

ACBL-wide International Fund Game #1 – Feb. 3, 2018 – Set 218024

Bd: 1 ♠ A Q 3 2
 Dlr: North ♥ Q 10 5
 Vul: None ♦ 5 2
 ♣ 10 9 8 2
 ♠ 9 6 ♠ 7 5 4
 ♥ A 7 4 3 2 ♥ 8
 ♦ A K 9 4 ♦ J 10 8
 ♣ K J ♣ Q 7 6 5 4 3
 ♠ K J 10 8
 ♥ K J 9 6
 ♦ Q 7 6 3
 ♣ A

After two passes, South will open 1♦, hoping for a major-suit response. West overcalls 1♥, and North can double, showing four spades — and implying club length or diamond support, hence a place to play if South can't bid spades. (A 1♠ bid by North would promise five or more.) Then South should jump to 2♠, "raising" the suit North's double showed. True, South's heart holding is discouraging, but if he bid only 1♠, he would in our opinion

show a hand such as KJ8,986,K763,AQ4. If South plays at 2♠, West will lead a high diamond. He can then do well to shift to the ♥A and a low heart, ruffed by East, and get back in with a high diamond to give East a second ruff, holding South to eight tricks. Without that defense, South can draw trumps and win nine tricks, and N/S will score well for +140.

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

Some Souths will open a weak 2♦, a questionable action with a broken suit and good three-card spade support, and with one opponent having passed. North may respond 2NT to hear more. When South rebids 3♦, North must guess whether to shoot it out at 3NT or try 5♦, which could easily be a winning contract. At other tables, South will pass in second seat, and when North opens 1NT in fourth chair, South will raise to 3NT. And the winning contract is ... 7NT! With both minor suits sitting

beautifully for declarer, he can steam home with 13 tricks. We predict N/S may score 70% of the matchpoints for +720. A few pairs will fail to reach game or play at diamonds. At one or two tables, N/S may stretch to a slam, leaving E/W to mumble about their own remarkable bad luck.

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

At matchpoint scoring, a mundane partscore deal can swing as many matchpoints as a grand slam. At many tables, N/S will be +110: When North opens 1NT, South will transfer to 2♥, and North's conversion will be passed out. North will lose a trump, two spades and two diamonds. But at some tables, South may pass 1NT, which could be a winning action if North has poor hearts and a good five-card minor as a source of tricks. Then E/W will be +100 if they find the best defense and +50 even if they

start with three rounds of spades. At other tables, West may double South's 2♦ transfer response, and East can compete with 3♦. Then North will be tempted to try 3♥; to salvage a plus score, he must judge well to let 3♦ play. As in many partscore deals, any pair with a plus score will win some matchpoints.

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

South's only chance to pick up the hearts is to lead the queen and find East with the bare jack, but since East will have opened the bidding, South may decline that play even if he spots it. If South does find the winning heart play, he can take at least nine tricks at notrump but not nine at hearts. If East opens 1♣ in third seat, some Souths will overcall 1NT, shelving the ragged hearts. At some tables, 1NT will be passed out, and South may do well

in the play when West picks a spade lead. Other Souths will overcall 1♥, and after 1♠ from West, North can raise to 2♥. Say West leads the ♣9 against a heart partial. South wins and leads the ♥Q — king, ace, jack — but he has no quick re-entry to his hand to lead the ♥8, and E/W are sure of five tricks. We think N/S may need +120 for a good matchpoint result.

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

Analysis by Frank Stewart

A 1♦ opening by North will silence East, and we think most Souths will risk 1♥, averse to the chance of leaving North to rot at 1♦, vulnerable. Then light overcallers will try 1♠ as West, and North will raise to 2♥. East, with the best hand at the table, may feel compelled to do something; perhaps he might bid 2♠ or try an "action" double. At tables where South passes 1♦, West can balance with 1♠, and East may launch out into notrump. As it happens, nobody can make much of anything. South will struggle to

win eight tricks at hearts. West can ease home at 2♠. East can take seven tricks at 1NT — perhaps more if he finesses in spades, North ducks deceptively, trying to shut out dummy's suit, and East plays him for the king due to his opening bid. Plus scores on this awkward deal will earn good matchpoint results.

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

If E/W's auction starts 1♦, 1♥-1♠, West can jump to 2NT, invitational, or take an aggressive view and bid 3NT because of his good intermediate spot cards in the red suits and his ♣10, which will provide a second stopper if East has as much as J-x. Even if West settles for 2NT, East is likely to raise with his 14 high-card points and two 10s. If North leads the ♣Q, West can win with the king, cash the ♥AK, concede a heart to South's queen, win the club return and take the good

heart and four diamond tricks, making three. Expect +600 to E/W to be a common and about average result, however, a few pairs will come home with +630 when East is declarer at 3NT and N/S mismanage the defense.

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

South will usually get things going with 1♠; his spade spots are attractive. West has options. To double with a two-suited hand is ill-advised; West should start to show his suits. He can overcall 2♥ or try 2♠, a Michaels cuebid to show length in hearts and a minor. In any case, North is likely to commit to 4♠, and from there, the players' judgment will take over. At some tables, E/W will compete to 5♦, and it will be hard for N/S to push on to 5♠ since their values are skimpy. At

5♦ doubled, E/W will be -500 for what may be a good matchpoint result since some N/Ss will buy the contract at 4♠. At a few tables, N/S will push on to 5♠ over 5♦ and will be relieved when South ruffs two diamonds in dummy and wins a finesse in trumps to score +650.

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

Some Norths will open 4♠, shutting out everybody. Since North has length in the boss suit and 11 points in high cards, and one opponent has passed. North should avoid a preempt and instead open 1♠. Then East can enter with a 2♥ overcall or a Michaels cuebid to show hearts and a minor (as on Board 7). South has enough to drive to game: He could double East's 2♠ cuebid to show strength or jump to 3NT over 2♥ by East, but the contract should be 4♠ by North again. If East

leads a club, North can win, draw trumps and lead a heart. East will grab his ace and must cash his ♦A, lest it go away on the ♥K. West will also get a club trick to hold North to +420. We doubt that any E/Ws will attempt a 5♦ sacrifice, but any who do will regret it; they will be -500 for a matchpoint zero.

Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

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

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

♠ A J 2
 ♥ 10 4
 ♦ 7 6 4 3
 ♣ J 8 6 4

When North opens 1♣, South will scrape up 1♦ or raise to 2♣, and then West will face the task of getting his side to what turns out to be a good game. Over any call by South, West may settle for a 1♥ or 2♥ overcall; no other action is more attractive. Then North may act again, giving West another chance to show strength with a diamond bid or an aggressive jump to 3♥, and if West bids strongly, East will do well to appreciate the value of his ♥Q — and maybe his diamond holding as well —

and cooperate. A few Wests will bull into 4♥ on their own. Against 4♥, North will cash a high club and may shift to a spade, won by South's ace. Then West can place North with the ♦K for his opening bid and bang down the ♦A with a happy result. E/Ws who are +650 will score almost all the matchpoints.

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

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

♠ K J
 ♥ Q 7 4
 ♦ A J 9 5
 ♣ J 9 7 3

South may open 1♦, though his hand looks more like a barren assortment of high cards than an opening bid. If West doubles, East may pass for penalty — a shaky decision with that diamond holding — and the result may be down one. Still, E/W may win some matchpoints for +200. If instead West starts with a 1♠ overcall, East will raise, and West may bid 4♠; and at tables where South doesn't open, East will lift West's 1♠ opening bid to 2♠, and West may jump to game.

Alas, 4♠ should go down. A few pairs will reach 3NT, maybe via 1♠-2♠, 3♣-3♦, 3NT-Pass; or after South opens 1♦, West doubles and East responds 1NT. That game is cold with East as declarer. If West is declarer, North will lead a low heart, and when dummy follows with the six, South prevails only with the difficult play of the seven.

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

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

♠ J 9 3
 ♥ K 7 3
 ♦ A K J 7
 ♣ A J 2

When South opens 1NT, some Norths will make a disciplined pass. Then East may pass also, maybe because his methods will make it inconvenient to show clubs. If West leads a spade, the defense can hold South to seven tricks, +90. At other tables, North will be willing to respond 2♣, planning to pass any call by South; South will often have a four-card major and won't often have 3-3-2-5 pattern. If East doubles to show clubs, some N/Ss may have an agreement about the meaning of 2♦ by South as opposed to a

pass. If South ends up playing at a diamond partial, he can take nine tricks on any lead except a club. (Even if West leads a low(!) spade, leading to a third-round ruff, South can succeed at double dummy by endplaying West in trumps.) E/W can get a top if East plays at 3♣ and is +110 after guessing the trump position.

Bd: 12 ♠ 10 7 4
 Dlr: West ♥ K 10 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ A K 10 8
 ♣ Q 9 8

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

♠ Q 8 6
 ♥ J 8 5 2
 ♦ 9 5 2
 ♣ A K 7

North will usually open 1♦, South responds 1♥ and West, a passed hand, can trade on the vulnerability to try 1♠. Then whether North passes to suggest a minimum or makes a "support double" to show three cards in hearts, South will bid 1NT, passed out. Against 1NT, the defense will tee off with three rounds of spades, dummy's 10 winning. South can come to his ♣A, lead a heart to the 10, return to the ♣K and lead a second heart.

West can win and take two spades, and South has the rest. If South errs by attacking the diamonds, he sets up a third diamond trick but gives the defense a sixth winner in the process. We expect +120 to N/S at most tables. A few pairs may play at 2♥ for +110, and a couple of pairs may double an over-competing E/W at 2♠ for +300 for a matchpoint top.

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

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

♠ Q 5 3
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ 9 3
 ♣ A J 9 8 6 5

This board may be entertaining. If North opens 1♥, most Souths will respond 2♣. (Good luck reaching the best contract to pairs using a "two-over-one" style when South is unwilling to force to game and responds 1NT, forcing. Also, good luck to pairs using "Flannery," and North opens 2♦ to show a minimum with five hearts and four spades.) West will come in with 2♦ — or with a double if South has responded 1NT — and North might jump to 4♣ or, better, issue a slam signal with a "splinter" jump to 4♦. N/S might

reach 7♣ if South were able to cuebid his ♥A, but East can prevent that by jumping to 6♦ as an "advance save." We can't imagine the "par" result — +2210 to N/S at 7♥ — being achieved. A possible result is +1390 at 6♣. E/W may score well if they are -800 at 6♦ doubled.

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

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

♠ Q 8 6 2
 ♥ 10
 ♦ A Q 4 2
 ♣ J 8 5 3

East can open 1♦ (please, no off-shape 1NT openings when he has a sound option), West responds 1♠ and East raises to 3♠. West may suspect that East has a singleton club — East has shown a hand worth about 17 points and would open 1NT with a balanced hand in that range — but West has enough trick-taking potential to go to game. Say North leads the ♥A and another heart. (Oddly, a trump lead might be best; unless West puts up dummy's king(!), he can be defeated.) If South ruffs and cashes his ♦A next, West must guess the trump position to make his contract. But if instead South exits with a club, West can take the ♠KA, cash the ♣K, ruff a club and lead a good heart from dummy. No matter what South does, West can finish with 10 tricks. We predict that E/W will get at least a 75% result for +420.

Bd: 15 ♠ A 10 7
 Dlr: South ♥ A Q 10 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ 3 2
 ♣ A Q 10 2

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

♠ Q 5 3
 ♥ J 3 2
 ♦ A J 6
 ♣ K 8 5 3

This board should prove routine. After two passes, North will most often open 1NT, after which South has an easy raise to 3NT. East should lead the ♦K; to lead fourth-highest when he has a broken sequence is too risky at matchpoint scoring, though as it happens, East would survive that lead in this deal. North can duck the ♦K, win the next diamond with the jack — a spade shift will make no difference — lose a heart finesse to the king and end with 10 tricks, losing a spade at the end. Expect +630 at almost every table.

Bd: 16 ♠ 10 9 7
 Dlr: West ♥ A Q 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ A J 3
 ♣ A 9 8 4

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

♠ A J 2
 ♥ J 9 8 6 5 2
 ♦ K 8
 ♣ 10 6

When North opens 1NT, South can transfer with a 4♦ response and pass North's 4♥. As many pairs play, a two-level transfer followed by a jump to game would show slam interest. Many matchpoints will ride on East's opening lead. If he starts with a spade, dummy will play low, and West can win and shift to the ♣Q. North can take the ace, lead to the ♠J and pick up the trumps with a finesse, but then he must judge whether to finesse with the ♦J, making four or six depending on where the queen lies. North might settle for five on the reasoning that East might have led a passive diamond from a worthless holding. At other tables, East will lead a trump, leaving North with the same guess. But a few Easts will lead a diamond, conceding the second overtrick, and N/S will get a top for +480.

Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

Bd: 17 ♠ A 6 5 4 3
 Dlr: North ♥ 5 3
 Vul: None ♦ 9
 ♣ 10 6 4 3 2

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

♠ 10 7
 ♥ Q J 9 7 6
 ♦ J 8 4 3 2
 ♣ 7

E/W should handle this slam deal. If East opens 1♦, West should respond 1♠ despite his great strength, leaving ample room for slam investigation. An immediate jump-shift would be appropriate if West had a long, strong suit, or support for diamonds, or a good suit in a strong balanced hand. As it is, East will rebid 1NT, showing a balanced minimum, and West can get out his abacus and raise to 6NT, the best contract. If South leads the ♥Q, East can take the king and lead a spade to his jack and a second spade. The appearance of South's 10 will give him 12 easy tricks; he won't need a fourth diamond trick or a squeeze. Expect +990 to E/W at most tables.

Bd: 18 ♠ A Q J 3
 Dlr: East ♥ K 8 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ K 5
 ♣ Q J 10 7

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

♠ K 8 6 4
 ♥ 10 7
 ♦ 10 9 7 6 4
 ♣ 6 4

After two passes, most Wests will open a lightish 1♣. If E/W were vulnerable, North might pass, hoping for a juicy penalty. (For example, 1♣ might be passed out and down two.) At the actual vulnerability, most Norths will feel constrained to pursue their own contract, but if North overcalls 1NT, East can double for penalty — he has nine points and a good lead — and if all pass, the defense will win at least eight tricks, handing N/S a painful penalty and a matchpoint zero. A few Norths will overcall 1♠, and East may try 2♥, protected by his passed-hand status. If South jumps to 3♠, preemptive, despite the threatening vulnerability, E/W can be +500 again. E/Ws who play at a heart partial may score poorly even if declarer produces a winning guess in trumps for +140.

Bd: 19 ♠ 5
 Dlr: South ♥ K Q 10 6 5 4 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ 10 5
 ♣ Q 5 2

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

♠ 7 6
 ♥ 8
 ♦ 8 7 4 3
 ♣ A J 9 6 4 3

E/W are cold for 7♠ and would no doubt get there, given a free run. But these days, free runs are uncommon. At the favorable vulnerability, many Souths will blast away with a 3♣ preempt, and after West passes, North may make life miserable for East by boosting the auction to some number of clubs. Then East might retaliate by bidding 6♠, counting on his partner to deliver some help, and if West is duly impressed with his ♠A and ♦Q, he might kick the extra point. If South passes as dealer, North will open 3♥. Then East might investigate by starting with a double. West has enough to jump to 4♠, and East can reasonably bid 7♠, if not 8♠. E/Ws who overcome a preemptive barrage and register +2210 will win 80% of the matchpoints.

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

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

♠ 9 8 7 6 2
 ♥ Q 9 7 4
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ 9 5

A few Norths will open 1♦, planning a 2♣ rebid after a major-suit response. That plan is ill-advised. If E/W stay out, South will respond 1♠ and take a 2♦ preference over 2♣. His hand is far too weak to continue with 2♥, a forcing bid in a new suit, and a silly contract will result. North should open 1♣ and rebid 1NT, but alas, that plan helps only a little. South will try 2♥ next (not forcing), North's 2♠ preference will be passed out and E/W should be +200. At some tables, East will try a dubious

four-card 1♠ overcall, perhaps thinking that West, whose hand may be short in clubs, will produce spade support (a theory that has been called into question). If N/S sell out, and South leads a trump or the ♦A, N/S can go plus on defense for a good matchpoint score.

Bd: 21 ♠ K 6 3
 Dlr: North ♥ K J 9 8 6 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 10 4
 ♣ 2

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

♠ A Q 10 8 2
 ♥ Q 10 2
 ♦ Q 8
 ♣ 8 7 4

Many Norths will look past the "red" vulnerability — and their ragged suit and their three-card support for the other major — to open a weak 2♥. If South raises preemptively to 3♥, he may buy the contract. E/W should get their four top tricks, but N/S will be +140. At tables where North understandably passes as dealer, West may be left to open 1♣ in fourth seat. North can overcall 1♥, and East will support the clubs. N/S may bid as high as 3♥, but expect E/W to

Bd: 22 ♠ Q 10 8 7
 Dlr: East ♥ —
 Vul: E-W ♦ 9 4 2
 ♣ A Q 9 6 3 2

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

♠ A 4 3
 ♥ 10 5
 ♦ A J 10 6 5 3
 ♣ J 10

Some players would refuse to open a weak two-bid with two aces, but South's hand looks like a good 2♦ bid to me. Granted, I would rather the black-suit holdings were reversed. West will bid hearts, and North may put it right up to 5♦, sacrificing sooner rather than later. Then East has a tough call. His hand is not worth 5♥, especially when the ♦K is "wasted" for offense, but if he doubles 5♦, South can be +550 with best play. If West leads the ♥A, South can ruff in dummy, come to the ♦A, ruff his last heart and lead a low club from dummy. He has a path to 11 tricks whether East wins or ducks. If instead West leads his singleton club, South can still succeed; even if he ducks in dummy and West gets a ruff, South can guess how to take the rest. Our prediction? +100 to one side or the other at most tables.

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

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

♠ A 6
 ♥ A K 10 3
 ♦ Q 8 7 5
 ♣ A 8 6

The auction should be the same at most tables. South opens 1NT, and North transfers to spades and bids 3NT next, offering a choice of games. South will pass. If West leads a club, declarer can win in his hand and lead the ♠A and a low spade. West wins and leads another club, and South wins in dummy, concedes a spade and wins the next club. He has nine tricks — three spades, three clubs, two hearts and a diamond — but must decide how to go for more. If he passes the ♥9, hoping for 11 tricks, he wins nine when West takes the ♥Q and cashes the 13th club. But if South leads a diamond toward his queen, for whatever reason, he takes 10 tricks. The only opening lead to hold him to nine is a low diamond, enabling E/W to set up a second diamond trick plus two spades. N/S may score well above average for +630.

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

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

♠ Q J
 ♥ J 4 3 2
 ♦ J 4
 ♣ K Q 9 6 3

North will often open 1♦ if only for the possible lead-directing benefit, and if South responds 1♥, North will usually rebid 1NT, passed out. East is likely to lead the ♣J or ♣2, and when dummy's king wins, declarer may try a heart to his 10. When East takes the ace, he can lay down the ♠A, and when West signals encouragement, East can take his ♣A and continue spades for down one. N/S should fare no better at a contract of 2♥, losing three trump tricks, two spades and a club. They might make 2♣ if they landed there, but in reality, the only successful partscore contract would be at spades by E/W; they could take nine tricks if they found a way to enter the auction, and +140 might be an E/W top. N/S should get an above-average board if they find a way to be plus.

Analysis by Frank Stewart

Syndicated columnist, author and Bridge Bulletin contributor Frank Stewart analyzed this set of deals, directing his comments toward advancing players.

Bd: 25 ♠ 63
 Dlr: North ♥ J 8 4 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q 10 5
 ♣ A 9 6 2

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

♠ K J 10 8
 ♥ Q 7 5
 ♦ J 9 4
 ♣ K J 8

When North passes, East should avoid opening 3♠. He has a broken suit, and one opponent has passed (reducing the urgency to preempt). Moreover, East has length in the ranking suit, giving him some control over the auction, and the vulnerability is discouraging. If East passes, West will start with 1♥ in fourth position, East responds 1♠, West tries two of a minor, and East's 2♠ rebid should be passed out. West must not fight the misfit by seeking a better contract when none may exist; East's

Bd: 26 ♠ A J 10 3
 Dlr: East ♥ J 9 6
 Vul: Both ♦ 9 8 6 5
 ♣ A J

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

♠ K 7 2
 ♥ 7 4 3 2
 ♦ J 10
 ♣ K Q 5 2

Pairs using the Flannery convention will open 2♦ as West to show four spades, five hearts and minimum values. That will not be what East yearns to hear, but the convention will show a profit if he grits his teeth and bids 2♥. With the fall of the ♥J, he takes eight tricks for +110. At tables where West opens 1♥, East will respond 1NT. If that bid is forcing, West will be obliged to rebid 2♦, passed out, and the same eight tricks will come in for +90. If East's 1NT is not forcing, he may find himself

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

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

♠ J 9 2
 ♥ Q 8 2
 ♦ Q 10 9 8 6 2
 ♣ 9

Most Wests will open 1♣ in second seat (hopefully South won't even think of acting as dealer), East responds 1♥ and West raises to 2♥. Then East can jump to 4♥, but if his partnership often raises a major-suit response with three-card support, he might probe with 2♠, then go to 4♥ when West continues with 3♥, suggesting four-card support. If South leads the ♣9, North will take the A-K and lead a third club. East can make an overtrick by ruffing with the king and picking up the trumps, but he may place

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

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

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

Some Wests will eye the vulnerability and open a skinny 2♠, passed out. (It is preferred that our partners have some idea of what we hold for a weak two-bid, but styles are like noses; everyone has their own.) If North leads the ♥Q, the defense can take two hearts, a heart ruff, the ♣A and South's ♠K to hold West to +110. At tables where West prefers a disciplined first-seat pass, a few Easts may upgrade to a 1NT opening and will become declarer

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

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

♠ A J 10 4
 ♥ 9
 ♦ K 8 7
 ♣ A K 7 5 4

East, with support for the majors and two aces, will often open 1♦ in second seat. He may fear that if he passes, West may pass out the deal in fourth seat if his major-suit holdings are not attractive. South can overcall 2♣, a call with obstructive as well as constructive value. West may stretch a bit to bid 2♥, and East will raise to 3♥. Then South will do well to pass — he may be tempted to double for takeout — and West will have no reason to

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

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

♠ Q 7 6
 ♥ Q 9 5 4 2
 ♦ 10 2
 ♣ Q 9 6

go on (unless in his system his 2♥ forced to game, and East may have intended his 3♥ as forcing). It looks as if a trump lead might beat 3♥, but since North has no entry to lead a second round, West can always take nine tricks. Some E/Ws will go down at 4♥ and not many will collect a double penalty from N/S, so +140 should be a good E/W result.

Bd: 31 ♠ J 8
 Dlr: South ♥ J 8 6 3 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ A 8 4
 ♣ J 6 5

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

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

Most E/Ws will have a prosaic auction to 4♠. East will open 1NT, using a 15-to-17 range, and West will employ Stayman, locate the spade fit and bid game. No matter what South leads, East can win in dummy, lead a trump to the jack and his king, and lead a second trump. N/S get two trump tricks, and E/W are +450. A few E/Ws will miss — or not pursue — their spade fit and land at 3NT. (They do have two balanced hands, and West has poor spades and extra high-card strength, so that playing at a 4-4 fit may not gain a trick.) That might turn into a big matchpoint victory if the opening lead were a non-heart, but if South leads a low heart, the defense should win three tricks for -430, saddling E/W with a bottom.

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

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

♠ A 4
 ♥ 7 6 5 3
 ♦ A Q 4
 ♣ Q 10 7 2

East might pass his unattractive hand as dealer, but after two passes, he may ignore the adverse vulnerability to open 1♠. If South passes, West will respond 1NT and pass East's 2♥ rebid. South has a marked trump opening lead — as it happens, a club would do as well — and East should take seven tricks for down one. A few Souths will look at the friendly vulnerability and risk a double of 1♠. If West still responds 1NT, East will rebid 2♥ again, down one. But if West passes over the double, North might shoot out a penalty pass, and he should get the valuable +200 he hopes for. Other Norths will remove South's double to 1NT and play there; they should finish with seven tricks, but for only +90. E/W will enjoy a good matchpoint result if they escape for less than -100.