



Message from
José Damiani,
President, World Bridge Federation

2007 is the 21st birthday of the World Wide Bridge Contest!

I remember when it all began, sponsored by Epson Computers, when the height of technology was the fax machine and results were relayed to Paris using that or the telephone. In those days it was several weeks before a full and final result was available, while we waited for the post to bring us the paper results that we could then key into the computer – hundreds of names and scores, a task that was all too time consuming.

Today things are very different - your club can enter their own scores as soon as you finish play, and upload them to the server where they are immediately added to all the other scores coming from clubs all over the world, and re-scored across the whole field. You can watch on it all happening at www.ecatsbridge.com and have the fun and excitement of seeing the results come in and change as new ones are uploaded and the whole event can be finalised within a very short period.

These advances in technology mean that most of us have access to Internet, and can find information in a way that is unprecedented. You can find out about events that are going to happen – events like the 2007 World Championships in Shanghai for example, with its exciting World Transnational Teams. Or about the first World Mind Sport Games to be held in Beijing in 2008. You can discover so much about the bridge events that are happening: their results, online vu-graph, daily bulletins and so forth. And of course you can play bridge on line at one of the many “online clubs” that are now available. So much that was unthought of 21 years ago.

But today you have gone to your local club, and I would like to thank you – the bridge players, who come and play in this event, and enjoy what might be called the “lighter” side of bridge – not a major Championship but a light-hearted and fun event, played amongst your own friends at your own club but competing against the rest of the participating clubs world wide! It just proves that we can all enjoy ourselves while indulging in our wonderful sport of Bridge ... and at the same time, show that we all follow the spirit of the WBF Motto -

Bridge for Peace

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'José Damiani'.

José Damiani
President

**Find the results from this exciting competition at:
<http://www.ecatsbridge.com>**

Board 1. Love All, Dealer North.

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

With good playing strength and easy rebids, most Norths will open their six-loser hand with 1♦. With the hearts and clubs reversed, a weak 2♦ would be a sensible alternative, but the side four-card major and maximum values will usually dissuade most of the weak-two aficionados.

Similarly, you could make a case for passing over 1♦ with the East hand, but with four-four in the majors, it's often right to get into the auction with marginal values, and we expect double to be a popular choice. If East doubles, South will try 1♠ (or a modern 1♥ transfer, a treatment which has considerable merit as it places the "strong" opponent on lead should responder's suit become the trump suit). West will choose from amongst 1NT, 2NT, a cue bid of one of the enemy suits and a slightly heavy 3♣. West might shy away from both notrump with only one stopper in diamonds and a cue bid with the inherent complicated continuations, and settle for the straightforward 3♣ bid.

If 3♣ is passed out, West finds himself looking at four losers when the ♣K is offside, and against various defenses he will lose a fifth trick. If North leads the diamond king, ducked all around, and follows with the diamond jack to the ace, West can ruff his diamond with the ten, but South just pitches a heart, to obtain a ruff in that suit later. A spade lead and heart shift, ducked by North (who can count on West's not having four hearts when he jumped to 3♣) will also produce five tricks with the heart ruff. If South returns the spade jack at trick two, pinning West's nine, West's best try is to win in

dummy and lead a heart to the king. To defeat 3♣ then, North has to duck – a much easier play to find "on paper" than at the table.

North isn't really worth 3♦ over 3♣ in this scenario, but some players will risk it, hoping that when 3♣ would produce at least 110 for E/W, N/S might escape for -50 or -100 in 3♦. As 3♣ can be defeated, the uninhibited 3♦ turns a potential plus into a sure minus result, and West may double (to protect his equity in 3♣). Even 2♦ is too high if the defenders lead spades early, killing the entry to the king of clubs. If East starts with the ♠K, and North ducks (best), another spade cuts the communication with dummy, and when declarer ducks a heart, a switch to ace and another trumps leaves declarer with three heart losers to go with the trump ace and the two black losers. Conceding 100 or 300 on the first deal of the session may serve to temper North's optimistic bent. Or not.

If East passes over 1♦, South responds 1♠ and North rebids 2♦, which will often end the auction. A diamond lead, ducked, lets North make the contract by establishing the club king as his eighth trick, so in order to go plus, the defenders have either to lead a trump to the ace followed by a spade shift, or lead the ♠K and time the defense correctly (see previous paragraph). Neither line of defense is particular obvious, so North will go +90 with some frequency. If West reopens 2♦ with a takeout double East may declare 2♥, which figures to go one down, but South may take the push to 3♦ with his prime values, doubleton support for a probable six-card suit, and potential ruffing value. E/W won't double 3♦, but a N/S minus won't be very good in any case.

At the tables where North passes as dealer, each of the other players might open, but it's possible that the deal will be passed out. East might open 1♣, 1♥, 1♠, 1NT, or a Precision-style 1♦, after which his side might buy the auction in a variety of contracts that include 1NT, 2NT, 2♥, 3♥, and 3♣, none of them likely to make.

Was this a partscore battle at your table, or did one side have a free run? While it's fashionable

to run with “it’s a bidder’s game” as justification for playing a busy game, doing too much is still a losing philosophy. Finding the right mix is a continuing challenge and one of the aspects that makes Bridge so interesting.

Board 2. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ K 10 5 ♥ A 9 5 ♦ 8 7 ♣ K 10 9 7 2</p> <p>♠ 9 8 6 ♥ J 7 6 3 ♦ A J 6 5 3 ♣ 3</p>	<p>♠ A J 2 ♥ K 10 2 ♦ K Q 4 2 ♣ A 8 4</p> <p>♠ Q 7 4 3 ♥ Q 8 4 ♦ 10 9 ♣ Q J 6 5</p>
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Where East starts with a strong notrump, he will usually play there when West passes and North has no sensible way to reopen, or he will be declarer in 2♦ if West tries a Stayman 2♣, intending to pass East’s response (a strategy we would choose ourselves).

East has seven top tricks in INT and will come to an eighth if he guesses hearts. If South leads a spade to the king and ace, and continues spades when East leads a heart to the ten and the queen, declarer can set up two heart tricks for +150 and a great score. But if South leads a club (or shifts to clubs when in with the queen of hearts), East has to be content with +90 and a below-average score. With luck (North discarding one or more clubs on the diamonds), he will manage +120, which will be close to average.

If East plays 2♦, he will usually do better than he’s entitled to do in notrump. Dummy’s nine-eight of spades stop the defenders from establishing more than one trick in that suit, and when hearts are three-three, declarer scores +130 by simply drawing trumps and setting up dummy’s hearts. That beats the pairs taking eight tricks in notrump and should give E/W a very nice score. The only real danger for declarer is to misguess spades (after a spade lead to the king and ace) when North returns the ♠5.

In a weak notrump environment, the bidding might start 1♦-1♥; 1NT. If West can bid a natural 2♦, East may be tempted to bid 2♥, trying for 30 points a trick, but many pairs play 2♣ as a puppet to 2♦, to play or to start invitational hands, and East will not have an option. If West passes 2♥ (and plays it all out) he will be pleasantly surprised. A diamond or heart lead gives him time to knock out ace-queen of trumps, but a black-suit lead threatens to shorten West fatally. On a club lead, West wins, plays a diamond to hand and a heart to the ten and queen. A second club is ruffed, and then care is needed. The only winning play is to lead towards the heart king. If North wins, West is in control, and if he ducks, West ruffs the last club, crosses to a diamond and plays the last trump – losing only one more heart and two clubs for +140, and a great score.

After a low spade lead against 2♥, West has to be even more careful. He ducks to South’s queen, and wins the club switch with the ace. Diamond to hand, heart to the ten and queen, a club back ruffed, and a heart to dummy’s king. But now West can’t continue as after a club opening lead (because he has already lost a spade trick). Instead, he leads high diamonds, forcing South to ruff. West’s last heart takes care of the next club, and after a spade finesse, dummy leads high diamonds only losing to the trump ace.

If North protects against 2♦, his side might land in 2♣ rather than the more attractive 3♣, with considerable jeopardy in either case. It will not be obvious to West to play for penalties, however, and the most likely effect of North’s enterprise will be to nudge his opponents into bidding again.

It’s a pity that 3♣ will rarely be the final contract because the play would feature an interesting battle for the second undertrick, with some possibility of an endplay for declarer to eliminate his second spade loser. In one cute variation South’s ♠7 would be the star of the show, but the main task for the defense would normally be to avoid an elimination position in which declarer and dummy have only spades

and trumps and declarer's first spade play is the king. Save that for a rainy day.

Board 3. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

E/W have the potential for 6♣ but the mesh of minor-suit controls is not good and the slam will be defeated if the defense leads either a diamond, establishing the setting trick, or clubs, negotiating a ruff. If West opens 1♠ and North preempts 3♦ (or a more aggressive 4♦). East will usually try 4♠, as nothing else really fits. Although West has extra values, lots of controls and strong trumps, he can't expect East to provide the values for slam, and as the five-level isn't secure, passing is a standout.

If East thinks that his hand is too good for a simple 4♠ over 3♦ his main alternative is 4♦ to show a strong raise to 4♠ (4♣ is a dangerous option as West might raise to 5♣, but it could be the key to reaching slam). Here, 4♦ by East will get a 4♥ control-bid from West, and although East will retreat to 4♠, West will surely be tempted to invite or drive to slam. If West continues with 5♦ and East bids 5♥ "on the way" to 5♠, South may double for the lead. Then, if West jumps to 6♠, North may follow South's recommendation ... and let the slam make; not likely, but it will happen a few times in such a large field.

Some pairs think a weak 2♥ opening is perfect with South's cards. It won't stop E/W from reaching 4♠, but it may induce North to save in 5♦. That might have worked if there were no ruffs. But if E/W double, and East leads his singleton heart, the defenders take two spades, two red aces and two ruffs, for +800. 5♥ is

worse: if West leads a low heart, South will take six tricks for -1100. And should E/W prefer to bid 5♠, North may lead his partner's main suit – only to see the opponents draw trumps and set up dummy's clubs for 12 tricks.

Board 4. Game All. Dealer West.

<p>♠ 9 8 ♥ A J 8 7 6 4 ♦ 5 ♣ 10 8 3 2</p> <p>♠ A J ♥ --- ♦ K J 9 8 7 6 ♣ A K Q 5 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 6 3 2 ♥ K 10 ♦ A Q 10 3 ♣ 9 7</p>
<p>♠ 10 7 5 4 ♥ Q 9 5 3 2 ♦ 4 2 ♣ J 6</p>	

In an uncontested auction, 7♦ should be easy to bid. When the auction begins: 1♦-1♠; 3♣-4♦ (good support), West can choose between 4♥ and 5♥; 4♠ would be natural. Over 4♥ East can bid 4♠ (leading to 5NT-7♦) or use Blackwood (catching the partnership response for an odd number of key cards for diamonds plus a void - 7♦). The key bid is 4♦, which sets West's mind at ease about the quality of East's trump support. Contrast 4♦ with the "cheap" 3♦ preference over 3♣, which might be the best available bid with two low diamonds. Although West would like to jump to 4♥ over 3♦ to show his void, he can't be sure that clubs won't be a better trump suit or that East has anything of value to offer. In that context, 4♣ would be a more prudent call than 4♥, but if West did risk 4♥, East could bid 7♦ with or without Blackwood as West must have the black aces and the minor suit kings for his bidding.

If E/W stop in a small slam, 6NT is best, producing 1440; 1470 on a non-heart lead. 6♠ would be the second best small slam, for 1430 or 1460.

Although vulnerable, many North players will take some action over 1♦. As 2♥ would require an advanced case of color blindness, 1♥ will be more popular in the bidders' camp. South will volunteer a preemptive raise to 3♥ or 4♥ over East's 1♠, the latter forcing West to choose

between 5♣ and 6♣ facing a simple one-level response that didn't promise much. East should bid 7♦ over 6♣, but is more likely to bid 6♦ or 6NT over 5♣. Where North takes the plunge with a weak jump overcall of 2♥, East will show a higher minimum by bidding spades freely at the two level (Negative Free Bid fans would have to double, which would not necessarily deliver a strong hand). Now, over South's 4♥, West will have more options, including 5♥ (perhaps too dangerous if East will expect better spade support), 6♣, and (for some) a forcing pass. Even so, someone will have to make a conclusive decision for the partnership, and 7♦ (when East's trumps convince him that West must be void in hearts to justify his commitment to slam) will probably be reached more often than 6NT (where East fears a heart loser) or 6♦.

We don't expect N/S to take their 1700-point save in 7♥ over 7♦, but if they do, they will gain only against the pairs who defend 7♦. If the E/W field is in Heat One, the unlikely sacrifice may save quite a few matchpoints. It's considerably worse to save against a small slam: -1400 is worse than -1390, and 6♥ may also push E/W to 6NT or 7♦, where they will score better than they would have in 6♦.

Board 5. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

If N/S were allowed to see all the cards, they would bid 4♠ and pick up both major suit queens, for +650. But at the table, many pairs will lose to East's queens and take nine tricks only, with +140 perhaps more likely than -100.

The bidding will often begin 1♣-1♦-1♠. If West

settles for a gentle 2♦, North will either raise to 2♠ or employ a Support Double (a popular modern treatment) to show three-card support for spades and values for competing to at least 2♠. South, with a fifth spade, aces, club fit and diamond shortness, might try for game, and North will be happy to accept. If South is content with 2♠, East or West will compete to 3♦ and South will take the push to 3♠.

Today, many players consider the Law of Total Tricks to be the ultimate guideline in competitive auctions, and True Believers would scoff at a mere preemptive raise to 3♦ at this vulnerability and try the effect of 4♦, expecting 10 trumps for their side. South will reopen 3♦ with a competitive double, but might not protect against 4♦, or the bigger preempt might push N/S into a thin 4♠ that they would not have bid if left alone. There will be a variety of final contracts at these tables, including 3♦ and 4♦ doubled or not, 3♠, 4♠, 4♣, 5♣, and perhaps even 3♥ and 4♥ if North bids hearts over a competitive double and South, with no security elsewhere, passes in the hope that the four-three fit will handle well (and it might if North can keep control and do some good guessing). If N/S can make a vulnerable game, an unlikely E/W sacrifice at 5♦ doubled will show a profit in absolute terms, but their -500 will score well only if the N/S field is bidding aggressively and playing with inspiration – a rather big parlay on which to wager.

If the defenders start with two rounds of diamonds against a spade contract, South will have to play on hearts and clubs to develop his tricks and will have issues of control to deal with. As he has more flexibility in the majors, he should get the clubs going first. Say that the ♣10 is covered all around and a club comes back (East can't afford to concede a ruff-and-discard as declarer's heart loser will disappear). If declarer plays West for the ♠Q, East will win and have either a trump exit or a diamond exit, depending on whether the trump finesse is taken on the first or second round. In the latter case declarer will have to ruff the third diamond in hand to avoid promoting West's

♠10, and will be reduced to one trump in each hand, but he can draw West's last trump, cash clubs and reserve his options in the heart suit. By then he will have a shrewd idea that East is 2=4=5=2, and might well come to a tenth trick by leading the heart jack from dummy for a backward finesse, playing the long-heart hand for the queen.

If West thinks a diamond lead has no future, he might try a surprise attack and start with the ♥10; South will emerge with at least 10 tricks. If East withholds his ♥Q, South may cash ace-king of spades (to avoid running into heart ruffs). Then he can draw the last trump, run the ♥9, cross to the ♥A, go to the ♣A, pitch his diamond on the ♥K, and later pick up clubs. That line leads to a whopping 12 tricks!

If the information that West has a weak hand with four or more diamonds gets South to play East for the missing key honors, the preemptive jump will have hurt E/W, but if the bid pushes N/S to a game they wouldn't have bid otherwise, and which goes down, it will have gained.

So, how did the preemptive 3♦ and 4♦ jumps work? The frequencies will reveal all.

Board 6. E/W Vul. Dealer East

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

Only partly because of the proliferation of systems featuring a strong or artificial 1♣ opening, 1♠ has become the much more popular choice of opening bids with five-five in the black suits. Those who have the option of opening 1♣ break down into two camps – the zealots who brook no other choice, and those whose approach is more flexible and let

suit quality and overall strength play a role in their decision. For the second group, 1♣ will seem the better choice here, with such weak spades.

Where East passes as dealer, the 1♣ opener gets off to a better start on this deal, naming their best strain immediately, while the 1♠ opener may not find their club fit at all, or early enough to head towards slam. 7♣ is a decent contract, needing trumps two-two if the ♥J is fourth, or a three-one split in clubs if the ♥J falls on the second or third round. But 6♣ will be high enough as many pairs will stop in game (3NT, 4♥ or 5♣).

At some tables, East will look at his strong spades and open the bidding (with 1♠ or possibly 2♠, weak) despite the adverse vulnerability. After two passes, North will usually double for takeout, and South has a decision to make. At this vulnerability, hoping for +500 looks good, and if South passes the double, he might restrict East to only four tricks -- although declarer will often come to a fifth -- for +800 or +1100 depending on the level of the opening bid. If South prefers to take out the double and is both able and willing to bid his clubs fairly early, N/S will finish in 6♣ (or even 7♣). North players who try to avoid making a takeout double with a void in the opponents' suit, might protect over 1♠ or 2♠ with an overcall in hearts, making it very difficult to find clubs -- not to mention slam -- and are likely to reach 3NT or 4♥.

If South is permitted to open 1♠ in second seat, North will respond 2♥. Whether or not 2♥ would create a game force, a 3♣ rebid by South would normally show extras, so these South players will rebid 2♠ by default. North should continue with 2NT if that is forcing and the club fit will be found. A 3♣ rebid by North will achieve the same positive result, but some Norths will give up all thoughts of slam and jump to 3NT playing "fast arrival". They missed slam will achieve a bad result. Ugh!

If South opens 1♣ and North has a void-showing 3♠ jump available, South suddenly has a tremendous hand and can visualize a grand

slam – and might even get there. But virtually every North will respond 1♥, and East will introduce his spades. If South can double for penalty, he may do so (North will not sit for it), but as South doesn't have much of a surprise for East, or might be using Support Doubles, he will most likely pass. North will double for takeout (which South may pass), force with 2♠, or jump to 3♠ (if it is shows a void and club support). 3♠ will turn out well (again), and 2♠ should also lead to a club slam. It is also possible that the auction will end in 3NT, the Matchpoints factor coming into play.

The play in 7♣ is interesting on a spade lead. The best plan looks to be: ruff, unblock South's red honors, cash the ♣Q (jack-fourth of clubs in East would be too tough to overcome) and cross to the ♣A. If trumps are two-two, cash the ♥K and ruff out hearts, if necessary. But when trumps are three-one, declarer draws trumps and hopes the ♥J falls.

Curiously, in 6♣ things aren't as easy. If hearts are four-two with the jack long, the line above won't work, so declarer may give up on the overtrick and ruff a heart after the second round of trumps. If West can overruff, declarer gets back that trick (a second spade ruff in dummy), and if West follows suit, South draws trumps and takes his twelve winners. As just reaching 6♣ may be good for N/S, trying for an overtrick may not be needed. Note that South can't hedge his bets by playing the ♥K first – if West has no more hearts, the slam goes down.

Board 7. Game All. Dealer South.

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

Some will open the South hand with 1♦ or a very thin weak notrump, but more will allow their vulnerability to talk them into passing. Where South passes, West will most often open 1♦, setting a test of character (of sorts) for East. If he is a devoted up-the-line bidder, he will respond 1♥ and declare 2♥, a contract that produces nine tricks with careful play. "What's the problem?" he might ask.

But if East dislikes bidding bad suits, when a decent alternative is available (echoes of the late Terence Reese), he will respond in his chunky spade suit instead. Then, the heart fit probably won't be found, and E/W's score in INT, or perhaps 2♦, won't make them happy. "Serves them right," you say, "for getting fancy." You may be right, of course, especially if opener rarely raises responder's major suit with three-card support. But if he often raises on three, responding 1♥ risks a shaky 4-3 fit in hearts when something else would have been better. When you consider that with minimum-range hands, some experts would raise to 2♥ not only with three trumps, but also when holding four spades, the jeopardy in responding 1♥ is even greater.

If the auction starts 1♦-1♠; INT, East will probably pass, but he could gamble on 2♥, hoping that West has four hearts (possible) or that a preference to 2♠ leads to +110 against +90, or +140 against +120.

If West opens the bidding with INT, East has no perfect solution. Opposite 12-14 or 13-15 a partscore is usually enough, but if West has upgraded his hand because of the five-card suit and the three tens and shown 14-16 HCP (a popular range in Europe these days), East can't comfortably rule out a game. If he uses Stayman, the heart fit will be found, but if he passes INT, and North leads the club ten, West is headed for a bad result. Eight tricks are available, but +120 scores worse than +140.

However, +140 isn't that easy. If East declares a heart contract and South believes in leading trumps against low-level partials unless there's a good reason not to, North will win the first

two tricks and exit passively in clubs. East will make nine tricks by playing South for the $\diamond Q$. A more testing lead is a low club, won in dummy. If East plays a spade to his hand, he takes only eight tricks if he plays a heart next (a diamond is better): North takes two trump tricks and exits in clubs. Then, South can win the first diamond, cash the $\heartsuit K$, and play the $\clubsuit Q$; North later gets a trick with the $\spadesuit Q$.

Where South opens $1\diamond$, he may declare INT uncontested. The same might happen if he stretches to open INT. Tricks will be hard to come by for South and -200 will be a likely result at those tables. It doesn't pay to get too busy, vulnerable at Pairs, and E/W won't have the opportunity for +200 or more unless South creates it.

Board 8. Love All. Dealer West.

\spadesuit K Q 10 \heartsuit K J 10 \diamond A 8 6 3 \clubsuit J 9 5	\spadesuit A 9 6 5 3 \heartsuit A 8 4 2 \diamond J 9 5 \clubsuit A	\spadesuit 7 2 \heartsuit Q 6 \diamond K 7 2 \clubsuit Q 10 7 6 3 2
	\spadesuit J 8 4 \heartsuit 9 7 5 3 \diamond Q 10 4 \clubsuit K 8 4	

Where West opens $1\diamond$, North will come in with $1\spadesuit$, setting a problem for East. In four-card major systems, $1\diamond$ is a real suit and East can solve his problem by raising to $2\diamond$, daring to hope for extra length in West. But in a system where West may have only three diamonds in a balanced minimum, such a raise is a little more dangerous. But passing with 7 HCP, a partial fit, and a long suit facing an opening bid isn't much fun either, so where East's methods or judgment preclude him from risking $2\clubsuit$ or a flawed preemptive $3\clubsuit$ (weak suit, playability in opener's suit, side honors), he may well try $2\diamond$ as a least-of -evils choice.

While a raise to $2\diamond$ may well end the auction, it's likely that either South or North will compete. If North protects with $2\heartsuit$, East will complete

his planned two-step strategy by bidding $3\clubsuit$ – showing six or seven clubs and only three diamonds; 2NT, instead, would suggest five clubs and three diamonds. $3\clubsuit$ is the perfect spot for E/W, producing nine tricks (even if the defenders attack diamonds early) by knocking out the $\heartsuit A$ to build a diamond discard before attacking trumps). If N/S compete to $3\heartsuit$ or $3\spadesuit$, West may double on the basis of his strong majors for +300 and a super result, but even +100 may be good enough, as both diamonds and notrump offer only +90.

Where South, non-vulnerable scrapes up a raise to $2\spadesuit$ East will nearly always compete to $3\clubsuit$. If N/S believe E/W have reached their par contract, they will have to decide whether to settle for a likely average-minus result by passing out $3\clubsuit$ or whether to try to improve their score by taking the push to $3\spadesuit$ or $3\heartsuit$, hoping E/W won't double if two down is unavoidable.

Where East is willing to jump to $3\clubsuit$ over $1\spadesuit$, North's reopening problem is different as his side has not yet established a fit in a major. Although it's often a good idea to protect with a takeout double when you are short in the suit bid on your left, there are warning signs here. The fact that you have the ace of clubs means that South is much less likely to have strong enough clubs for a penalty pass (even if that would be the winning choice). With AJx of diamonds and a low singleton club, double would be more promising. Furthermore, North has a high defense to offense ratio, with poor suits of his own and prime cards to contribute to the defense. Here a reopening double is doubtful at best, and $3\heartsuit$ isn't worth considering, but if North ignores the obvious risks and doubles anyway, he will get $3\spadesuit$ (or maybe $3\heartsuit$) from South. Although West has hopes for a set, more typical East hands for $3\clubsuit$ (most of the strength in the long suit), and the likelihood that North has the $\spadesuit J$ will usually convince West to pass (unless East has redoubled to suggest some defense) when North doubled $3\clubsuit$, and N/S will often escape undoubled. It's a juggle out there, kids.

Where West opens a Precision 1♦ or a Polish-style 1♣, East will usually get his side to 3♣ one way or another and the outcome will turn on N/S's inclination to compete further and E/W's inclination to double three of a major to try to protect their equity.

Given the current popularity of non-traditional notrump ranges, West will often start with 1NT. North will either show the majors or the possibility of holding both majors and East will get his side to 3♣ at his earliest convenience, using lebensohl where necessary. At these tables, where North has described or hinted at his hand type, South will not be anxious to commit to the three level and 3♣ will often buy the contract.

It's E/W's hand and they're entitled to a plus. Whether they get 90, 110, 100 or 300 will be the central issue, and any E/W minus will be dreadful.

Board 9. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

After two passes, the strong notrumpers will have an easy decision with the South cards. If West passes (by no means certain), North will often transfer to hearts and pass 2♥, but the nine and ten spots may convince him to invite with 2NT and South will accept by jumping to 4♥. If South shows a maximum for play in hearts by breaking the transfer (choices will include 3♥, 2NT, 2♠, 3♣, and 3♦) North will accept, perhaps “re-transferring” to get the stronger hand to declare.

Despite the adequate high-card strength, wealth of controls and strong trumps in a nine-card fit,

the N/S hands do not mesh very well, and N/S are likely to go two down on a neutral lead when declarer attacks trumps in the “natural” (it's easier to notice that you can pick up four trumps with West than with East) way, leading an honor from South or towards an honor in South. We can see that declarer has a chance to make 4♥ on the reasonable but luckless lead of a diamond honor by West, but will have to lead the first round of trumps toward the jack to have a chance. That might happen where West has been active in the bidding and won't have all four trumps, but it's quite a parlay otherwise. Those spectacular +420s will net N/S most of the matchpoints.

Although the diamond lead is quite attractive, West might look elsewhere when the auction suggests that 4♥ might be a close game and that it isn't necessary to establish trick(s) in diamonds when trumps appear to be breaking badly. If West leads a club, the result will be +50 or (more likely) +100. On a low spade lead, declarer won't be able to avoid down two even if he starts trumps by leading towards the jack as long as the defense exercises moderate care.

At some tables, North will consider his slow hand much more appropriate for notrump and focus on that strain by passing or raising to 2NT. A club lead and continuation will hold declarer to eight tricks, but a spade lead will also be effective, even if South wins the king and has reason (from the bidding, if West interferes) to lead a low heart from hand. East takes the jack with his ace, after which any side-suit return nets the defense five tricks (South needs three entries to dummy: two to pick up hearts, and another one to cash the fifth heart – but North only has two).

If West acts over 1NT, it might be with 2♣ (DONT: clubs and another), 2♦ (spades and another), or 2♠ (spades plus another) or something more exotic. In all cases, the club fit may be found, and East may compete to 3♣ if North leaves him room to do so. N/S will usually compete to 3♥. Depending on whether North shows his hearts and how he does so

South will raise hearts, probably to game if he's asked to do so, although he may downgrade his spade honors where West shows that suit. West might wait to act until the second round, trying 2♠ after South takes the transfer to 2♥. North will surely double, which will cost West at least 200 if everyone passes. However, if East interprets West's unusual sequence as showing a two-suiter, he will get his side to 3♣, which would make, but N/S figure to reach a heart contract instead. Where East is on lead, the likely spade start will net the defense five tricks if declarer is permitted to win the first spade trick.

Board 10. Game All. Dealer East.

♠ A 8 7 ♥ 9 8 7 4 ♦ Q 7 ♣ A Q 9 2 ♠ K 10 ♥ K 10 6 3 ♦ J 9 8 6 2 ♣ J 3	♠ Q 6 4 ♥ A 5 2 ♦ 3 ♣ K 10 8 7 5 4 ♠ J 9 5 3 2 ♥ Q J ♦ A K 10 5 4 ♣ 6
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Although the South hand has some of its honors poorly located, few will pass as dealer despite the weak spade suit that would normally be mentioned first. But the conservative Souths will at least have a chance to stop short of 4♣ and avoid the almost certain -200 at the game level.

Not that passing the South hand will always lead to N/S stopping short of game. If South passes, North might do likewise in fourth seat, but that combination of conservative actions is wildly unlikely (not best, for N/S, but it avoids a minus score). It's more likely that North will open 1♣ and pass South's response of 1♠. Opposite a partner, who couldn't open the bidding, taking that low road seems perfectly reasonable, and East might not protect with 2♣, vulnerable, in the suit opened on his right. +110 will be a huge result for N/S. If North keeps the ball in play and rebids INT over South's 1♠ response,

South will check for spade support and bid at least 3♠ when North obliges. That will normally be too high, but it will fare a trick better than 4♣ and so might turn out reasonably well for those stationary pairs.

With South's diamonds unbid, West may lead one against a spade contract, South winning a cheap trick. If he continues with two rounds of spades, West gets in and must switch to a heart (safe enough once South shows up with ace-king of diamonds) to protect his late diamond trick (East wins the ace and draws dummy's last trump; eight tricks for N/S), but if West switches to a minor suit instead, South can arrange to ruff his diamond loser in dummy for a ninth winner. If, instead, South starts with a low spade from dummy, West wins the trick, and gives East a diamond ruff. Then the defenders cash two heart tricks and score a second diamond ruff. Again, only eight tricks.

If West leads the ♣J instead, South may be tempted to finesse, but if he goes up ace and plays a low trump, he can later cash the ♠A before ruffing a diamond in dummy. He cashes the ♦Q and leads another diamond toward his hand; East can't ruff profitably. Still, only eight tricks; the best N/S can do on such a nasty lead.

A heart opening lead also makes it possible to make nine tricks in spades, but it isn't easy to find in practice. Suppose East wins the ace and returns a diamond, won by the queen. South plays a second heart, cutting the E/W communications, and wins the club return with the ace. A diamond towards the closed hand leaves East without resource – if he ruffs it is over, and if he ducks, South wins and ruffs a diamond. South can then ruff another diamond low, losing only two spades and two hearts. And if East returns a trump at trick two, declarer wins the ace, cashes the ♣A, ruffs a club and exits in hearts. West can cash the trump king, but is then endplayed: a diamond makes it easy for declarer, and if he tries the ♥10 instead, South ruffs, plays a diamond to the queen and leads the good heart. If East ruffs, it is his turn to be endplayed (forced to set up dummy's

♣Q), and if he discards, South ruffs a diamond in dummy. In practice, South is likely to play on diamonds early, but that plan only gets him eight tricks.

Curiously, the deal belongs to E/W in 3♣, which is cold with the ♠J onside and the heart honors falling; it won't matter that declarer has two trump losers. Even if East opens 1♣ or 2♣ as dealer, E/W will rarely buy the contract, but the deal illustrates that it's not always force of strength that determines "ownership" of a particular deal.

Board 11. Love All. Dealer South.

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

N/S have eight clubs and E/W have nine hearts. Total tricksters would predict that 17 total trumps should translate into 17 total tricks, but, as is so often the case, distribution is a much more important factor than the number of trumps.

As North has the eight of spades, it looks as if N/S can take 10 tricks in a club partial – but they can't against best defense; the four-one break is a complicating factor that holds South to nine tricks. The winning defenses are to lead hearts, to get a force going, or to lead a diamond: the threat of one or two ruffs means declarer has to draw four rounds of trumps, but when he plays spades, E/W play hearts, and the delayed force holds declarer to nine tricks.

E/W can also take nine tricks in their best trump suit. Playing in hearts, they have only two immediate losers in the minors, plus a slow loser in spades, but three losers don't always mean 10 winners – which would seem to be

the case here if the defense can lead two early rounds of trumps.

It looks as if a top club followed by a trump switch should stop the tenth trick, but it doesn't if West times the play perfectly. He wins the trump switch and gives up a diamond. North must win that trick to continue hearts, but declarer can win in dummy and crossruff two diamonds and two clubs; then play a fourth diamond, discarding his last club, and leaving North on lead. Dummy's last diamond is good, and as North has the spade king and no more clubs, North must help West to take the spade finesse and draw the last trump. A switch to the ♠K will prevent declarer from using the high diamond, but gives E/W an extra spade trick.

The bidding: South will open 1♣, and West will usually overcall 1♥; we suspect that there will be more weak jump overcalls of 2♥ than conservative passes. East will push the bidding up to at least 3♥ after that, and West will take nine or 10 tricks. A 2♥ overcall is likely to silence North, and East will raise to 4♥ or 3♥ according to style and partnership philosophy. South might double either of those raises, leaving North with an awkward problem that he will solve by passing or bidding an appropriate number of clubs, or perhaps 4NT over 4♥ doubled, trying to finish in the best minor-suit fit. That will produce N/S +100, -50, -100, -530, and -590, to go with the +110s, -140s, and -170s. If West doesn't overcall, E/W might not enter the auction, selling out to 1♠, 1NT, 2♦, or a low partial in clubs. The delicate 1♠ contracts will produce six, seven or eight tricks, all of which should be reasonable for N/S, given E/W's potential. If East finds a heart lead against North's 1NT the defenders can win seven tricks in the majors, but if he prefers his longest suit North takes nine fast tricks and N/S get a super score. West's early silence will not preclude delayed E/W competition, which would normally lead to a final contract of 3♥, probably doubled, as South will feel he has to try to protect his side's equity in a club contract.

Board 12. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

When you need to take a lot of tricks by ruffing, every trump counts, and here E/W can make 5♦ because East has enough trumps to ruff three of West's losers, the last one disappearing on the ♣A. The only real danger for declarer is to start spades by leading low to the ten, but that's a no-win play as low towards the queen leaves open a later finesse of the ten.

At almost every table West will open with 1♦, and although North doesn't have that much, he will usually think enough of his length in both majors and shortness in the opening suit to overcall 1♥. East will support his partner, but choosing the level will be a matter of judgment and system. Although the East hand would be prototypical for a "mixed" raise, not everyone will have the treatment available. Perhaps the most popular competitive minor-raise package includes a standard single raise, preemptive jump raise, limit-plus cue-raise, more extreme four- and five-level raises, but even in that scheme, some will settle for 2♦ while others will prefer 3♦ or 4♦. Although South would like to mention his gorgeous clubs, the level of the auction or the risk of reaching a lower-scoring strain might force him to raise hearts instead.

If South raises hearts (say: 1♦-1♥-3♦-3♥), West's hand grows up substantially: if East is short in hearts, as expected, there will often be 11 tricks opposite ace-fifth of trumps and virtually nothing else. And, as East didn't bid 1♠ (or make a four-spade negative double), West could simply jump to 5♦, expecting it to have

play. Even East's ♣A opposite West's void is not wasted when spades go four-two: West knocks out the ♦A, takes a discard on the ♣A, and leads toward the ♠Q.

If N/S climb to 3♥, West might trade on the vulnerability to try for a penalty, but in 3♥ doubled, declarer can win the diamond opening lead and start clubs immediately, losing only three aces and two club ruffs, for -200. We believe that won't be good enough for E/W as we expect more than half the E/W field to bid and make 5♦ for +400.

Board 13. Game All. Dealer North

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

Although we don't expect many N/S pairs to reach 6♠ and fail, the slam isn't all that bad: if trumps are two-two you succeed if one of the major-suit kings is onside, while if trumps are three-one with only one trump loser you still have chances. Where South starts with his favorite forcing spade raise, South may cooperate in the slam investigation if North shows a non-minimum. We have all reached worse slams than this one – if the cards cooperate, North might take all 13 tricks – but here it will pay to stop at a safe level, with four much more desirable than five.

East has a difficult lead. Unless he has some clues from the bidding, or relies on maxims like "never lead from a jack" or "always lead from your weakest four-card suit", his choice will be random. A heart is best this time as it forces declarer to make a decision immediately, with finesses possible in all suits but clubs. If North calls for the ♥A and plays on diamonds, hoping to get rid of his heart loser, he risks losing two

tricks in the red suits plus an indeterminate number of trump tricks. For that reason, he is likely to finesse in hearts. After that start, ten tricks is the limit; there is also a slight risk that declarer only takes nine. After a heart to the queen and king, declarer may cash the spade ace, and cross to the ♣K to lead a second spade. East can draw two more rounds of trumps, restricting South to only one club ruff. To find the game-going trick (or hold down the undertricks!), he must find the ♦Q or ruff one club in dummy, ruff one heart in hand and cash the last trump, catching E/W in a double squeeze.

If, instead, East leads a diamond, North has a vital third winner in that suit and can come to 11 tricks as long as he doesn't play ♠A, ♦K, ♣K, spade as East can take two high trumps and leave declarer with only 10 winners.

Board 14. Love All. Dealer East.

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

If South declines the opportunity to open 2♠ or 3♠, as most will, West will have to choose in third position between his red suits. Opening in the longer, lower-ranking diamond suit forces West to bury his hearts or risk overstating his strength over any response but 1♥, and if he's unlucky and focuses on diamonds, he might well miss a good five-three fit in hearts. Opening in the shorter, higher-ranking heart suit leaves West with an easy rebid in diamonds, but risks playing in the wrong strain – particularly at the partscore level – when East, with limited values, offers preference to hearts with two-three or two-two in the red suits. Although the downside for West feigning five-five is not insignificant, opening 1♥ with five respectable

hearts and six diamonds in the minimum range will often be the winning strategy.

If West opens 1♥, North will double. Even if 18 HCP is acceptable for a INT overcall, the suitability for other strains and the anti-positional heart stopper should steer him away from notrump. If he doubles, East will either raise hearts (perhaps with an artificial bid, showing 8-10 HCP and three hearts) or redouble (a slight stretch), and South will bid at least 2♠, possibly 3♠. West may introduce his second suit, and the final contract is likely to be four of a major doubled, usually one down. Where West opens 1♦, we believe Norths will do best in the long run to overcall INT rather than double, but for some, INT will be out of range and double will be the systemic action. East will bid INT over a double, and South will bid at least 2♠. Whether West names hearts or shows a distributional hand interested in competing, there is a reasonable chance that South will buy the contract at 3♠. Where North overcalls INT East has enough to double for penalty. If South escapes to 2♠, West will probably judge it reasonable to bid out his six-five if permitted that option. Where South transfers to spades West might double 2♥ to show length in the suit, and may be given the room to show extra length when N/S don't volunteer to go past 2♠ without being pushed. It's difficult to predict where the bidding will end most often, but going plus should be respectable for either side.

4♥ is a decent spot, needing only normal breaks in the red suits. Although hearts behave, with the diamond jack protected in North, West has no chance against most defenses: a diamond lead early gives the defense three aces and a ruff, but forcing declarer with spades works too; West will eventually run out of trumps and must surrender a diamond ruff to South or a diamond trick to North.

But even if 4♥ goes down, it may not be a bad score as N/S own the hand for 3♠. If declarer in a spade contract doesn't draw trumps too quickly, he can ruff a heart in North for the ninth trick; if the defense errs he may even

get a tenth. If the contract is played by North (after a transfer sequence, or perhaps after a Multi 2♦ opening by South), East might lead the ♦Q (if West has mentioned that suit) and shift to a trump, won in South. When a heart is led towards North, West must play one of his three highest cards, enabling him to win this trick and play a club through. If he doesn't, North can put in the six to lose the heart trick to East, ruff a heart in hand and a diamond in dummy, draw trumps, and finesse in clubs, ending play East, who is down to only clubs.

Board 15. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

With the ♦K onside and no voids in the defenders' hands, 12 tricks in spades are easy for N/S, but it is not so clear for N/S to declare a spade contract, especially where West bounces in hearts.

Suppose South opens with 1♣ or 1♦ (depending on system) and West jumps to 4♥. Unless North is willing to gamble on committing to his modest five-card suit, he will double, whether his partnership treats that as "cards," "negative," or penalty. South will often pass North's double and N/S will collect an inadequate penalty, but if the double suggests good overall strength and the willingness to compete, the more common expert practice, South will lean towards 4♠. North will be delighted, of course, and may entertain serious thoughts of slam, but should probably pass, taking the view that his side has found the right strain.

South will have no trouble taking 12 tricks if he finesses in diamonds, but West's preemptive

overall may convince declarer to place East with the diamond king. If so, he may try for a different route to 12 tricks. Suppose West starts with two rounds of hearts, South ruffing as East sheds a somewhat revealing club. ♠K, club to dummy, last heart ruffed, ♠Q; if South leads the ♦Q and West follows low without giving away the position, South may play East for the ♦K, going up with the ace to run trumps; he will force East down to two clubs in order to keep the putative king of diamonds, in which case playing clubs from the top will make a winner of South's ten. On the actual layout, however, declarer will be disappointed to see East take the last trick with the ♣J.

If West leads a top heart and shifts to a cunning low diamond, South has to guess well to take 12 tricks. If he plays East to have the ♦K, he will go up ace, ruff a heart (East shedding a diamond) and draw one round of trumps, reaching the crossroads. The winning line is to leave trumps for a while, instead, cashing the ♣A, finessing the ♣10 and discarding dummy's diamonds on clubs. Now a diamond ruff, both opponents following low. As South has a full count at this stage, he can finesse East for the ♠J, ruff a diamond with the ♠A, draw trumps (finally), and cash the high diamond. For that line to work, South needs East to have three trumps (likely, in view of West's long hearts) and the club jack (also likely, for the same reason). It looks a little esoteric, but if East has the ♦K that is the line that's required.

If West is allowed to play 4♥ doubled, he will escape for -300 most of the time, but if South opened 1♦ and North leads that suit, it's only -100. In the interest of completeness, we're obliged to tell you that N/S can negotiate a third undertrick at double dummy. First, North must lead a low spade or a low club to South, who switches to the ♦Q. West ducks, and ducks again on the continuation of the ♦J. A third diamond goes to the king and ace, and now North underleads the other black ace; South wins and leads the thirteenth diamond to promote North's jack of hearts. If someone finds that defense, flag down the nearest Bridge journalist.

Board 16. E/W Vul. Dealer West.

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

When the strength is divided evenly between the sides, both N/S and E/W can often make a partscore. But here E/W have much the worst of it: their maximum is a humble 1♣, while N/S can take 11 tricks in diamonds.

With a prime 17-count and a good five-card suit, West may be slightly too strong for a 15-17 notrump. INT will end the auction if South lacks the appropriate methods or inclination to reopen. It's often best to defend INT when the notrump's side is vulnerable, as there are several ways to win: you may not find your optimum trump suit and if you do, it may not yield as much as the 100 or 200 you would achieve by defending. North will lead from his longest suit and West will face an uphill struggle. With the ♦A in North, the defenders can take at least eight tricks, often nine; +200 or +300.

West might do a little better in a suit contract, but if hearts are trumps and North leads a spade, South putting in the ten (to deny dummy a quick entry with the queen), the defenders have seven tricks: the ♠A, one spade ruff, one heart trick and two tricks in each minor. If South plays the ♠A at Trick One and continues the suit, declarer can get out for one down by winning in dummy to lead a trump, finessing if South follows low; if South splits his honors and gets his spade ruff, declarer will eventually be able to force the defenders to give dummy an entry to neutralize South's remaining guarded trump honor. With everyone playing perfectly, E/W's most profitable trump suit is clubs, a strain in which they might manage

seven tricks, but the parlay of mentioning the suit and buying the contract at the two level is a real long shot.

When South declares a diamond contract, West can't lead clubs with profit, so declarer has time to develop spades, and can get home by playing on clubs without a spade lead. That will be +150 (which beats the pairs playing spades, +140), or the occasional +400 (or 550). In notrump, South will take at least eight tricks, and will often emerge with nine when West leads a heart (if an honor, followed by a switch to the ♠K, South ducks, and has time to develop spades). To defeat 3NT, West has to find an unlikely club lead, or an impossible diamond lead.

If West opens 1♥, and both North and East pass, South faces a problem that offers no obvious solution. With 14 HCP he can't rule out a game or profitable partial in his direction, but if 1♥ is a bad spot for E/W, it may be even better to defend and hope for vulnerable undertricks or, if 1♥ can be made, that E/W would have a bigger plus in one of the black suits. If South doesn't pass, he will probably try INT rather than 2♦, and then the diamond fit probably won't come to light. West should resist the temptation to bid again over INT or 2♦, and if North takes out to 2♠, he will probably buy the contract. That won't beat the N/S pairs who find diamonds and in practice won't often beat the N/S pairs in notrump, but simply declaring will be bad for N/S, with plenty of +200s defending contracts in hearts or notrump.

Board 17. Love All. Dealer North.

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

When both sides have a nine-card fit and an eight-card fit they can often take lots of tricks, but that is not the case here, at least not at double dummy. N/S can be held to eight tricks in spades (if East after getting a diamond ruff, underleads in clubs) and E/W can be held to nine tricks in hearts (if South leads a club early, the defenders get three trump tricks). All this is in theory, of course, and at the table it is possible, perhaps even likely, that N/S will take nine tricks and/or E/W will take ten.

Pairs using upside-down signals might fare badly if West leads the $\diamond A$ and East follows with the jack, as he would from jack-third. If West believes that layout more likely, he may shift to a club (essential if East has three diamonds and KJx of clubs), and then South can take 10 tricks by drawing trumps and finessing against West's $\diamond 10$. Although it might seem that he can combine his chances by switching to the $\clubsuit Q$ so East could discourage when he holds a singleton diamond, the truth is that East's club would be a forced play from king-jack-low and West couldn't read it with confidence if it held the trick. And if hearts are trumps, will South, after winning the spade lead, shift to a club? It's likely that he will, but then might he not go in with the ace on the first trump lead from dummy, essential to take all the defensive tricks if North has the $\diamond A$ and king-low of trumps? So, to hold hearts to nine tricks on the actual lie, South must find two key plays on defense; if he misses either of them, E/W lose only three tricks.

South will usually be left to open $1\heartsuit$ in third seat, and West, with his share of the deck and spade shortness, will have to decide whether to double for takeout, hoping the deal belongs to his side, or whether to remain on the sidelines facing a passed partner, in an attempt to avoid helping the opponents in the play should they declare a spade or notrump contract. If West passes, North will choose between a simple raise to $2\heartsuit$ and a mildly aggressive artificial raise, such as Drury-Fit. A $2\clubsuit$ response gives East the opportunity to make a lead-directing double, if that's his agreement (the alternative being to treat a double of $2\clubsuit$ as takeout of

the opponents' major). South might just jump to $4\heartsuit$, but some will invite game or even sign off, awaiting a further move from partner. If West has room to "raise" clubs or the option of competing with an extended responsive double, he may get involved, and that might get his side as high as $4\clubsuit$, the par contract on this deal - clubs is the only strain offering a legitimate play for 10 tricks. It's curious that E/W's five-four fit, which breaks two-two, will produce one less trick than their five-three fit, which breaks four-one. North may well double $4\clubsuit$, should it come to that, but he will regret doing so as there is no defense to beat it: declarer develops his side-suit (hearts) as soon as possible.

E/W will find their heart fit if West doubles $1\spadesuit$ for take-out. East has a nice hand, and the more spades N/S bid, the better it becomes. And, as there is decent play for $4\heartsuit$ opposite as little as $1=4=4=4$ with two red aces and 11 low spot cards, East may be forgiven for driving to $4\heartsuit$. It is also the right thing to do if it jockeys South into $4\heartsuit$, perhaps as a two-way shot. E/W can double and rate to get 100 more often than not, with -590 more likely than the inspired +300. But if East presses on to $5\clubsuit$ (which easily could be better than doubling $4\heartsuit$), N/S will double and enter a plus score on their side.

Board 18. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

	\spadesuit K J 7		
	\heartsuit K 10 9 6 5		
	\diamond 9 5 3		
	\clubsuit K 2		
\spadesuit 5		\spadesuit 10 8 4 3	
\heartsuit 8		\heartsuit A 4 3 2	
\diamond A K Q J 8 7 6		\diamond 4	
\clubsuit J 10 9 7		\clubsuit A Q 8 6	
	\spadesuit A Q 9 6 2		
	\heartsuit Q J 7		
	\diamond 10 2		
	\clubsuit 5 4 3		

It's the majors versus the minors, and this time, the minors win. With the $\clubsuit K$ onside, E/W can make both $6\clubsuit$ and $6\diamond$, while N/S can make nothing more than a low partscore (eight tricks in hearts – their weaker trump suit – but

only seven in spades, as the defenders have a heart ruff to go with their high-card winners). With the strength fairly divided between the sides, it's unlikely that E/W will bid to the six-level, and even the five-level may be too high for many pairs, especially if East passes in first position, which will be the popular choice.

After two passes, West will choose between 1♦, 4♦, 5♦, a Gambling 3NT, and perhaps even a tactical 3♦. Each of these except for 1♦ has the potential to buy the contract, with 3NT offering the chance for a windfall profit if North leads a heart. Declarer would then have to decide whether to be content with nine tricks or whether to take the club finesse for 12 ... or eight. As many won't be in game and 11 tricks in diamonds or clubs will be the limit with the ♣K in South, West should probably run for cover with +400 if North doesn't cover the ♣J late in the play.

We don't expect many Wests to open 3♦, a unilateral underbid/misbid that might silence everyone for +170 and a modest score. Alternatively, South might protect with a double (leading to 3♥, down one, probably not doubled) or with 3♣, which East might double and set 300 if the defense finds its heart ruff.

Against 3♥, East leads his diamond to West, who cashes a second round (East pitching a spade) and shifts to the ♣J, covered. Two more rounds of clubs reduce declarer to the same trump length as East. A heart to the queen and the ♥J will win the next two tricks, East hoping declarer will lead more hearts, so that he can win the ace and lead his last club, promoting his last trump. But there won't be a third round of trumps. Instead, North cashes three spade tricks, ending in hand, then ruffs his last diamond in dummy.

Can E/W reach 5♦ (or 5♣) without West opening 5♦? Perhaps, with a little help from their friends, they might get there via: Pass-Pass-1♦-Pass; 1♥-1♠-2♦-2♠; Double-Pass-3♣-Pass; 3♣-p-5♦. With eight playing tricks, West can't afford to pass over 1♠, and over East's competitive double of 2♠ West shows

his secondary length in clubs. East, whose prime values seem to mesh well with West's distribution, tries for game with 3♣, and East accepts the invitation in his solid suit. If you think this is an overly imaginative "constructed" auction, remember that 5♦ is excellent if East's clubs are only ace-to-four, and here, where East has the ♣Q and the king is onside, 5♦ is one level too low. We salute you if you reached 5♦ on a cooperative auction and if you reached six you were lucky, as getting to five would have given you an excellent score without risking the ignominy of going minus.

Board 19. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

There was a time when the most effective Bridge strategies were jealously guarded by the experts who made a living from the vastly-greater number of non-experts, but the game has, mercifully, evolved. Today, even bright beginners are started down the road to competence by teachers who can draw from a wide array of tips, maxims, and general advice that have emerged from the trade literature. One of the more widely favored catch phrases of recent years is "Six-five, come alive," which translates into something like: "When you have 11 cards in two suits, you don't need lots of honors in order to take lots of tricks." Here, West has only 11 useful HCP (the ♠K plays no role in a diamond contract), but they are enough for E/W to make 6♦ opposite East's wonderful eight-count when everything is as friendly as possible for them - not that you would want to reach slam with the E/W cards, of course.

West will open 1♣, 1♠, or 1NT, according

to system and, perhaps, judgment. Over 1♣, North will come in with 1♠ or 2♠, the latter being more attractive once South has passed. 1♠ will set a problem for East. If he tries a negative double, promising nothing more than four or more hearts and the values for a voluntary response to a one-bid, he will surely be concerned about how he will cope with a potential 3♠ or 4♠ by South, or even a simple rebid in clubs by West. As those challenging scenarios are not unlikely, East may decide he'll do better by introducing one of his long suits while the level is relatively comfortable, and as majors score more than minors, he may bid 2♥, paying respect to his fifth heart.

South will raise to 2♠ over 2♥ (and over double), even with this "quackery." West will strongly consider a penalty double where that option is available, and might double to show general strength with only two hearts where double carries that message. Whether West doubles or passes, East will follow through on his plan by introducing his diamonds, and West will choose between 3♥ and 3NT. Although East won't much like 3NT, with two sources of tricks and sharp cards, he will probably pass it. On a spade lead, and a diamond up, North will be on lead again and may continue spades, handing West an eleventh tricks, and West may manage a twelfth by finessing South for the ♥Q. +660 should be a good result, and +690 off the charts.

If East introduces his longest suit first, a time-honored strategy, he can later bid hearts twice (or jump in hearts) to suggest at least five-six. Then, E/W will find the best strain, and will most likely stop at the five level and score +620 if West can issue a slam try and respect East's signoff. Where West elects to play in hearts for 30-point tricks, his decision will work well, as East will score +650, perhaps even +680 if he gets diamonds going early, learns he has the time to play either opponent for the ♥Q, and chooses South. Here, where East never considered 3NT a real target, there is less to be said in favor of going on to 6♦ over 5♦ (on the theory that 5♦ won't produce a good score

when others will make overtricks in 3NT).

Where North jumps to 2♠, East is more likely to choose a negative double, although he won't feel entirely at ease about following it up accurately. E/W are in -500 territory if West passes the double, and a raise by South will bring -800 into focus, perhaps after 3♠-Pass-Pass-Double, passed out, but if West takes out East's double to 2NT, reasonably enough, East will have to choose from among 3♦, 3♥, 3♠, and 4♦, with the precise nature of all those calls likely to be undiscussed by even longtime partnerships. Avoiding this sort of scenario is one of the main reasons for East to start with a natural red-suit bid rather than double, but as double at least suggests length in the unbid suits, it will be quite a popular choice.

A 1NT opening by West, regardless of range, will make it easy for East to value his hand positively as he will expect West to have at least three cards in one of his suits and at least two in the other; E/W will reach 4♥ or 5♦ at these tables if they don't stop to double an intervening North.

If West opens 1♠ and East responds on the two level, E/W will reach one of their three successful game contracts. A hopeful 1NT response, where East fears overstating his values, will fare less well: 1NT will produce +180 or +210, but those will be poor results for E/W.

Board 20. Game All. Dealer West

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

A common start to the auction will be 1♣-Pass-1♦-Double. Although South has a five-

card major and double may make it difficult to locate a good five-three spade fit, overcalling 1♠ might bury a profitable heart fit. There will be differences in opinion about the relative importance of these two issues, but we expect more Souths to vote to introduce both suits at once than to back just one horse.

With South promising length in the majors, West should not take any action over South's double. With four-card support for one of South's suits, a valuable king, and a side ace, North is full value for a jump response of 2♥. Although South has something in reserve for his takeout double, his ♦Q is an uncertain asset. At IMPs, we'd expect most players to take a shot at game, but at Pairs, a simple raise to 3♥ is enough. Of course, North might raise himself to 4♥ in that scenario, so game will sometimes be reached even when South doesn't bid it.

Where West starts with a weak notrump, East might gamble a pass, but it's more natural to try to play the hand in diamonds. If East passes, South will show his majors or one major and second suit; N/S should find hearts and stay out of game, so that strategy by East won't be a winner. Not that aiming for 3♦ has to work either, as that will go down 200 or 300.

Against a heart contract by North, East will probably lead the ♣J and continue the suit if left on play. If West switches to a diamond, North can come to 10 tricks if he times the play accurately: ♦A, ♠K, ♥A, ♠A/♠Q to discard diamonds, ruff the ♦Q, ♥K to ruff out the spades; the defenders only get one more trick, in trumps and N/S score +170 or +620. However, East will have at most one of the high diamonds as he didn't lead the suit, and if West places East with two clubs and not four (North should follow three-eight) he may find the winning defense, which is to play a third club, playing East for the ♥J. Bingo! But East also has to be alert and ruff his partner's winner with his top heart to promote a second trump trick for the defense. If E/W finds that defense to hold declarer to nine tricks, N/S will not be happy with their matchpoint score, whether it's the award for +140 or -100.

Board 21. N/S Vul. Dealer North.

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

After North's 1♠ opening East will overcall 2♥, 3♥, or 4♥. Over 2♥, West might jump to 3NT, or take a slower route. Although East might pass a direct jump to 3NT if he believes that West might be bidding on a source of tricks of his own or that his hand might produce as many tricks in notrump facing a fit, many will convert to 4♥.

The play in both hearts and notrump depends on how declarer tackles the heart suit, but while 4♥ will always make, getting the hearts wrong will lead to defeat in 3NT. When declarer cashes the ♥K and South follows with the queen, the Theory of Restricted Choice advocates finessing the ten of hearts (when a player follows with one of two equals, the odds are roughly two-to-one that he only had one honor) on the next round, and this deal doesn't reflect badly on that theory.

But will declarer play that way? If the opening bid promised at least a five-card suit, following the Restricted Choice line means that declarer is playing North to have eight or nine major-suit cards to South's three or two. Thus, if we add the spade length to the equation, the odds favoring the second-round finesse of the ten have changed.

Against 3NT, North will lead the club king, promising the queen (and often the jack, too). Now, the odds are even worse for hearts being three-one with the length in North, but in notrump declarer can postpone his decision in hearts. And if he wins the ♣A, then plays to the ♥K, the right play at that stage is to cash the

ace-king of diamonds, just in case some new information materializes. And so it does! North shows out, marking South with six diamonds to North's one. Suddenly, everything is back to "normal" in terms of the Restricted Choice issue, as North and South have approximately the same number of known cards in the suits other than hearts; now finessing the ♥10 is the indicated play, after all.

But in a heart contract, East can't afford to test diamonds (and if he does, he runs into a ruff). On the natural spade lead, declarer can play low, allowing the ten to win the first trick. He wins the club return and will then concentrate on getting rid of his club loser. He cashes the ♥A, leads another trump to dummy's king, and advances the ♠Q, which is covered and ruffed. He crosses to the ♦A to ruff out North's remaining spade honor, and now needs only to reach dummy with the ♦K to discard a club on a high spade. Unfortunately for declarer, North ruffs the ♦K and cashes a club, holding him to 10 tricks. With some justification, East will moan about his bad luck for the rest of the session.

Board 22. E/W Vul. Dealer East.

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

E/W have the balance of power, but the cards are lying favorably for N/S, and on best defense E/W's most likely contract, INT, will drift two off when South leads spades and North leads clubs when he is on lead. That textbook strategy of leading "from weakness towards strength" will restrict declarer to one spade, one heart and three diamonds.

In practice, however, declarer will usually take at

least more trick. If South thinks a lead from his best suit is in order, he will start with the ♣Q. Then, East gets a trick with the king of clubs and has time to establish his seventh winner in hearts. He may even get an eighth with the aid of a squeeze against North if South rises with the ♥K to cash his club winners, the pressure mounting on North, who has no escape when declarer cashes ace and queen of hearts. But for the squeeze to operate, East has to guess to keep his fourth diamond, not his fourth heart. To break up that "fratricide squeeze," South must shift to spades (or diamonds) without cashing a single club trick, limiting E/W to seven tricks.

Some Souths will enter the bidding over 1♦ with a light takeout double or with a thin 2♣ overcall. Neither bid is a thing of beauty, but with shortness in opener's suit and two decent suits it often pays to enter the auction, especially at favorable vulnerability, and at Pairs it's often more dangerous to be conservative (call that disciplined) than aggressive (call that enterprising). After 1♦-2♣, West will compete with a negative double, catching the worst possible rebid (2♥) from East. West, hating his alternatives, will choose from among Pass, 3♦, and a wildly hopeful 3♣ cue bid, the last of these leading to 3NT, a sequence that will probably steer South away from the club lead. Should he try a spade, the unbid suit that he knows West will hold, he will be pleased with the number of undertricks, but even a club lead will defeat 3NT, as declarer has no long suits to run. North might well double 3NT.

Passing 2♥ will keep E/W low, but won't secure a plus score, as 2♥ has no chance on any sensible defense. If East times the play well, he can come to seven tricks for -100. Where West offers preference to 3♦ his decision figures to work badly, as best defense holds East to six tricks and -300. That requires a spade lead by South, quite a likely choice. Suppose that East wins and leads a low heart. Then, South has to win and play a second heart in order to get all available tricks for N/S (one spade, one heart, two diamonds and three clubs). A

trump lead also works well. 3♦ will sometimes be doubled.

Where South doubles 1♦ for takeout, West will redouble or bid 1♠, with the latter likely to prevent North from competing to 2♠, a contract that would play very well – thanks to the good lie of the black suits. On a diamond lead, followed by two rounds of trumps, North can use his trump entries to finesse in clubs for nine tricks and +140, a fine score. It's better for E/W to lead clubs to cut the communication between North and South, or to lead diamonds to force dummy, but careful play still gives North eight tricks, and +110. Where West starts with a redouble, North might compete to 2♠ and might be doubled for +470 or +570.

Board 23. Game All. Dealer South.

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

The black suits versus the red suits: N/S are likely to win that battle in 4♠, which can be defeated. However, to do that, E/W must know precisely what they are doing – and even expert defenders will allow 4♠ to make more often than not.

If South opens 4♠, he may shut out everybody, even though some players may feel it's their duty to overcall 5♣. Neither North nor South has an idea if it will make or go down, but since South has preempted with ace-king in one suit and king-queen in another, it's his responsibility to say "I have good defense" by doubling on the way out. North has no reason to bid on, and four black suit tricks later, N/S can enter +500 on the score sheet. But South has a singleton heart, and may shift to it before cashing out. Will that matter? Say South cashes

two rounds of spades before switching to the ♥4. The best West can do is win the ace and run seven rounds of diamonds, keeping only hearts in dummy. If North reduces to two hearts and the ♣A, West can pass the ♥J, then exit in clubs, using North as a stepping stone to dummy's "stranded" ♥K. North can avoid that fate by discarding the ace of clubs, a play he should find if South uses his trumps and spade discards to indicate a strong holding in clubs, or discards the ♣K, to show possession of the queen. Although +200 is worse for N/S than +500, the matchpoint difference will probably be small when so many of the other results will be +620 or -100 in 4♠.

Many South players (count us in their number) will not consider their hand appropriate for a preempt (too much defense relative to offense, too much slam potential for the other strains) and open 1♠. West will overcall 2♦, 3♦, or 4♦, and North will usually compete with a negative double in the first case, often in the second, and occasionally in the third. With heart length indicated to his right, East may not act at the two level, but with decent support for diamonds, many will risk 2♥. Whether East bids or passes in that scenario, South will face a decision much like West's (over 1♠): 2♠, 3♠, or 4♠? 2♠ is too little; 4♠ is too much (though it will be a popular choice); but 3♠ feels just right (shades of Goldilocks and the Three Bears). Although North could reasonably pass an invitational 3♠, some will raise.

West cashes two rounds of diamonds and the ace of hearts. How should East signal on the ♥A? Strict count players will simply do their thing here, and that approach might well convince West that South has one heart rather than three. Attitude players have more scope, choosing between an encouraging card that will be irrelevant when South has the remaining heart, and a discouraging signal, which would either suggest something in clubs or leave West to find the best continuation. If West believes he's on his own, he will see the problem in these terms: a second heart is fine if South can follow and East has no top honor

in spades (or if South has to guess the ♣Q with his actual distribution but the ♠Q instead of the ♣Q); a club switch is needed if South has 7=2=2=2 with solid spades, the ♥K and no ♣K: the heart blockage means South will lose another trick; a third diamond is needed if the defense has no outside tricks but East has a top honor in spades, so that East can ruff with it to promote West's ♠J via an uppercut.

To our knowledge, there is no formal signaling system that solves this problem cleanly, but consider the following: If East showed his long suit over North's negative double, West can expect him to have the missing hearts, so East can use a three-way signal (high or low as suit preference, middle to encourage) to offer an opinion about the best continuation. Here, with no club help but a possible promotion coming, he can signal high (the ten) to get West to play the higher side suit, i.e. a third diamond; the ♥5 (East's lowest heart) would indicate a valuable card in clubs, the lowest suit, while the ♥7, instead, would be neutral, and therefore nominally encouraging. Note that East would encourage a heart continuation if he could not ruff a third round of diamonds with a potentially useful trump.

But if East hasn't bid hearts, what can he do? Actually, there is a pretty solution: East can play the ♥K under the ace. As he didn't encourage ("let's try to cash a second heart trick") or discourage ("don't play a second heart, please" – try a club, the normal switch), and a trump shift is clearly pointless, the only message East can be sending is "let's play for a promotion." The ♥K won't look so good if South ruffs that trick, but as West will have at most one club honor, South isn't likely to profit from getting a heart trick in dummy. If West gets the message when South follows to the ♥A, and plays a third diamond, South should ruff with dummy's deuce, making it as easy as possible for East to over-ruff cheaply from Q3 or J3, with South having to follow suit. If East was clever enough to drop the ♥K, it's inconceivable that he will fall for that. In retrospect, we're sorry we mentioned it!

Board 24. Love All. Dealer West.

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

The importance of distribution can't be overstated, and this deal is a good illustration. With spades one-one, South can make 5♠, even with the queen-jack of hearts and the diamond honors pulling no weight in a spade contract. N/S's big fit and meshing shortages produce 11 tricks with only 13 working HCP.

Now, let's look at E/W. In a club contract, they have two immediate losers in hearts, and at least one loser in diamonds. While it appears that on the actual lie, E/W must lose a second diamond, if North leads diamonds at some stage, West can play that suit for one loser. If East is declarer in 5♣, careful play still lands ten tricks (declarer eliminates the majors and trumps and loses a middle diamond spot to one of North's honors; a diamond play from South doesn't prevent declarer from executing his endplay). Even if declarer loses another trick, -300 should be almost as good as -100 or -50 (no double of 5♣) for E/W, as N/S are cold for +450.

Ever since S.J. Simon formulated his famous piece of advice -- "When in doubt, bid one more" (in *Why You Lose at Bridge*, one of the best bridge books ever written) -- players have bid one more over and over again, trading plus scores for minus scores by failing to appreciate the important "when in doubt" proviso in Simon's suggestion. South would do well on this deal to heed Simon's advice. Say that West passes and North decides to open light with 1♥. East has the wrong shape to act,

so he passes, and South responds 1♠. If West overcalls 2♣, North will raise to 2♠ and East will get his side to 5♣ (either directly or via a 3♠ cue-bid), but with his three little clubs, South can confidently expect to catch at most one club in dummy. Sure, 5♣ doesn't have to make, but it might (give North: AQxx, KQxxx, xxx, x, for example) and it will "never" go for more than 300. So, when 5♠ figures to make most of the time, South should take the plunge and bid 5♠.

With only three major-suit cards and good playing strength, we expect many West to open 3♣. North has the shape to act (club shortness), but only 10 HCP and microscopic defense should South opt for a penalty pass or double E/W's final contract. We know lots of players who wouldn't dream of passing and lots who wouldn't dream of taking action. If West gets by North, East will jump to 5♣ as a two-way shot (but, from his angle, his main goal is +400, not to preempt N/S). South's club holding will give him reason to hope to catch spade support and short clubs opposite, and most experienced players in this situation will bid 5♠ to make or as a good save. If South shows such enterprise, North will like his hand and give some thought to raising 5♠ to six, but if he follows another piece of sound advice -- "when partner may have done something good, don't punish him," he will pass. Indeed, he may be surprised to see a double to his left. Sure, East can't be sure of defeating it, but South's 5♠ bid may not be duplicated at other tables, so if it is right for N/S to act at such a high level, little may be lost by doubling, and if 5♠ goes down, it should be at a higher stake than 50 points a trick. If North redoubles 5♠, will East (or West) run? Poker players live for these moments! If everyone sits for the redouble, N/S will record +1000 and a top, but if E/W run to 6♣ and get out for -300, North will regret his greed. As neither West nor East is likely to run, and if 5♠ doubled is a common contract -- which it very well might be -- North may need to redouble to get a good score.

What an exciting deal!

Board 25. E/W Vul. Dealer North.

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

With two balanced hands, no eight-card major-suit fit, and 22 combined HCP, a notrump partial would normally be best for N/S, but not on this layout, where E/W can win five spade tricks and an ace to hold South to seven tricks; where North is declarer and East leads a heart, N/S have eight top tricks.

But even with this best-case scenario for notrump, N/S are better off in their diamond fit, which produces 10 tricks when everything is as friendly as can be, +130 beating +120. Perhaps we could subtitle this deal: "Why disrespect the minors?"

Let's go back to INT from North, with a heart lead, won with the jack (or the eight). If declarer doesn't cash out but hopes for a defensive error and leads club towards his hand, the best West can do is go up ace and shift to spades. But if he returns the king, East has to be alert and overtake. If not, spades are blocked, and North gets nine or even 10 tricks.

But will N/S get to play the hand? West has the best hand at the table and a nice spade suit. If neither North nor South deems his hand worth an opening bid, West will open 1♠ in fourth position. North may overcall 2♦, which will get his side to their best contract (a diamond partial), but if North passes again, East will respond INT. 2♣ from West will either get a pass (not so likely if 2♣ may be on a three-card suit, American-style), 2♥ (not attractive either, with such short/weak hearts) or 2♠ (the most likely rebid choice). Against 2♠ North will attack with a heart or lead a passive trump, which could easily solve a trump problem for declarer. West may win a trump

lead in dummy to lead a club to the queen, but if the defenders change tack, leading red-suit winners thereafter, West only gets his six sure tricks (five in trumps plus the ace of clubs). Although it seems to be more promising to win the spade lead in hand and play a low club, the defenders can switch to a forcing strategy, holding declarer to six tricks as long as they revert to trumps when declarer clears clubs, preventing declarer from ruffing his fourth club with the ♠A; and if declarer ducks two rounds of clubs, the defenders must counter differently by cashing two hearts ending in North for a fourth round of diamonds, allowing South to discard his remaining club. Although West can't conceive of passing out the deal, that would be the winning action this time as he can't go plus on offense (with -200 a live possibility), and if his side doesn't buy the contract it will be because his opponents have reached their optimum contract.

North has only 11 HCP, but his strong diamond suit, wealth of intermediates, and the favorable vulnerability will convince most players to open. After: 1♦-Pass-1♠, West may not have a natural 2♣ overall available in his methods, and even if he does, he may prefer to pass, but others will be willing and able to risk 2♣ directly. Where West tries 2♣ and two passes follow, will South let it go, try 2NT or 3♦, or double to try for +200? The winning action will be to defend, doubled or not, with +200 or +500 available on solid defense. 2NT is a favorite to work badly, but 3♦ will lose only to the N/S pairs getting at least 200 on defense. If the defenders don't double 2♣ and let a trick get away against 2♣, their +100 will beat only the N/S pairs who achieve +90 in INT. If West passes after 1♦-Pass-1♠, North will rebid INT, which South might raise to 2NT, questionable at Pairs scoring. N/S might well survive that to a degree, though, when East leads a heart. If South passes INT, however, it will seem more dangerous to West to reopen with 2♣ when North has implied holding two or three spades. If he calls it a day, he will probably go -120, but should score well. Aggressive West players who passed over 1♠, planning to double opener's INT rebid for penalty (with

East expected to lead dummy's suit), will not be dissuaded. That plan might have been a big winner had East been dealt some of South's assets, but here the double will only lead to trouble: North will score either 180, 280, 560 or 760 in INT doubled or INT redoubled, and if E/W run from South's likely redouble, they will finish -200 or -500 in 2♥ or 2♠ doubled.

Board 26. Game All. Dealer East.

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

North has full values for an opening bid in any position; yet, if there are three passes to him, he may consider passing the deal out because he has only two spades, a poor dummy for spades if South has length, and if he starts with 1♣, it will be easy for the opponents to enter the auction.

Suppose North does open 1♣ in fourth seat, East's club length and dull pattern should convince him to pass again. When South responds 1♠, West's length in the unbid suits affords him an opportunity to double for takeout. In practice, few Wests will pass in this scenario, but with his weak suits and potentially useless ♣K, there is a strong case for remaining on the sidelines.

If West doubles, North should pass, and East will choose from among INT, 2♦ and 2♥. The defense can prevail against INT as declarer has no timely seventh winner, but if South leads a spade or a low club, the contract will produce seven or eight tricks for +90 or +120. A passive diamond lead gives declarer time to guess spades, with some chance to create two tricks in the suit (imagine South not covering when the jack is led from the closed hand). The best lead for the defense is a heart, which will set

the contract, but that's a tough one to find. 2♦ figures to make more often than not, although it might require some inspired guessing on passive defense, but 2♥ will be too tall an order for East, and might go down a lot.

If West passes at his second turn and North rebids 1NT, South will either pass or convert to 2♣. A somewhat obscure natural 2♣, hoping to catch three-card spade preference is another possibility. Where North will often pass 1♠ or raise to 2♠ with three, South will most often do better to pass 1NT. 1NT isn't the best of contracts, but East doesn't have an attractive opening lead. If he leads a high club, trying to combine a passive approach with the potential to establish a long card if the suit goes 4333 around the table, North might well play the ace with a gratifying result, but even if the ♣K is permitted to win, West has to guess which suit to return. If East's opening lead in North's suit convinces West that he didn't have a good suit to lead from, West may decide to play East for his actual shape, in which case a diamond return stands out, and best defense thereafter gives E/W eight tricks for +200, an excellent score. However, if North has three diamonds, a heart shift will often be better. Declarer will cover a switch to a heart honor, and if the East continues hearts, he may wonder why the defenders are playing his best suits, but the resulting +90 or +120 will net N/S most of the matchpoints. If East's opening lead against 1NT is a the ♥2, North will win and finesse in clubs. West will most often return the suit East led, but with North's strong intermediates, that suit poses no threat; East must find the difficult diamond switch after winning with the heart ace if the defenders are to stop North from making his contract.

Some Norths will rebid an ugly 2♣, rejecting both 1NT with two low diamonds, and the unilateral pass with only two spades (though South will quite often have five spades). Where that's passed around to West, we expect him to protect with double, the danger notwithstanding (N/S have not established a fit, implicitly or explicitly). East has some nice honors to contribute to the cause, but only three-card suits to offer. If he boldly passes

for penalties, he may get away with that enterprising decision. On a club lead, North may finesse, and get a diamond back, East playing a second trump. After that start, North will lose at least two heart tricks and will suffer a penalty of 200 or 500 points. It's more likely that East will take a more conservative course, and bid his best three-card suit, 2♦ getting E/W to their best contract. South, with undisclosed club support, may well take the push to 3♣ and N/S will finish at least -200 if West doesn't take the push to 3♦. If South doesn't compete to 3♣ at these tables, he will more often than not go minus on defense against 2♦.

Where West opens 1♦ in third chair, planning to pass East's one-level response, his effort may get his side to 2NT (East's response to 1♦), which will be defeated if the defenders manage to cash all five of their club tricks in time. Some Norths will overcall 1♥ or 2♣ over 1♦, with the outcome turning on style, judgment, and perhaps a bit of luck after that: there will be contracts in both directions, some of them doubled.

Then there are the tables where North opens 1♥ or a weak notrump in fourth position. N/S will declare 1♠, 1NT, 2♠, 2♣, 3♣, and perhaps even 2♥, but after a weak notrump and transfer to spades, West may reopen with a takeout double, intending to convert clubs to diamonds. That will get his side to 3♦, but N/S will go plus against that.

That's an awful lot of possibilities on a simple-looking deal!

Board 27. Love All. Dealer South.

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

With four-three in the majors and a hand they would have opened as dealer, some West players will not allow their inadequate club support, diamond length, and modest strength to dissuade them from doubling South's 1♦ for takeout. Whether that is the minority position it would have been when we were learning bridge is far from clear today, but we will dare to predict that many Wests will have the patience and discipline (which we concede is in the eye of the beholder) to pass. At those tables, North will usually respond 1♠ (a few will try INT or a conservative pass), leaving East to choose an appropriate number of clubs. With a seven-card suit and limited high card strength, some will vote for a somewhat heavy preemptive 3♣ or 4♣ rather than expose themselves to bidding twice voluntarily with inadequate high-card strength, but we suspect that 2♣ will be the popular choice.

Over 2♣, South will rebid his diamonds while the price is right, leaving West to find a sensible way to advance with a remarkably good hand on the bidding. With his weak diamond spots, doubling for penalty is a questionable move, and these days it's quite common to use double to say, "I want to do something, but I have no clear direction," which happens to be a fair description of this West hand. Alternatives include cue bids of 2♠ or 3♦, 2NT and a jump to 3NT (a gamble that East's long suit will run and that there are enough quick tricks once the diamond stopper has been dislodged). 2NT feels just right to us, as it leaves East an easy retreat to 3♣ with a suit-oriented minimum, knowing West has something in diamonds; the cue-bids leave the diamond stopper in doubt and may cause East to overestimate his potential for a high club contract. Although East really doesn't have a minimum in terms of playing strength, his topless clubs may not come into play soon enough at notrump, and rebidding 3♣ would be the prudent move. As West settled for 2NT to cater to stopping in 3♣, he will pass. If North hasn't already competed to 3♦, he might do so over 3♣. With a diamond void, a seventh club, and uncertain defense, bidding 4♣ will strike East as the winning action, and so it is.

If East passes with the intention of defending 3♦ doubled, West will probably "oblige," but if declarer guesses hearts, N/S will chalk up +470 for a top. Not that N/S +110, -50, or -100 would be much better.

E/W have 10 tricks in clubs and the battle at many tables (we expect club partials to be more common than games) will be over an eleventh. If South leads a spade (as he often will if North responds 1♠), East can succeed if he wins with dummy's ten, ruffs a diamond and leads a club towards the king. If South wins the ace and accurately shifts to a heart, East's only chance is that South was dealt only one club – and if he is willing to risk holding himself to nine tricks, he can unblock the spade honors, enter dummy in clubs and discard a heart loser on the ♠Q. To come to 11 tricks after the lead of the ♣A and a heart shift, East has play double dummy, which amounts to passing the ♠10 and following the previously-described line. It's a huge parlay, of course, but in 5♣, declarer won't be so concerned about the second undertrick and may just get it right. That would make a good story and we hope someone can tell it. If South thinks the ace of diamonds is a good opening lead against 5♣, East gets a discard on the diamond king and will make his contract in comfort (let's not think about the overtrick). A heart lead and continuation holds club contracts to 10 tricks legitimately, probably shortening the play significantly.

With neither side vulnerable, par on the deal is N/S 4♦ doubled, for -100, but we're willing to wager that this result will be very rare indeed.

Board 28. N/S Vul. Dealer West

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

We can see several reasons not to open 3♣ with the West hand (excellent support for the majors, strength outside the main suit, only six clubs), but at favorable vulnerability, we expect 3♣ to be a remarkably popular action; that's the nature of the modern game. Most would treat a new-suit advance as forcing, so it's dangerous for East to respond 3♠, but some will risk it in order to make it more difficult for N/S to get together in a red suit and to direct the lead in case N/S buy the contract. If East bids 3♠, South will double for takeout and West should raise to 4♠ (perhaps via an advance control bid of 4♦ or 4♥) directly rather than hope to have the opportunity later. Some North players will double 4♠ to show some values while others will pass. If North passes, South, with a questionable ♣K and so much strength in his longest suit, may not volunteer a second double, fearing a losing leave-in by North. Where North doubles 4♠, South is more likely to bid 5♦ than pass for penalty. Where East passes West's 3♣ opening, South will protect with 3♦ or 3NT. North will probably pass 3♦ and East might not reopen with 3♠; if he does, there will be further bidding (double for takeout by South, leading to 4♠ doubled or 5♦; reopening 4♦ by North, with West reopening in turn with 4♠; direct 4♠ by West ending there or in 5♦). Where South reopens with 3NT, East might double, hoping to get West to lead his shorter major or perhaps his shortest suit, which might convince South to look elsewhere, turning one or two down into +150. That's a lot of possibilities flowing from a marginal opening bid that may not be made at many tables!

After two passes, is that East hand a 1♠ opening, a weak two-bid or a three-level pre-empt? Where many would open 1♠ in first or second position, we expect 2♠ and 3♠ to be much more popular in third. South has a enough strength and the right shape to double any spade bid, but the higher openings are much more likely to convince West to get his side to 4♠. With clubs not bid, South will think more highly of his ♣K and will convert an aggressive responsive double to 5♦ more often than he will pass for

penalty; if North passes 4♠, South will probably double again, which North figures to pass.

As it happens, North's modest assets are just what South needs to make 5♦, as long as declarer plays for three-three hearts with the king onside to develop his fourth heart for a club discard from dummy. Where West has opened 3♣ or East has opened with 1♠, hoping for such a delicious lie of the heart suit would be well against the odds (the ♥K will be in the "strong" hand more often than not), but after a spade preempt declarer could count on the ♥K being right – and then he'll "only" need hearts three-three to seal the bargain.

Should N/S somehow stumble on 4♥, they will make it unless the defense is letter perfect: first, a diamond must be led; second, West must grab his trump king immediately; third, East has to get the lead in spades; fourth, East has to give West a diamond ruff, and fifth, West has to exit in clubs. South is one trick short to draw trumps, and after West's evil club shift, he has no entries to ruff two spades in hand. Thus, he only takes nine tricks.

E/W will often play the hand in a spade contract, and if they find spades they will often reach game, perhaps doubled. Most of the time the result will be win nine tricks, and if the defense slips slightly, there is potential for a tenth. Perfect defense, however, holds declarer to eight tricks. For that to happen, South has to lead hearts, say, ace and another. The king wins the second trick and a club is led, North winning the ace. He cashes the ♥Q and returns a trump, and East has to lose two more tricks. South will usually lead a high diamond, however, and then East can't be denied nine tricks. If South thinks shifting to trumps is a good idea, he will soon regret it. East wins the trick in hand and leads his club, North winning his ace. If North plays a second trump, dummy wins, a club is ruffed and a heart led towards dummy. As long as East plays for the ♥A with South and clubs three-three, he will come to 10 tricks. It doesn't help North to play a second diamond when he wins the ♣A: East will then crossruff two clubs and two diamonds, draw trumps, and lead a heart to the king.

There are two defenses to hold East to nine tricks after a diamond lead. The easiest is to shift to hearts at trick two, to build a second heart trick, but a second diamond, shortening dummy, is also good enough. If East ruffs and leads a club, North wins the trick and shifts to a low heart, South playing the ace and another. If East tries for 10 tricks in that scenario (needing both clubs and spades to divide evenly) he will hold himself to eight, while he can settle for nine tricks by means of a second diamond ruff in dummy.

Board 29. Game All. Dealer North.

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

At most tables, E/W will start, uncontested: 1♠-1NT; 2♠. With 9 HCP and a doubleton spade, West is close to raising to 3♠, but with much of his strength in minor honors, taking the low road is the indicated (in)action at Matchpoints. Here, East may lose one trick in each side-suit plus two trump tricks and, if he is really unlucky, he will run into a late club ruff also.

Suppose South puts his faith in his long suit and leads a diamond, won by North's queen. If North shifts to a club, South wins the ace and plays another. East wins the trick in dummy, loses a spade finesse to South, and sees a second diamond come back. If East sees no danger, he will win the ace and take a second spade finesse, but South wins, leads a heart to North's ace, and receives a club ruff on the way back. Arggghhhh! Please don't blame East for playing that way. Although he can practically guarantee his contract by going up with the ace of trumps on the second round, his line loses only against this particular layout, so the risk of losing a ruff is much, much lower than the risk of losing an

overtrick (when North started with queen-third of spades). If South leads a passive heart on the go, East gets rid of his diamond loser, unless North grabs his ace and shifts to diamonds. If, instead, he returns a club at Trick Two, East can discard a diamond on the ♥Q (using the ♣Q or ♦A as the entry to dummy) and take nine tricks, for a lovely +140.

Should E/W play a notrump contract, perhaps after 1♠-1NT; 2♠-2NT, it looks as if they will do well, but on two rounds of clubs, and a losing spade finesse, South can return a diamond, to North's queen, and clubs will be cleared. If West thinks it is likely that North has the ace of hearts, he may finesse in diamonds, cash the diamond ace and take another spade finesse – after which the defenders take the remaining tricks, North's hearts going on South's two high diamonds. That is a depressing four down. West will do much better – in fact make his contract – if he goes after hearts instead. North's best defense is to duck his ace twice, but if West plays the spade jack (or the ten) from dummy after that, and goes up with the ace on the diamond return, he can establish dummy's spades with the club king as an entry, without N/S being able to win more than one diamond trick. That plan looks distinctly double dummy to us, though, and the losing line of simply going after spades looks much more promising.

South's hand isn't worth a 2♦ overcall, of course, but some players believe in bidding early and often with any excuse. South won't enjoy declaring 2♦, where he will lose one spade, two hearts, three diamonds and one club. That's -200 not doubled, and some Easts will protect with a double. Where East reopens 2♦ with 2♠, West may advance with 2NT or even 3NT, both of which should go down on a club lead. However, if North respects his partner's overcall enough to lead the ♦Q, West has a fighting chance if he wins the ace and leads a heart. To defeat 3NT legitimately in this variation, North must take the ♥A and shift to a spade, covered by the jack and queen. And even if North finds that play, South must cash the ♦K and the ♣A, then exit in clubs. After that diabolical defense, West has to lose one more

trick. Should any N/S pair find that precise line of defense against that obscure contract after that obscure overcall, they will have quite a story to tell their grandchildren.

Board 30. Love All. Dealer East.

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

One of the reasons we're not inclined to open light with length in both majors is that such hands can usually be shown conveniently later without overstating the strength, and in a competitive auction, opener often won't be able to risk showing his second suit after opening. Furthermore, responder tends to bid aggressively when a major-suit fit is found while he won't hold back with an opening bid of his own when then there is no eight-card major fit; in both cases, opening will often lead to a minus position where passing initially would not. We would not open this East hand, but expect 1♥ or a Flannery 2♦/2♥ to be much more popular across the field.

Here it will be hard to turn West off short of slam with a control-rich 20-count and fitting honors in East's suits. With the poor lie in hearts, both 6♥ and 6NT have no chance, and as those will be the most common slam contracts, the E/W pairs who find a way to go plus at a lower level will score well. Although there is a successful slam available to E/W, it won't be easy to find.

If East passes, West will open 2NT or, less often, a natural 1♣. In strong-club systems East will open the bidding, so West will be deprived of the opportunity to open 1♣, a much better start for his side, leaving room for East to show a heart positive, then his shape and strength.

Once West describes his balanced hand and strength, East will think about slam. If he checks for majors, then shows his own four-five, he'll learn that West has only two hearts or heavy concentration in the minors. East has enough to make one more try over 3NT, with 6♦ the main target if East should have five diamonds or four strong ones because there may be useful club ruffs in the short hand. If East goes past 3NT, his best move is 4♦, depicting 4=5=4=0 or 4=5=3=1, and because of his initial pass, East can't be much stronger than he is.

West's first instinct will be to sign off at 4NT as there is no eight-card fit, but if he thinks his club holding too tenuous for such a high notrump contract, he will think seriously about four of a major on the marked seven-card trump contract, choosing between the five-two 4♥ and the four-three 4♣.

Against 4NT, the ♣K is North's best start on the lie of the cards, but if West has AJ10 of clubs, a live possibility when he chooses 4NT knowing of East's shortage, North will probably prefer to avoid that dangerous lead and will try the safe ♦10 instead. West will win and play on hearts, but South gets in and leads a club through. If West goes up with the ♣A to try for 12 tricks when the remaining hearts are divided evenly, he will go down one in 4NT unless he guesses to play North for the ♠J before releasing the ♦A. If he ducks the club return, he no longer can derive maximum benefit from a three-three heart break, but he will emerge with 10 tricks without having to guess spades, so 4NT is in jeopardy at this form of scoring. It may be that playing notrump with ace-ten fifth opposite a singleton isn't such a good idea, after all.

Should West try 4♥ over 4♦, he will take 10 or 11 tricks if East does not convert to 4NT on the strength of his singleton honor in clubs and maximum point count. Suppose West, in 4♥ after a transfer or Smolen sequence, gets a high club lead to the ace, and plays ♥A, heart to the jack. South wins and plays a second club, ruffed in dummy. If declarer cashes the ♥K, the result on the deal depends on the declarer's ability to neutralize the ♠J: +420 or +450.

But should West opt for 4♠, he will love his decision, as in that strain, 12 tricks are there for the taking. The reason why spades is the better trump suit, though both suits break four-two with the key honors with the enemy length, is that if the more “balanced” suit -- the four-three spades -- are trumps, West can play on cross-ruff lines. In hearts, he can take ruffs only in the long hand. On a passive diamond lead against 4♠, declarer can ruff two club losers low in East, cashing all his red-suit winners en route. When declarer cross-ruffs two hearts and a club with high trumps, North has been forced to under-ruff twice, and is down to jack-low of trumps with the East and West hands reduced to the singleton ten of trumps opposite the singleton nine accompanied by one plain-suit card. By leading an off-suit and trumping in the other hand declarer must take a twelfth trick. Pretty!

As reaching spades will be an infrequent achievement, E/W needn't bid 6♠ (and shouldn't) in order to get a great score. It's interesting to note that if one of North's clubs were a spade declarer still comes to 12 tricks despite the five-one break in trumps.

Board 31. N/S Vul. Dealer South.

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

With N/S holding 26 HCP, two balanced hands and no eight-card major suit fit, this deal offers the potential to be everyone's 3NT, with the opening lead playing a crucial role in the outcome.

Weak notrumpers will roll into 3NT on a simple Stayman sequence, revealing only that North has at least one undisclosed major,

but at other tables South will open 1♣ or a Precision 1♦. After 1♣-Pass-1♥-Pass, the four-trump raisers will have to live with a INT rebid (2♣ would show at least six and would be a very poor choice with this balanced minimum), but in more flexible partnerships, South can raise to 2♥, judging his two low diamonds and suit-oriented hand more suitable for a three-trump raise.

North will raise a INT rebid to 3NT without much concern, but South's raise to 2♥ will not clarify the strain issue and North will probe with 3♣ (where that is forcing), 3♦, or perhaps an artificial 2♠ or 2NT. 3♣ will get a stopper-showing 3♠ from South, and if North expects diamond shortness for that sequence, he will head for 5♣ or 6♣. If South might have two or three low diamonds, however, North may try 3NT. A problem with that scientific sequence is that it will be attractive for E/W to find the best opening lead of a diamond, and after that start, declarer can't be sure of nine tricks. Suppose he ducks his ace twice, then plays on hearts. If he crosses in clubs to lead to the ♥Q, East might take the ace, cash his diamond and exit with the ♠8, forcing declarer to choose between the spade and heart finesses, and he'll go down if he chooses the wrong one. If declarer plays hearts the other way (low to the king) or finesses in spades, he will take nine tricks. And if he is allowed to sneak a heart trick through East, he can take 10 tricks by taking the spade finesse.

Where South declares 3NT, West, with no entries to the long spade suit, is likely to lead a diamond from his jack-high sequence, combining safety with modest aggression, holding declarer to +400 unless he can sneak past the ace of hearts.

In clubs, N/S have an unavoidable diamond loser on the natural diamond lead from either side, and so will need the ♠K be onside. Had trumps been three-one declarer would have been able to eliminate the black suits, discarding North's third diamond on the ♠10, and exit with a diamond, forcing the defense to break hearts or yield a vital ruff-and discard. With trumps

four-nil, the fate of 5♣ turns on declarer's ability to guess the location of the ♥J. With the trump length in East, he will probably play West for more hearts than East and therefore place him with the crucial card, which works well on this layout.

The delicate four-three 4♥ will be N/S's choice at some tables, and it might make, although it is tricky to play, and with North declarer East can defeat it with a club lead, West ruffing to return a diamond. East can win the first trump and give West a second ruff.

So far we've only considered uncontested auctions, but for many pairs, a weak jump overcall isn't what it once was, and some brave West players will surely risk 2♠ over South's 1♣. If North doubles (negative) and South is given the opportunity to bid 2NT, West will know spades offer no future in notrump (and will lead the ♦J instead), but if East takes his partner seriously and either redoubles (to show a spade honor) or raises to 3♠, West may not find the best opening lead against 3NT. If that happens, realists will blame the loose weak jump overcall for the bad result, not that this will stop them from doing the same next time.

The weak jump overcall could show a profit, however, if it results in E/W saving in 4♠, or if N/S stop to double 3♠ in the appropriate scenario. As N/S can take only seven tricks against a spade contract, they will score badly for +300 or +500 with at least +600 available to them in clubs or notrump. Although there will be some who fare even worse by going down in game, there won't be many.

Board 32. E/W Vul. Dealer West

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

N/S have 25 HCP but all they can make is +90 in either 1NT or 2♦. Because of the spade flaw, even 2NT is too high; and if N/S climb to 3♦, three rounds of spades will promote a third trump trick for East.

Although it would appear that 3♦ must fail if the defense leads three rounds of spades later in the play, that isn't so at double dummy. On a heart or a club lead, North can cash his six tricks in those suits and then exit in spades. He ruffs the third spade and is over-ruffed, and East's only safe exit is his last heart, but declarer ruffs in hand and leads a low diamond towards the jack, endplaying East when he wins an honor. There's no clue that points to declarer playing that way, of course.

The problem with the deal for N/S is judging to stop that low. If North opens 1NT, 15-17 HCP, South should pass with a junky 4333 eight-count and no honors in his only four-card suit. Some will invite game, however, and North has a straightforward acceptance.

If 3NT is reached via the equivalent of 1NT-2NT; 3NT, East may decide a passive lead is in order and start with a heart. Declarer's only hope is that the defenders can't (or won't) cash more than three spade tricks and that diamonds can be established with only one loser. He may try the nine of diamonds from hand, hoping that East has a doubleton including the ten. His plan is to let the nine run if East follows low, intending to lead the jack on the second round, catering to king-queen-low in West; and if East plays an honor on the first diamond lead, South can again lead the jack on the second round to smother the ten, securing four tricks when East started with honor-ten doubleton. If East covers the nine with the ten and the jack loses to an honor, declarer will have to guess whether to play the ace or finesse the eight on the next round, declarer judging whether the East player at his table would be up to playing the ten from ten-low or honor-ten doubleton. Here, declarer has no winning play in diamonds, and even if East doesn't shift to spades after winning a diamond trick, declarer still has only seven tricks. With a strong four-card diamond suit, however, East may well lead the king or

queen of diamonds (unless North has bid the suit). If declarer wins and plays a second diamond, he will get an eighth trick with the $\diamond J$ but will still go down in 3NT if East doesn't find the spade shift; the extra trick will make a difference in the scoring, however. If North, fearing a spade switch, attacks the suit himself by leading the eight from hand at Trick Two (an imaginative shot), East must play "second hand high" to defeat 3NT. If not, the spades are blocked, and North has time to knock out East's two diamond winners.

After the lead of a diamond honor to the ace and a diamond towards the jack, East winning, West would like to encourage a spade switch without discarding a potential winner in the suit. Several popular signaling methods should work well here: for example, a Lavinthal signaler would discard the $\heartsuit 10$, a high discard signaling interest in the higher of the two remaining suits, while a Roman signaler would also discard the $\heartsuit 10$, a high even card indicating interest in the higher of the two remaining suits. Using ordinary methods, however, West can discard a low heart or a low club to discourage a switch to that suit, but East won't know which of the other two suits his partner prefers. Shifting to the $\spadesuit A$ in that scenario could work very badly.

Board 33. Love All. Dealer North.

	\spadesuit K 8 2	
	\heartsuit A K 10 5	
	\diamond J	
	\clubsuit K 10 9 8 4	
\spadesuit Q J 7 5		\spadesuit A 10 3
\heartsuit 7 6 3		\heartsuit Q 8 4
\diamond 6 5		\diamond 9 7 4 3 2
\clubsuit J 7 3 2		\clubsuit A 5
	\spadesuit 9 6 4	
	\heartsuit J 9 2	
	\diamond A K Q 10 8	
	\clubsuit Q 6	

After an ordinary start like $1\clubsuit-1\diamond; 1\heartsuit$, South will use fourth-suit forcing ($1\spadesuit$ or $2\spadesuit$, depending on the partnership's agreements) and the contract will nearly always be 3NT, played by North after he bids the cheapest number of notrump over South's spade bid. Although spades are more-or-less "unbid,"

East will probably save his $\spadesuit A$ to capture an honor and will prefer to lead his longest suit. A diamond lead gives North a real problem, because it cuts the link between declarer and dummy. When the queen of clubs is an entry, it's fine to win the lead in hand and lead a club up, but if North plays that way and the $\spadesuit A$ lies over the queen of clubs, he may never reach dummy's diamond winners. However, winning the trick in dummy and proceeding to cash diamond winners creates a different set of issues for declarer: he will have trouble finding safe discards, and by eating his $\diamond J$ he will establish East's long nine.

So, perhaps the best shot is to win the lead in hand and start on clubs, hoping to find a friendly layout in that suit. If East plays second hand low (the best defense), North must guess how many diamonds to cash and which cards to discard on those diamond winners. When the $\clubsuit Q$ holds, declarer believes he knows who holds the $\spadesuit A$, but with a club, five diamonds and two hearts, still needs a ninth trick, and can play West for the $\clubsuit J$, the $\heartsuit Q$, or the $\spadesuit A$ to find it. Declarer's best move at Trick Three in this scenario is to pass the $\heartsuit 9$: if it loses, the $\heartsuit J$ is an entry and he will take at least nine tricks, and if the $\heartsuit 9$ holds, declarer can cash the diamonds, discarding a spade and three clubs, repeat the heart finesse for 10 tricks, and exit with the $\clubsuit K$, hoping for an eleventh if East started with ace-low of clubs and the $\spadesuit A$, which happens to be the position in the black suits on this deal. Here, East wins the $\heartsuit Q$ (ducking smoothly could lead to a very pretty ending) and must avoid the spade switch, which would hand declarer his 10th trick. On a passive return, declarer can't cash his fourth heart comfortably and leave himself the possibility of a black-suit play from dummy as he needs to use the $\heartsuit J$ to reach the diamond winners. However, if on the high diamonds, he discards a spade and three clubs, East can't get out of his own way. If declarer guesses the ending correctly, he can (indeed) take his hearts and exit with the $\clubsuit K$ to collect the $\spadesuit K$ in the end for a tenth trick. We can envision many different lines of play, some of them unsuccessful, and in practice it might work fairly well for the defense to lead

spades on the go, giving declarer his king; if he overtakes the $\diamond J$ and takes the heart finesse, for example, he will go down, perhaps more than one.

Should South become declarer in 3NT, West is likely to lead a spade. If he chooses a low one, South can duck, keeping the protected king in dummy. Then, he can come to nine tricks by playing on clubs. If West leads a spade honor, South can still make the contract if he ducks spade twice (which he is unlikely to do), as East has both black aces. A particularly obscure club lead by West, with East ducking dummy's ten, could lead to another bizarre ending in which declarer must guess the precise position to get home, but we're getting a joint and several headache thinking about all the possibilities. We suspect that this deal caused the players at least as much pain!

Board 34. N/S Vul. Dealer East.

<p>♠ Q 10 3 ♥ 8 2 ♦ Q 2 ♣ Q 9 8 7 6 4</p> <p>♠ 9 2 ♥ 9 6 3 ♦ A K 8 7 5 4 ♣ J 2</p>	<p>♠ K 8 7 6 4 ♥ Q 7 5 4 ♦ 10 ♣ A K 5</p> <p>♠ A J 5 ♥ A K J 10 ♦ J 9 6 3 ♣ 10 3</p>
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Over East's $1\spadesuit$ opening, South will have to choose between an under-strength INT, a flawed (weak doubleton in an unbid suit) takeout double, and the purist's pass.

Matchpoint sharks will tell you that you don't win many Pairs tournaments unless you are active in the bidding, and for them it's perfectly fine – maybe even mandatory – to take some action with the South hand. The $\spadesuit J$, the $\heartsuit 10$ and the $\diamond 9$ add value to South's raw point count, so INT would be the choice of many. And the strong heart suit would be an excuse for others to double, the best plan (short of an imaginative $2\heartsuit$ overcall) to bring a heart contract into focus. Hardly anyone worries about clubs!

If South passes, West will respond INT (or perhaps a preemptive $3\diamond$ or a light $2\diamond$) and East will rebid $2\heartsuit$. At that stage, South may like his decision not to join the party, even more so if West decides to take a preference by passing. Most Wests will consider that too committal and will opt for $3\diamond$ or a simple preference to $2\clubsuit$ (because of the poor intermediates in diamonds). The advantage to $2\clubsuit$ is that it leaves East the most room to finish describing his hand when he has maximum values unsuitable for a game-forcing jump-shift rebid. Here, $2\clubsuit$ will end the auction.

If South tries INT over $1\spadesuit$, West will probably compete with $2\diamond$, though some will double or (perhaps better) pass, hoping to record some vulnerable undertricks if INT is passed out. North will compete to $3\clubsuit$ over $2\diamond$, but will choose between pass and getting his side to $3\clubsuit$ if West doubles or passes.

Where South doubles $1\spadesuit$ for takeout, West will pass, bid (or transfer to) $2\diamond$, or try INT. North will certainly bid clubs at the two level, but some might not commit to $3\clubsuit$ over $2\diamond$. Where West bids INT and protects with $2\diamond$ over North's $2\clubsuit$, not every North will go on to $3\clubsuit$, with poor holdings for offense in both the opponents' suits. Unless East recklessly bids again, the final contracts at these tables will be $2\diamond$ by West and $2\clubsuit$ or $3\clubsuit$ by North.

If South leads a top heart against $2\clubsuit$ (by no means an automatic choice), he will know he can give North a heart ruff and a likely over-ruff to set the contract, but as he has natural heart tricks, he may not be so keen to waste any of North's trumps, and he may well shift, probably to a diamond. Declarer discards heart on the second diamond, and plays three rounds of clubs. Whether South ruffs in front of dummy with the jack or discards, it won't matter; East will come to seven tricks in one way or another for -50, which is one trick more than East would usually manage in hearts (-100). If E/W buy the contract in diamonds, the defenders can win five major suit tricks and two diamond tricks for -100 in $2\diamond$, or -150 in $3\diamond$.

With all finesses working for N/S, $3\clubsuit$ is cold

their way, for +110, and so is 2NT, for +120, and if West leads a low diamond, South can take nine tricks at notrump: he wins the trick in hand and passes the ♣10, East doing best to duck. East wins the club continuation and returns a heart; if South finesses, then plays hearts from the top, East will be used twice as a stepping stone to dummy, once to establish the clubs, and once to cash them. There are some interesting variations, including one in which East sacrifices his heart trick by dropping the queen under a high honor. We can hope that the battle for that ninth trick in notrump will produce some opportunities for special play, which will lead to some entertaining post-mortems.

With N/S due to go plus on this one, small minuses for E/W will be particularly good, and N/S might have to score at least +120 to do well.

Board 35. E/W Vul. Dealer South.

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

Is North's hand strong enough to force to game if the bidding (in standard systems) starts 1♥-1♠; 2NT (18-19 HCP), or is it better to sign off in 3♠ (if that is possible in the system)?

Here, N/S take no less than 11 tricks in spades as South, minimum in high cards, has a fitting hand with "perfect" minor-suit holdings and the ♥K is onside. Give him king-third of spades instead, and N/S may make a slam (if especially lucky). But, as many other South hands will make 4♠ a bad contract, the correct answer to the question above is that it's wrong both to force to game and to sign off; the best solution is to invite game. The reason we can say this with confidence is that we ran a computer simulation to gather more evidence. We were

not surprised that the simulation indicated that it was a "clear" toss-up between 3♠ and 4♠, and that only opener could make a wise decision about level.

In straightforward natural methods, there is no pure game try sequence available in auctions of this type, so North has to decide whether to go low or take an optimistic stance. For pairs using the Wolff signoff, North can bid 3♣ to puppet to 3♦, then bid 3♠ as an intended sign-off. If South is allowed to overrule North's decision with a maximum for play in responder's major, the problem has a viable solution. The issue is complicated further if N/S favor very light responses, particularly with a long major (and do not use weak jump responses), as some of South's "acceptance" hands won't offer a play for game if North is terribly weak.

Here, the play in spades is straightforward, declarer knocking out the trump honors and taking the heart finesse for eleven tricks.

With only two stoppers in each minor suit and no ruff in the South hand, notrump will play worse than spades. If West finds the diamond lead, and East's spade king is saved as a late entry, South only gets eight tricks. On a club lead, he will make 3NT, but his nine tricks and +400 will be worse than the +450 recorded at other tables. The N/S pairs who languish in 3♠ for +200 will have to hope that many of their colleagues are equally pessimistic and that there are plenty of Wests who find the right defense against a surprisingly high number of 3NT contracts.

Board 36. Game All. Dealer West.

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

Though some South players will pass after East

opens 1♦ in third position, we expect many more of them to risk a vulnerable 1♠ overall, even facing a passed partner. That will set a familiar problem for Wests playing standard systems: a negative double is expected to deliver at least four hearts, a diamond raise at least four diamonds, a free bid in clubs at least five of those (and a better hand), and 1NT at least some hope for a second stopper (ace-third is particularly dangerous as it's anti-positional and can easily destroy the value of some normally useful East holdings like queen-third or king-jack doubleton). In a weak-notrump system, West can afford to raise to 2♦ as East will have an unbalanced hand with diamonds, or at least a strong notrump when he's balanced and won't be in a silly contract if he passes 2♦ or moves forward with 2NT or a suit bid; and he can afford to double for the same reasons – indeed, some weak notrumpers treat this double as card-showing with no specific requirements for heart length.

We expect 1NT to be the popular choice and this action that may well convince North that 2♠ would be more prudent than a preemptive jump raise to 3♠. East has enough for 3NT, but if he wants to propose 5♦ as an alternative he might double, bid 3♠, or even 3♦ or 2NT (where his partnership uses a version of Good/Bad or Bad/Good 2NT). If East shies away from notrump, West should seriously consider doing so also: he has only one stopper in the enemy suit, some fit for diamonds, and three potentially useful honor cards. Still, we expect that after these first four bids 3NT will be the final contract much more often than not. If E/W find diamonds, it may not be essential to reach game to score well, as there will be many pairs in their direction going down in 3NT.

Where West competes, instead, with an improvised Negative Double (intending to pass a 2♥ rebid by East as a hedge of sorts), North is far more likely to bid 3♠ than 2♠. Over the gentle 2♠, East will try an extended responsive double (extra values, takeout, fewer than four hearts but usually three), a 3♠ cue bid, or 3♦/2NT (as described in the preceding paragraph). As West will have an as-yet-not-shown spade stopper, he might bid or suggest

notrump, but there is certainly potential for these E/W pairs to reach 5♦ instead. If West can show values with a simple 3♦ (where 2NT would be a variation of Lebensohl for weaker hands), the bidding might continue: 3♠ (or 3♥) by East, 3NT by West. If West does not make a natural bid in notrump at his second turn, East might simply insist on diamonds, as he needs some help in diamonds, a spade stopper and another fast trick for 3NT.

If North jump-raises to 3♠ and East doubles as his most flexible move, West may sit for it, hoping to score +200 against a part-score or +800 against a game. N/S can take seven tricks in spades, so E/W would get +500, which should be a fine result; 5♦ won't be reached that often and 3NT will fail more often than it will make. Even if South doesn't overcall, North may lead a spade against 3NT and a low club lead will still defeat 3NT as South can win and switch to spades. The ♣J, however, might be fatal: declarer ducks in dummy; South takes the ♣A to attack spades; declarer wins, finesses the ♣9, tests diamonds, cashes the ♣K, comes to the ♥K, cashes the ♣Q, and finesses the ♥J for +600.

That's it for this year. We look forward to seeing you and your friends in 2008, wherever you are!

Commentator:s

Eric Kokish & Anders Wigren

Eric Kokish married Beverly Kraft, his childhood sweetheart, in 1986.

Son Matthew, two dogs: Lady (Golden Retriever) and Jackie Robinson (Black Labrador); Kitten - called Kitten!

Residence: Toronto

Eric learned bridge at High School and has been fascinated by the game ever since. He has made his mark on bridge in several areas. He served in administration, as president of Unit 151 (Montreal); as District I judiciary chairman in the Seventies and Eighties, as a Canadian Bridge Federation board member and as a member of the ACBL Goodwill Committee.

Eric is a former editor of the Unit 151 newsletter, author of a weekly bridge column in the Montreal Gazette from 1977 to 1997, has been a principal contributor to most world championship books since 1979, directs the Master Solvers Club and Challenge the Champs for the Bridge World magazine, has been editor of the World Bridge News since 1994 and has contributed to bridge magazines and bulletins around the world as well as doing VuGraph commentary at many World and International events.

Kokish is also the author of several conventions, including the Kokish Relay and the Montreal Relay. In 1980, he won a Bols Brilliancy prize and the ROMEX award for the best bid hand of the year.

Although he has not played frequently of late, Kokish is still among the top all-time Canadian players. He has won two North American championships — the Vanderbilt Knockout Teams and the Men's Board-a-Match Teams. He has earned two silver medals in international play — in the World Open Pairs in 1978 and the Bermuda Bowl in 1995 and has finished third three times in the Rosenblum Cup.

As a coach, Kokish has earned a reputation as one of the best. His latest success was as coach of the Nick Nickell squad, which won the 2000 Bermuda Bowl in Bermuda and the 2003 Bermuda Bowl in Monaco. In the past year Eric has coached the Russian and Chinese teams and members of the Egyptian team and this year is coaching teams and pairs using the excellent play records from Bridge Base Online, which provide for a whole new and effective coaching environment.

In 1997, after several working visits to Indonesia, he was invited by the Indonesian government to coach the national teams in Jakarta, following which he and Beverly settled in Toronto.

Anders Wirgren, of Limhamn, Sweden was born in 1951, is married and has three children (two girls, 14 and 12, a boy 10). He started as a promising chess player, winning the Swedish championship for juniors in 1968, but took up bridge a few years later, eventually making that his favorite pastime. Today, two players have won the Swedish championship in both chess and bridge. Anders is one of them (chess: three

titles, bridge: eight titles).

Together with Mats Nilslund and Magnus Lindkvist, Anders started Scania Bridgekonsult in 1986, a Swedish publishing house, specializing in bridge literature. Since 1998, Anders is running the company by himself. So far, Scania Bridgekonsult has published 19 book titles (five of them in English), and Anders has been author or co-author of nine of them. He has also written two chess books and one book in collaboration with Mike Lawrence: *I Fought the Law of Total Tricks* (a critical study of the so popular *Law of Total Tricks*). Scania Bridgekonsult is found on the net on <http://www.scaniabridge.com>

Anders has worked full time with bridge for the past 25 years, writing weekly columns for many different Swedish newspapers during that time. He also writes for the two Swedish magazines *Bridgetidningen* (where he is co-editor) and *Bridge* (the membership magazine of the Swedish bridge federation). He often contributes to international magazines like *The Bridge World* and *Bridge Today*, and has twice won the International Bridge Academy's award "Best Theoretical Article of the Year".

Other interests besides bridge (and chess) are literature, history, philosophy (which he studied at the University) and music. He used to play the classical guitar in younger days, and still loves the fragile tone of the instrument. In the classical genre, Bach and Ravel are some of the favourites, while Bob Dylan and Leo Kottke are on top of the modern list. His wife and children are all musically talented, so it would be possible to give a family concert with piano, flute, guitar, cello and drums.

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