.......53	21	-300 1
+690 94	 63	 52	+50.........19	0
+680 92	+500 62	+170.......50	17	

Cover a Nine?

In 3 NT the *nine* is led from dummy and you are next to play. Assume your only concern is to win the most tricks in the suit shown, and declarer cannot have six cards. What do you play?

1. Dummy: 9 2   You: Q 5 3

2. Dummy: 9 8 2   You: K Q 3

Answer

1. Play the queen. This can never cost a trick and will gain in many layouts, e.g., if declarer holds A-J-10-x and partner has K-8-x-x. The nine should be treated just like an honor for the purpose of deciding whether to cover. 2. Play the three. Nothing matters if declarer has A-J-10, but if declarer has A-J-x (any length) he is likely to let the nine ride to partner's 10.

♠ J 5
♡ A 10 7 6
♢ A K 8 2
♣ 10 8 2

♠ 8 7
♡ J 4 3
♢ J 10 9 7 6
♣ 9 6 3

N
W E
S

♠ A Q 4 3
♡ Q 9
♢ Q 5 4 3
♣ K J 5

♠ K 10 9 6 2
♡ K 8 5 2
♢ —
♣ A Q 7 4

Those who play one notrump forcing after a major opening will probably bid this way:

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 ♡
Pass	4 ♡	All Pass	

Traditional Norths will respond 2 ♢ instead and arrive at the same contract. In fact, I can't imagine any method that wouldn't reach 4 ♡ (famous last words).

In hearts, 11 tricks should be won. Assume the ♢ J lead taken by the king, ♠ J to the ace, and a club shift won by the queen. A variety of plays will achieve the same result, but best I think is: ♡ K; ♡ A; ♢ A pitching the last club loser; ♠ K; spade ruff; ♣ A; spade ruff. The South hand is now good except for the high trump.

A few declarers might be lured into a dubious safety play after the ♡ K drops the nine: finessing and losing to the queen. With this wasted effort declarer must take the spade finesse to recoup his 11 tricks. Even at *IMPs* I don't like this safety play because declarer can succeed with two trump losers on most layouts, and it could be the dreaded *unsafety play*. For example, if East returned a spade you might be set with a bad spade break.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 19

............100	+460 91	+200...... 30	+120.......22	0
+690 99	+450 74	 29	+110.......21	
..............98	 58	+180...... 28	20	
+590 97	+430 53	+170...... 27	-50.........13	
..............96	+420 46	 26	5	
+490 95	+400 37	+150...... 25	-100.........3	
+480 94	 32	+140...... 24	2	
..............93	+210 31	+130...... 23	-150.........1	

♠ 10 8 5 4
♡ A J 10 6
♢ K 9 8
♣ 5 3

♠ 7 6
♡ K Q 9 7 4 2
♢ 6 5 4
♣ 8 4

N
W E
S

♠ A K Q J 2
♡ 5 3
♢ Q 7 3
♣ A 10 7

♠ 9 3
♡ 8
♢ A J 10 2
♣ K Q J 9 6 2

This will be a trouble deal for many East-West pairs. One sensible auction might be:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♣
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2 ♡	Pass	2 ♠	All Pass

Some brazen Wests will open 2 ♡ (poor judgment I think with such a flat, barren hand) and get even higher when East tries for game.

In spades, East can win only six tricks if South gets his heart ruff. Even after the ♣ K lead, declarer is unlikely to win and draw trumps, so the opportunity remains.

The outcome in hearts should be the same. After a club lead, declarer is helpless to do anything effective.

In clubs, South can win 10 tricks with good guessing. Assume three rounds of spades, ruffed with the ♣ 9. To avoid a trump promotion, cross to the ♡ A and lead a club, ducked to the king. Next lead the ♣ Q, and all that remains is to guess diamonds. Poor defense! On the first club lead East should play the *ten*, the card he is known to hold. Now declarer is likely to assume A-10 alone and continue with a *low* club to avoid the promotion when West has 8-7-4. A cute swindle.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 20

............100	+400 92	+110...... 38	-140.........8	
+870 99	 91	+100...... 25	7	
..............98	+300 83	+90........ 17	-200.........6	
+800 97	 75	 16	4	
..............96	+200 62	-100....... 14	-300.........3	
+670 95	 49	-110....... 11	2	
..............94	+130 46	-120....... 10	-500.........1	
+500 93	 43	 9	0	

Marital Bliss

On their wedding night a couple arrive at their hotel room and the phone rings. The husband answers and talks with his friend about a *bridge* hand. The conversation continues for hours as the friend describes how he went down in a six-spade contract.

When the phone call finally ends, the distraught wife is in tears and says, "How can he be so inconsiderate? That was just *terrible!*"

"You're right, honey. All he had to do was take a finesse."

♠ K 7
♥ J 8 6 4 2
♦ 7 5 4
♣ 10 8 5

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

♠ 10 9 4
♥ 5
♦ Q 10 9 6 2
♣ K J 7 2

Most will deem the East hand worth a 2♣ opening. Here is a sound standard sequence:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	Pass	4 NT	All Pass

West barely has enough for a positive response, and East wisely suppresses his spade support to declare notrump. East later invites slam with 4 NT (natural, not Blackwood) and West declines.

Is this a good slam? The probability of success is hard to figure with chances in every suit, plus the advantage of the lead, but my rough estimate is about even money. So it's definitely not good; call it *fair* at best.

In notrump, assume the ♦ 10 lead to the king, then ace and a spade to North, and a heart return. At double-dummy it's easy — finesse hearts twice, or win the ♥ A and finesse in both red suits — but it's more realistic to cash the top hearts, after which the limit is 11 tricks.

Those who play in spades may do worse; for example, if North leads a heart and South later gets a heart ruff. But they may do better if *East* becomes declarer (after a transfer bid) and South leads his singleton.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 21

............100	 70	-430.......53	-510.......12	0
+300 99	-140 69	49	-520.......11	
..............98	-150 68	-450.......43	10	
+150 97	 67	-460.......29	-980.........8	
..............95	-170 66	22	-990.........5	
+100 91	 65	-480.......18	3	
..............87	-400 64	-490.......14	-1010.......2	
+50 78	-420 61	13	-1020.......1	

♠ K 7 6 5 2
♥ 6
♦ A Q J 9
♣ K Q 10

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

♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ J 10 8
♦ 7 6 4 3
♣ J 5

Competition for a partscore is likely to produce an auction like this:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♥	1♠	2♥	Pass
Pass	Dbl	3♥	3♠ (AP)

Some Norths may double 1♥ since they can support all the unbid suits, but I prefer to overcall first so as not to miss a 5-3 spade fit. (North is not strong enough to double and then bid spades.) East competes in hearts, and South finally comes to life with a spade raise.

In spades, 10 tricks can be made on the friendly layout. After two rounds of hearts, ruffed, I would lead the ♠ K won by West, then assume a heart return, ruffed. Now, the only problem is the spade guess, and I see no reason not to go with the slight favorite, trying to drop the jack. Even against shrewd defense (West ducks the ♠ K and East denies dummy a club entry), declarer can maneuver two entries to dummy to finesse diamonds.

In hearts, West can win nine tricks with careful play. The key is to keep South off lead while establishing the club suit, i.e., duck the first round if North plays high, or win the ace if he plays the ten.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 22

............100	 78	+100......33	18	-730.........1
+590 99	+200 76	28	-140.......13	0
..............98	 74	-50.........25	-150.........7	
+500 97	+170 61	23	6	
..............96	 48	-90.........22	-170.........5	
+420 88	+140 44	-100.......21	4	
..............80	 39	-110.......20	-620.........3	
+300 79	+110 38	-120....... 19	2	

Fewest Tricks

At rubber bridge (traditional scoring, not Chicago), what is the fewest total number of *tricks* one side could take and win the rubber? And by how many points would you win? Assume there are no irregularities.

Think about it; the answer is likely to surprise you.

Answer

Deal 1: Opponents bid 5♣ and take all the tricks (minus 140). Deal 2: Opponents bid 7 NT redoubled and you hold *four aces*. In a state of shock you forget to cash two of them but still set them two tricks (plus 1150). Deal 3: Same as Deal 1 (minus 140) and they get the rubber bonus (minus 700). Your side took only two tricks, yet you won the rubber by 170 points!

```
              ♠ 4 2
              ♡ 8 7 6 5
              ◇ 10 8 3 2
              ♣ J 7 2
♠ A 9 5                      ♠ Q
♡ A Q 10 9 3        N        ♡ K J
◇ K 9 5          W     E     ◇ A Q J 7 6 4
♣ 8 4              S         ♣ A K 9 3
              ♠ K J 10 8 7 6 3
              ♡ 4 2
              ◇ —
              ♣ Q 10 6 5
```

Bidding a grand slam after a preempt is a difficult feat, especially without Blackwood. So let's dream:

West	North	East	South
			4 ♠
Pass	Pass	5 ◇	Pass
5 ♠	Pass	6 ♣	Pass
7 ◇	All Pass		

South's 4 ♠ bid is aggressive but on target in my view (I estimate the hand to take seven tricks and overbid by three). West is too weak to act the first time, and East bids his long suit. West shows spade control en route to 6 ◇, East shows club control (implying tiptop values), and West takes the intelligent stab at seven. Admittedly, this is far easier on paper than at the bridge table.

In notrump or diamonds, 13 tricks are laydown; well actually there are 14 in notrump and 15 in diamonds (with a club ruff). The only way for East-West to go minus would be if West stumbles into 7 ♡ and is beaten by a diamond ruff.

In spades, South can win six tricks (West can get two club ruffs) so bidding 7 ♠ (minus 2000) is better than defending 7 ◇. But only a fool would do this because it *guarantees* a bad score.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 23

Score	MP	Score	MP	Score	MP	Score	MP	Score	MP
........100		-500 91		 65		-1390.....36		-1700 11	
+100 99		 90		-710........60		-1400.....28		10	
............98		-620 89		-720........54		27		-2140 8	
-190 96		 88		51		-1430.....24		5	
-200 95		-640 78		-800........48		21		-2210 4	
............94		-650 68		46		-1460.....18		-2220 2	
-300 93		 67		-1100.......45		-1470.....15		0	
............92		-680 66		44		12			

```
              ♠ 7 6
              ♡ A 7 4
              ◇ K J 7 4 3
              ♣ K 4 3
♠ 4 2                        ♠ 9 5
♡ Q 9              N         ♡ 6 5 3 2
◇ A 9 8 6      W     E       ◇ Q 10 2
♣ Q J 8 7 6       S         ♣ 10 9 5 2
              ♠ A K Q J 10 8 3
              ♡ K J 10 8
              ◇ 5
              ♣ A
```

Now North-South get their turn with an excellent slam in spades. Here is a standard auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	2 ♣
Pass	3 ◇	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♡	Pass	4 NT
Pass	5 ◇	Pass	6 ♠ (AP)

North's 4 ♡ is a temporizing move — there must be a slam somewhere but he is not sure where — then South takes control with Blackwood.

In spades, 12 tricks are easy unless West makes the diabolical lead of a *low diamond*, and many will win 13. After a club lead, the obvious play is to draw trumps, lead the ♡ 8 to the ace, ditch the diamond, and finesse hearts for an overtrick. But wait! The finesse would gain only if East had Q-x-x, which means West played the *nine* from 9-x-x. Is that possible? Sure, but I don't think so; I would put up the king. Thank you, next case.

Those who play in notrump will have a tougher battle. Say, North is declarer with a club lead. I think the best play is a diamond to the *king* right away. Even if you misguessed there's a good chance East won't return a diamond, then you'll have a second chance.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 24

Score	MP	Score	MP	Score	MP
........100		+980 54		+450........7	
+1520 99		 32		6	
+1510 98		+520 29		-50...........5	
............97		+510 26		4	
+1020 97		 21		-100.........3	
+1010 85		+490 20		2	
............77		+480 13		-150.........1	
+990 76		 8		0	

Quotable Quotes

Be an expert! Never take a finesse to make your contract when you can go down on a squeeze play.

Joe knows absolutely nothing about the game; his wife plays *twice* as well.

In bridge, there are *three* kinds of players: (1) Those who can count, and (2) those who can't.

I never met a man I didn't like, 'cept the bastard who doubled my slam.

We had a 75-percent game last night! Three out of four opponents thought we were idiots.

♠ 8 6 4
♡ A 6 2
♢ A J 2
♣ 8 7 6 4

♠ 10   ♠ A 9 2
♡ Q 10 8 7 5 3   ♡ K 4
♢ 8 5 4   ♢ K Q 6
♣ K 5 3   ♣ A Q J 10 2

       N
   W   E
       S

♠ K Q J 7 5 3
♡ J 9
♢ 10 9 7 3
♣ 9

I would upgrade the East hand to a 2 NT opening because of the strong club suit. Then perhaps:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	2 NT	3 ♠
4 ♡	4 ♠	Dbl	All Pass

South's overcall is a smart strategy at the vulnerability (in fact, a good case could be made to bid 4 ♠). West bids the obvious game for his side, and North sacrifices — when in doubt, raise partner. Lacking a heart fit, East probably should double, but with his ideal spade holding it would also be reasonable to pass the decision.

In spades, South can win eight tricks if he is careful. Assume a heart lead won by the ace; spade to king; high spade to ace; ♡ K; ♣ A, and a club ruffed. If South draws the last trump and finesses *twice* in diamonds, he will be tapped out of trumps and lose his long diamond. The simplest solution is just to give up on the second diamond finesse; another would be to postpone drawing East's last trump.

In hearts, East-West can win 10 or 11 tricks depending on whether South gets a club ruff. Played by *West*, the ruff is unlikely; but played by *East* (after a transfer bid) South may lead his singleton and get it.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 25

............100	+100 87	 68	53	-690 3
+300 99	 82	-150...... 66	-600.......48	2
.............98	-50 80	 64	-620.......42	-750 1
+200 97	 78	-200....... 63	-630.......37	0
.............96	-100 75	 62	36	
+140 95	-110 72	-300........59	-650.......21	
.............94	-120 71	 55	5	
+110 93	-130 69	-500........54	-680.........4	

♠ 4 2
♡ 7 4
♢ 8 5 2
♣ A K 10 9 8 7

♠ A K 9 7 3   ♠ Q 8 6
♡ K 10   ♡ Q J 9 2
♢ A K 10 6   ♢ J 9 4
♣ J 5   ♣ Q 6 3

       N
   W   E
       S

♠ J 10 5
♡ A 8 6 5 3
♢ Q 7 3
♣ 4 2

Most Wests will play in 4 ♠, often after this simple auction if North is quiet:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		

If North ventures a 2 ♣ overcall, it is unlikely to make a difference; but an aggressive 3 ♣ (not recommended) might dissuade East from raising spades with his quack collection, and the game could be missed.

In spades, West can win 10 tricks, but the defense can be annoying. Assume North leads three rounds of clubs and South ruffs with the *jack* and is overruffed. From declarer's viewpoint this might be an uppercut attempt with J-x, after which it would be necessary to take a spade finesse against North. Ouch! But with the known club break this is less likely. The straightforward play of cashing the top trumps makes the rest easy, without even needing the diamond finesse.

The top spot for East-West is in notrump, as the same 10 tricks are available. If the defense begins by ducking a club (best), declarer needs the diamond finesse for his life; but it's there for the taking.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 26

............100	-140 84	 72	-620.......44	2
+200 99	-150 83	-240....... 71	-630.......15	-800 1
.............98	 82	 70	9	0
+100 93	-170 79	-300....... 69	-650.........7	
.............88	-180 76	 68	-660.........6	
-110 87	 75	-500........67	-670.........5	
-120 86	-200 74	 66	-680.........4	
-130 85	-210 73	-600........65	-690.........3	

Point Count Zoo

On a certain bridge deal North has as many HCP as South and East together; West has as many HCP as North and East together. East has more HCP than South, and no two players have the same number of HCP.

Got that, folks? How many HCP does each player have?

Answer

The deck as 40 HCP so, N+S+E+W = 40. Since N=S+E and W=N+E, substitution produces: 3S+4E = 40, which has four integer solutions: S=12, E=1; S=8, E=4; S=4, E=7; S=0, E=10. The first two do not give East more HCP than South, and the last is rejected because it gives North the same as East. Hence, South has 4 HCP, East 7, North 11 and West 18.

♠ J 5
♡ A K
◇ A J 10 8 7 5
♣ A 8 4

♠ A 7 3
♡ 10 3
◇ K 9 6 4 3
♣ 5 3 2

```
  N
W   E
  S
```

♠ K 10 8 4
♡ J 7 4
◇ Q
♣ K J 10 9 6

♠ Q 9 6 2
♡ Q 9 8 6 5 2
◇ 2
♣ Q 7

A borderline game for North-South should produce a variety of auctions. Here is my choice:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	1 ◇	Pass	1 ♡
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 ♡
Pass	4 ♡	All Pass	

North's 2 NT rebid is not pretty, but neither is the alternative of 3 ◇. Another possibility is to *open* 1 NT, though the playing potential suggests moving up a notch with this route. I would be worried about spades, but sometimes J-x gives you a positional advantage on the lead (e.g., if South held A-Q-x or K-10-x). Without the ♠ J, I would rebid 3 ◇.

In hearts, 10 tricks can be won. Assume a diamond lead (a club makes it easier) won by the ace. Simplest is a *low club* immediately; besides the extra club, declarer can develop a spade trick by force (finesse the nine). A more exotic line: ♠ J to the king; heart return; spade to nine, ace; club shift (if not, East will be endplayed later) ducked to the king; heart return; diamond ruff; finish the trumps and East gets squeezed (if West could beat the ♣ 8 it would still work as a double squeeze).

North-South Matchpoints — Board 27				
............100	+420 80	+170...... 59	+90........46	-150 6
+590 99	+400 68	57	45	4
..............98	67	+150...... 56	+50........44	-200 3
+500 97	+300 66	+140...... 53	43	2
..............96	65	+130...... 50	-50..........33	-300 1
+450 95	+200 64	+120...... 49	21	0
..............94	63	+110...... 48	-100.......15	
+430 93	+180 62	+100...... 47	9	

♠ A K 8 3
♡ A 10 7 6 3
◇ A 10
♣ K 8

♠ 9 7
♡ 4 2
◇ J 8 4 2
♣ 10 7 4 3 2

```
  N
W   E
  S
```

♠ Q 6 4 2
♡ K Q J 9 8
◇ K
♣ A 9 5

♠ J 10 5
♡ 5
◇ Q 9 7 6 5 3
♣ Q J 6

OK, let's all return to Dodge City. I can picture this shoot-out at some tables:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 ♡	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	Dbl	All Pass

North's raise to game is questionable but justified I think with three aces and two tens. East, of course, thinks otherwise and doubles to direct a heart lead (the suit bid by dummy). Perhaps South should concede his demise and run to 4 ◇, but the macho thing is to pass.

In notrump South can win only eight tricks. Assume a heart lead, ducked to the eight; ♡ K-Q, both ducked (South pitching diamonds); ◇ K (it's falling anyway) to the ace, then the ♣ K. East can win the first or second club and return anything (except the ♠ Q) and the result is the same. Note that if East exits passively with a club, South runs the ♠ J to develop his eighth trick. On a good day the spade finesse would win. Sigh.

In diamonds South can win 10 tricks if he avoids a trump promotion (e.g., ◇ A, 10 to the jack right away). An 11th trick might accrue from a potential ruffout squeeze against East, but this is foiled by continued heart leads or a spade shift by West.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 28				
............100	+620 92	+170...... 84	44	9
+800 99	+600 91	+160...... 81	+80........43	-300 8
..............98	90	+150...... 78	42	6
+750 97	+500 89	+140...... 70	+50........41	-500 4
..............96	88	+130...... 64	40	2
+670 95	+200 87	+120...... 60	-100........33	-800 1
..............94	86	+110...... 52	24	0
+630 93	+180 85	+100...... 45	-200.......17	

Daffynitions

Doubleton — 4,000 pounds.

Vienna Coup — the mating sound of Austrian doves.

Jack Denies — newspaper headline about Marilyn Monroe's alleged relationship with J.F.K.

Trump Coup — triumph of Ivana's attorneys in securing a huge alimony.

Law of Total Tricks — a recent Las Vegas ordinance to reduce the amount of prostitution.

Quick Tricks — last-minute scurry by hookers to beat the ordinance.

♠ K J 9 7 2
♡ 5
♢ A 9 2
♣ A K 9 3

♠ 6　　　　　　　　　　♠ Q 3
♡ K Q 10 8 2　　　　　♡ J 6 3
♢ K 5 4　　　　　　　　♢ J 10 6 3
♣ J 8 7 4　　　　　　　♣ Q 10 6 2

```
        N
    W       E
        S
```

♠ A 10 8 5 4
♡ A 9 7 4
♢ Q 8 7
♣ 5

With only 25 HCP this excellent slam for North-South will usually be missed. Here's an expert auction:

West	North	East	South
	1 ♠	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	4 ♢	Pass	4 ♡
Pass	4 NT	Pass	5 ♠
Pass	5 NT	Pass	6 ♠ (AP)

South's 4 ♣ is a splinter bid showing a game-forcing spade raise with a singleton or void in clubs. After an exchange of control-bids, North uses Roman key-card Blackwood, and South shows two key cards plus the queen or *extra length* in trumps. (Note that with 10 trumps including the A-K the queen is a big favorite to drop.) Confident now of at least a small slam, North asks for specific side-suit kings, and South returns to the trump suit to deny any.

As is often the case, well-bid hands are easy to play. Declarer's only concern is a possible 3-0 trump break, which would certainly make the play interesting; but trumps behave normally for 12 laydown tricks. There is no way to win more unless East leads a *low diamond*; but even then, declarer's best play for the overtrick is to put up the queen.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 29

............100	 68	 4
+2210 99	+680 40	-100......... 3
..............98	 12	 2
+1460 97	+650 9	-200......... 1
..............96	 8	 0
+1430 83	+230 7	
..............71	 6	
+710 70	+200 5	

♠ A 9 7
♡ 10 6 3
♢ Q 10
♣ A J 10 6 2

♠ J　　　　　　　　　　♠ 10 8 6 5 4 3
♡ K 7 4 2　　　　　　　♡ 5
♢ A K J 9 8 6 2　　　　♢ 3
♣ 3　　　　　　　　　　♣ Q 9 7 5 4

```
        N
    W       E
        S
```

♠ K Q 2
♡ A Q J 9 8
♢ 7 5 4
♣ K 8

A sound game in hearts should be reached at most tables, often after this standard auction:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1 ♡
2 ♢	3 ♡	Pass	4 ♡ (AP)

North's jump is a limit raise, and South accepts. Some Wests will bid more than 2 ♢ (I like 4 ♢ with partner a passed had) but this may not matter since North is likely to bid 4 ♡ if necessary. Another variation is that some Souths will open 1 NT, which might lead to a hopeless 3 NT (almost surely if West cleverly passed).

A curious deal: Both North-South hands are balanced, and East-West have *four singletons*. This shapely misfit will result in some numbers floating around, especially if *East* enters the bidding. Did I hear someone suggest a weak two-bid? Or a 3 ♠ opening? Excellent; now please return to your padded cell.

In hearts South can win 10 tricks. After three rounds of diamonds this is simple: Ruff high, draw trumps and claim. But if West shifts to his singleton spade at trick two, declarer will need mirrors, as a trump must be led immediately *from hand* (if the ♡ A, a diamond next). Somehow I don't think I'd find it.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 30

............100	 44	+140...... 34	-100.......11	-500 2
+800 98	+300 42	 33	9	-510 1
..............96	 40	+100...... 30	-130.........8	0
+590 95	+200 39	 28	7	
..............93	 38	+50........ 26	-150.........6	
+500 90	+170 37	 25	5	
..............87	 36	-50......... 21	-300.........4	
+420 66	+150 35	 14	3	

Zero Points

I try to be impartial in my writing, so I feel obliged to include something for lunatics. Listen up! This should give

you the confidence to *redouble* the next time you get doubled.

What is the *most tricks* declarer could win against best defense with no HCP in either hand?

Answer

Nine tricks. With spades trumps, declarer has: ♠ 10-9-8-7-6-5-4 ♡ 10-9-8-7-6-5, and dummy has: ♠ 3-2 ♡ 4-3-2 ♢ 5-4-3-2 ♣ 5-4-3-2. Both majors split 2-2. Declarer has just enough trumps to take the taps, draw trumps and establish the hearts. Hmm. Then how could anyone think of passing the East hand on Board 30? With *two* points you could miss an easy game.

♠ 5
♡ K Q 9 7 5 4 2
◇ Q 10 9
♣ 8 7

♠ K J 10 2   ♠ A 8 7 4
♡ A 6   N   ♡ J
◇ J 7 6 5 2   W   E   ◇ A K 4 3
♣ K Q   S   ♣ J 4 3 2

♠ Q 9 6 3
♡ 10 8 3
◇ 8
♣ A 10 9 6 5

Most East-Wests will reach the normal spade game despite any antics by North. A typical auction:

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1◇	2♡	Dbl	3♡
3♠	Pass	4♠	All Pass

East's double is negative (showing four spades) and the 4-4 trump fit is easily found. Even if North snubs the vulnerability and bids 3 ♡, it is unlikely to matter. (Most experts play negative doubles through 4 ◇ at least, and many include 4 ♡ after a minor opening.)

In spades, 10 tricks can be won with reasonable care. Assume North leads the ♡ K, won by the ace. I think it is right to lead the ♣ K, which South wins and returns a heart, ruffed; then the ♠ A and a spade finesse. Declarer now could just cross to the ◇ A and draw trumps, or he could cash the ◇ A-K letting South ruff — either comes to the same. There is no way to make an 11th trick.

In hearts, North can win only eight tricks against best defense. Assume the ◇ K lead, two rounds of trumps, then a club ducked to West. The defense must now cash one spade and *lead a club*, else declarer would be able to squeeze East in the minors for a ninth trick.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 31

............100	91	-140.......60	-420.......30	4
+870 99	+100 84	-150.......59	-430........11	-590 3
.............98	 76	58	10	2
+730 97	+50 70	-170.......56	-450.........9	-800 1
.............96	 64	54	8	0
+670 95	-100 63	-200.......53	-480.........7	
.............94	 62	52	6	
+150 93	-130 61	-400.......48	-500 5	

♠ J 8
♡ 8 7 6 5
◇ 10 9 6
♣ Q 9 8 5

♠ A K 6 4   ♠ 7 5 3
♡ 9 3   N   ♡ A K J
◇ A K Q 7 5   W E   ◇ J 8 4 2
♣ A J   S   ♣ K 10 3

♠ Q 10 9 2
♡ Q 10 4 2
◇ 3
♣ 7 6 4 2

There are many roads to this slam for East-West with their 33 HCP. I prefer short and simple:

West	North	East	South
1◇	Pass	3 NT	Pass
6 NT	All Pass		

West's one-bid is a little heavy, but the alternative of 2 ♣ often leads to an awkward auction when opener has diamonds. (Another possibility is to open 2 NT, but that seems deranged.) I use the 3 NT response to show 13-14 HCP but would fudge a point to avoid a clumsy, drawn out sequence. Those who play 2 NT as 11-12 HCP would bid that instead (I play 2 NT as 15+). It hardly matters though, since West should always drive to slam.

In notrump, 11 to 13 tricks will be won depending on the lead and declarer's finessing choices. Assume South leads a spade (a club or heart makes it easy) won by the king, and declarer cashes three diamonds ending in East as South pitches clubs. It is logical now to finesse clubs right, and declarer can win all the tricks if he shuns the heart finesse for a major-suit squeeze against South.

In diamonds, 12 tricks can be ensured by giving up a spade and ruffing the fourth, but this rightfully gets little reward in a matchpoint event.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 32

............100	82	-660.......74	-1390.....49	-2220 2
+500 99	-170 81	72	48	0
.............98	 80	-690.......68	-1440.....33	
+200 96	-600 79	64	16	
.............93	-620 78	-720.......62	-1470.....11	
+100 88	-630 77	60	6	
.............84	-640 76	-1370.....55	-2140.....5	
-100 83	-650 75	50	4	

Statistical Analysis

The average HCP and freakness of the 36 deals are shown at right. Freakness is a measurement I devised to rank the 39 hand patterns on a scale of 0 to 20. Each card *over 4* or *under 3* in each suit gets a point, plus a point is added if the hand has a singleton (2 if a void). The theoretical average freakness is 2.98.

Player	HCP	Freakness
North	9.64	3.58
South	9.42	4.42
East	11.08	3.19
West	9.86	3.31

♠ 8
♡ A 10 5 2
♢ A 4 3
♣ A Q J 9 7

♠ J 10 5   ♠ A K 7 4 3
♡ Q 8 6   ♡ J 4
♢ J 10 8 6 2   ♢ 9 5
♣ 10 8   ♣ 6 5 4 3

(N/W-E/S box)

♠ Q 9 6 2
♡ K 9 7 3
♢ K Q 7
♣ K 2

An easy heart game should be reached at most tables, perhaps after this sequence:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♠	Dbl
Pass	4♡	All Pass	

South's double is negative (showing four hearts), and North's excellent playing potential and controls warrant a jump to game. Indeed, South has a difficult decision whether to pass or bid again, and some will surely get overboard to a hopeless slam.

In hearts, 11 tricks are routine. The only chance to win 12 might be if East shifted to a trump after cashing one spade, but in view of dummy this is a poor strategy; it's probably right just to continue spades on the off chance *partner* has the singleton.

Some Souths will ignore the search for a heart fit and bid 3 NT, a lucky decision as the same 11 tricks can be won. This is easy if South is given a trick with his ♠ Q early, but it's possible against any defense. For example, say West leads the ♠ J to the king, and East shifts to a diamond: On the clubs West is forced to shed diamonds, then the top diamonds catch him in a vice squeeze. If you need help, call 911 and ask for the Vice Squad.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 33

............100	+460 85	+200...... 13	-300.........1	
+980 99	+450 55	 12	0	
..............98	 30	+150...... 11		
+520 97	+430 24	 10		
..............96	+420 17	-50.......... 8		
+490 94	+400 16	 4		
+480 93	 15	-100......... 3		
..............92	+210 14	 2		

♠ 9 6
♡ 7 4 2
♢ A 10 9 7 3
♣ Q 7 2

♠ K J 10 5 4   ♠ Q 7 3 2
♡ 8 6 3   ♡ A K Q J 10 5
♢ 6 5   ♢ K
♣ A 6 3   ♣ 10 4

(N/W-E/S box)

♠ A 8
♡ 9
♢ Q J 8 4 2
♣ K J 9 8 5

Lights! Camera! Action! I wouldn't be surprised to see this drama unfold at an expert table:

West	North	East	South
		1♡	2 NT
3♡	5♢	Pass	Pass
Dbl	All Pass		

At unfavorable vulnerability South's unusual notrump (showing 5-5 in the minors) is not clear-cut but justified. West ekes out a heart raise, and North jumps to 5 ♢ with his excellent fit. This pressure bid will cause some Easts to bite at 5 ♡; but it's rarely right to bid "five over five" so a disciplined pass seems best, and West doubles.

In diamonds, 9 or 10 tricks will be won depending on how trumps are played, and the difference is a *very big trick*. Assume a heart lead and a spade shift. It would be nice to locate the ♣ A before playing trumps, but good defenders would duck the first club, then declarer has to worry about a club ruff, too. So it seems right to tackle trumps, and the odds favor the finesse (especially after West has doubled) — down two, minus 500 for a terrible score. Oh well; been there, done that.

East-West can win 10 tricks in either major, and many will be given 11 when the defense fails to lead clubs.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 34

............100	 92	-170....... 80	-450.......28	-800.........1
+750 99	+110 91	 79	11	0
..............98	+100 90	-200....... 76	-480.......10	
+600 97	 89	 72	9	
..............96	+50 87	-230....... 71	-500.........7	
+150 95	 85	 70	4	
..............94	-100 83	-420....... 59	-650.........3	
+130 93	 81	 48	2	

13-Year Statistics

It is interesting to observe how well random deals fit the laws of probability theory. Generally, the more deals you examine the closer they will approach the average. There were 468 deals in the 13 years I have done this event, and the statistics are shown to the right. Pretty close I'd say.

Player	HCP	Freakness
North	9.86	2.93
South	9.91	3.18
East	10.27	2.87
West	9.96	3.06

♠ A K Q 6 2
♡ J 8 5
♢ K
♣ 9 8 7 5

♠ J 9 8 3   ♠ 10 7 5
♡ Q   ♡ K
♢ 10 5 2   ♢ A Q J 8 7 6 4 3
♣ A K J 10 3   ♣ 4

♠ 4
♡ A 10 9 7 6 4 3 2
♢ 9
♣ Q 6 2

A normal preempt by South might be the only bid:

West	North	East	South
			4 ♡
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East will be tempted to try 5 ♢, but the vulnerability should dissuade him, as chances of catching the right dummy are poor. Though in fairness, if you swapped West's black suits so that 5 ♢ *makes*, I might be labeling East a coward. If East does bid, North should not push to 5 ♡; either double or pass is reasonable.

In hearts South should win nine tricks after the defense takes the first four. On a high club lead, East's four-spot is ambiguous (South should play the two). A diamond shift could be right, since the ♢ A might be lost if South has a stiff club; but the odds favor a club continuation. Four-eyed defense can do even better: an *original* diamond lead then four rounds of clubs for an uppercut.

In diamonds, the defense also has the first four tricks, but a possible hang-up may occur: If South leads his singleton, North may lead a *fourth* spade hoping for a trump promotion. Is this right? Yes, because it is South's duty to *ruff* the third spade if he has the ♡ A. Of course, cashing the ♡ A first would simplify all this.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 35

...........100	91	71	28	4
+850......99	+480......90	+200......68	-100.......19	-500........3
.............98	89	65	11	2
+800......97	+450......83	+140......64	-130.......10	-620.........1
.............96	75	63	9	0
+650......95	+420......74	+100......61	-150.........7	
.............94	73	60	6	
+500......92	+300......72	-50.........44	-300.........5	

♠ A K 8 5 3
♡ 10 6
♢ Q 4
♣ 10 8 3 2

♠ 9 6 4 2   ♠ Q 7
♡ J 3   ♡ 7 4
♢ K J 8 6 5   ♢ A 10 7 3 2
♣ 6 4   ♣ K Q J 9

♠ J 10
♡ A K Q 9 8 5 2
♢ 9
♣ A 7 5

Opposite a passed partner, most Souths will take the direct route to game:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 ♢	4 ♡ (AP)

Preempting with a good hand prevents partner from making an intelligent decision if there is further competition or a chance for slam, but these cases are remote after West and North pass. If East opened in first seat, I think most experts would start with a 1 ♡ overcall.

In hearts South can win 10 tricks against best defense, but there are ways to connive 11. For example, assume West leads a diamond to the ace, and East shifts to the ♣ K. South should *duck*. Yes, you could be set if East began with five clubs, but this is remote (especially since West might have led his singleton) and ducking greatly increases your chances for a successful squeeze. If East leads another club, *bingo*; run the trumps and West is history. Of course, a diamond return by East breaks up the squeeze by erasing the threat. Observe that you have no chance for the overtrick if you win the first club.

A few East-Wests might get carried away with their diamond fit and bid 5 ♢. Did I say *carried away*? Yup, that's minus 800 at least. Call for a stretcher.

North-South Matchpoints — Board 36

...........100	+650......91	+300......32	+100......16
+1100.....99	89	31	15
.............98	+620......63	+200......30	-100.......10
+800......97	+600......37	29	4
+790......96	36	+170......25	-200.........3
.............95	+500......35	19	2
+680......94	+400......34	+140......18	-300.........1
.............93	33	17	0

Will Mickey Mouse be there?

Anaheim, August 10-20, 2000

Summer North American Bridge Championships