



# **The Celtic Nations**

## **Simultaneous Pairs**



**Fostering our Celtic links**

**Set D**

**Thur 5th - Sat 7th December 2019**

**Hosted by:-**

**Northern Ireland Bridge Union**

**Commentary by Ian Hamilton**

**Northern Ireland International**

**1**

♠ Q92  
 ♥ KJ74  
 ♦ Q8752  
 ♣ 7  
 ♠ A1087  
 ♥ AQ985  
 ♦ A  
 ♣ 1042  
 ♠ K4  
 ♥ 103  
 ♦ 96  
 ♣ KQJ9863  
 ♠ J653  
 ♥ 62  
 ♦ KJ1043  
 ♣ A5

 Dealer: North  
 Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	-	1	-
S	-	2	-	1	-
E	5	-	2	-	2
W	5	-	3	-	2

Pre-empting in second seat can be less effective than in first, there being a 50% chance it is partner inconvenienced, as here, rather than the intended opponents. Luckily, west has a pretty clear 5♣ call. It is almost certainly futile to bid a major, in the hope of finding a fit when one is clear already.

Those bidding 5♣ find that slam is on a finesse, and will perhaps be relieved that it loses. It would be quite wrong to bid 3NT, in peril on a diamond lead. Those that try this route will largely fail, so long as north leads his longest suit - and there is no reason not to.

**2**

♠ 10543  
 ♥ J10972  
 ♦ K4  
 ♣ 52  
 ♠ 97  
 ♥ AK864  
 ♦ A96  
 ♣ KJ8  
 ♠ 862  
 ♥  
 ♦ QJ10852  
 ♣ AQ107  
 ♠ AKQJ  
 ♥ Q53  
 ♦ 73  
 ♣ 9643

 Dealer: East  
 N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	1	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	4	4	1	-	2
W	4	4	1	-	2

The weak no trumpers N/S could come a cropper here, so long as east keeps his nerve. West doubles south's call, and knows what to do when north removes to hearts. Defending hearts, E/W should be able to muster six tricks for the kiss of death 200, west either getting a spade ruff or promoting a long trump via a club force.

However, I can see many easts taking out, and finding that they cannot make game in either diamonds or no trumps, though north does need to find a spade switch against the latter after winning his diamond king.

Where south opens 1♣ a penalty is not in the picture whether west overcalls 1♥ or 1NT. Some will stay in a safe diamond part-score, others could try one of the games, 5♦ the likely candidate, it being unlucky that north's only meaningful card takes the setting trick.

**3**

♠ Q9  
 ♥ A108  
 ♦ K10  
 ♣ A107652  
 ♠ A10  
 ♥ KJ763  
 ♦ 632  
 ♣ 983  
 ♠ K732  
 ♥ Q9  
 ♦ Q875  
 ♣ KQJ  
 ♠ J8654  
 ♥ 542  
 ♦ AJ94  
 ♣ 4

 Dealer: South  
 E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	1	1	3	-
S	2	1	1	3	-
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

Some norths could languish in 2♣ after north opens and rebids his suit over south's 1♠. This spot is tricky enough where the defence lead hearts, declarer needing to finesse in diamonds to establish a pitch for a heart loser, at risk of several light.

Others will rebid 1NT, and will doubtless play there. This spot is not pretty on an improbable heart lead. A diamond lead gives declarer a chance, but only if he plays spades immediately, and subsequently fells the 10. I can't see too many succeeding.

Best is where north opens a weak NT. Now a transfer sees 2♠ declared. Here, nine tricks can be made by a cross-ruff combined with a successful diamond finesse. Few will manage this, but at least some should get a plus, in this rather death-trap hand.

**4**

♠ QJ98  
 ♥ K64  
 ♦ 954  
 ♣ K98  
 ♠ K10  
 ♥ J753  
 ♦ K6  
 ♣ AQ652  
 ♠ A54  
 ♥ AQ1082  
 ♦ Q87  
 ♣ J10  
 ♠ 7632  
 ♥ 9  
 ♦ AJ1032  
 ♣ 743

 Dealer: West  
 Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	4	1	5	1	3
W	4	1	5	1	3

One would expect many to be in the heart game when west opens 1NT or 1♣ and has four card support for east's suit. A spade looks the likely lead, whoever declares.

Declarer can get to west in spades and pull trumps, before losing the club finesse. Now the defence need to grab the diamond ace or they lose it. With the club suit on view in dummy this should be clear-cut. Where west declares it might be less so, declarer sneaking twelve tricks.

**5**

♠ QJ87  
♥ K  
♦ A10984  
♣ AKQ

♠ A9  
♥ A1083  
♦ J762  
♣ J103

♠ 10632  
♥ J975  
♦ KQ53  
♣ 9

♠ K54  
♥ Q642  
♦  
♣ 876542

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	1	-	2	2
S	4	1	-	2	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

South can respond 1♥ to north's 1♦, but his worst fears come to pass when north rebids 2NT. A 3♣ signoff would be nice, but this is Checkback in most methods, asking if opener has either three hearts or four spades.

In 2NT the defence cannot set up enough red suit tricks, and declarer can guess to play for the doubleton spade king rather than for it to be onside, getting home when he gets an entry to south's clubs.

Some may to get to 3♣, scoring 130, or even 150 should west lead the spade ace, for likely the best plus. Others will end up playing in their "game-forcing" 2♠ rebid. They can scramble eight tricks on cross-ruff lines, but could easily go light.

Even 1♦ can score 70, where south elects to pass.

**6**

♠ AK105432  
♥ AQ  
♣ 9864

♠ 87  
♥ KJ864  
♦ KJ93  
♣ A7

♠ J6  
♥ AQ  
♦ 1087642  
♣ QJ5

♠ Q9  
♥ 1097532  
♦ 5  
♣ K1032

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	-	-	5	1
S	5	-	-	5	1
E	-	3	1	-	-
W	-	3	1	-	-

Many will bounce to 4♠ with north's cards over west's 1♥ opener, doubtless buying it.

The defence could get three tricks if east leads the club queen and dummy covers, west now getting a ruff. Ducking saves the day. At most tables the heart ace will be led and eleven tricks are easily made when declarer takes the percentage play in clubs, playing east for either the queen or knave, taking two finesses.

Will most record 450?

**7**

♠  
♥ A1053  
♦ A83  
♣ KQJ876

♠ KJ10875  
♥ K6  
♦ K  
♣ A1053

♠ AQ6  
♥ J82  
♦ 10964  
♣ 942

♠ 9432  
♥ Q974  
♦ QJ752  
♣

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	3	5	5	-	-
S	3	5	5	-	-
E	-	-	-	2	1
W	-	-	-	2	1

This represents a bidding challenge for N/S after west opens 1♠. Best is for north to overcall 2♣, then double at his second turn even if east has supported spades and west upped the ante. This works better than collecting 100-200 defending spades or worse, ceding 110.

As long as north forces the pace N/S should get playing in one of the red suits. Hearts look best, declarer able to ruff spades and set up clubs, losing to the ace, but ruffing the suit good. Declarer makes eleven tricks if he guesses diamonds correctly, ten otherwise.

Playing in diamonds, eleven tricks are also possible, and more likely as declarer, being forced to ruff two spades, fells the trump king, and east loses his trump trick or heart winner as dummy runs clubs through him.

**8**

♠ J7  
♥ 964  
♦ AK104  
♣ K863

♠ 98  
♥ J105  
♦ Q86  
♣ AQ1097

♠ KQ6542  
♥ AQ7  
♦ J7  
♣ 52

♠ A103  
♥ K832  
♦ 9532  
♣ J4

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	1	-	-
S	-	2	1	-	-
E	1	-	-	1	-
W	1	-	-	1	-

This looks like 2♠ by east after he opens and rebids his suit over west's 1NT or thin 2♣ response.

Where west has bid 2♣ few souths will find the winning club lead, north winning, and switching to a heart. Declarer is best to win, and try clubs, pitching a diamond. But south ruffs, cashes his heart, and plays a diamond to north. Now a fourth club promotes south's trump 10.

In theory, any other defence allows declarer to avoid a club loser, getting it away on a diamond, though in practice some may still only manage seven tricks.

9

♠ Q97542  
♥ QJ  
♦ 9  
♣ AQ42

♠ AKJ863  
♥ 10  
♦ A104  
♣ 1093

♠ 10  
♥ AK9432  
♦ KQ62  
♣ K6

♠ 8765  
♥ J8753  
♦ J875  
♣ J875

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	1	4	5	3	4
W	1	4	4	3	4

West has an interesting problem when his partner overcalls north's 1♠ with 2♥. 2NT is perhaps the best continuation, east now trying diamonds. I would imagine most will now end up in either 3NT or 4♥.

A club lead is best against 3NT. Few are likely to take the diamond 10 finesse, finishing with nine tricks when the heart honours luckily fall, recording a rather fortuitous 600.

The 6:1 4♥ is superior as usual, declarer only losing a club and a trump when south's 8 grows up, 650 scored.

Game could be missed, some wests not trusting east's vulnerable overcall, and unimpressed with both their support and poorly working side suit, known to be held on their left.

10

♠ 2  
♥ KQJ2  
♦ 10652  
♣ 9652

♠ Q7653  
♥ A43  
♦ AK  
♣ J83

♠ AJ9  
♥ 1076  
♦ Q743  
♣ AKQ

♠ K1084  
♥ 985  
♦ J98  
♣ 1074

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	3	3	3	5	3
W	3	3	3	5	3

Holding so many HCP and good stops in the shortest suit west could easily raise east's strong NT directly to game, ignoring a possible spade fit. 3NT has eight top tricks and a ninth trick can be set up in spades. 630 can result if the heart lead, or switch when south wins his spade king, is missed, a second spade ceded.

Probably most will be in the more orthodox 5:3 4♣ after either a transfer over 1NT or a Crowhurst/Checkback when east rebids his 15-16 NT over west's 1♠ response.

In 4♣ most will lose two spades and a heart, scraping home after pitching one heart loser on a diamond, but their 620 is better than 600. However, if declarer takes all his side suit winners, then leads the last diamond, south can eventually be end-played in trumps, however he defends, losing 650 and ceding a spectacular top.

11

♠ AQ654  
♥ K432  
♦ 8  
♣ 965

♠ KJ32  
♥ AQ6  
♦ KJ6  
♣ AQ7

♠ 9  
♥ 1095  
♦ 109752  
♣ K832

♠ 1087  
♥ J87  
♦ AQ43  
♣ J104

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	1	-
E	2	3	-	-	1
W	2	3	1	-	1

This could be a nip and tuck affair between the defence and west, whose 2NT opener is presumably passed out.

North may well lead a spade, declarer scoring his knave, and cashing four clubs. West's pitch on the last is critical. A diamond must be thrown, then the suit led, which seems counter-intuitive.

If a heart is pitched, south makes the diamond ace next, wins a spade, then switches to a heart. Declarer gets end-played to go one light.

Will many get this play problem right, which is similar on a passive club lead?

12

♠ Q9  
♥ K  
♦ 87532  
♣ AQ986

♠ AK7643  
♥ 96  
♦ 964  
♣ 107

♠ J1082  
♥ A32  
♦ K10  
♣ J542

♠ 5  
♥ QJ108754  
♦ AQJ  
♣ K3

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	4	4	5	-	-
S	4	4	5	-	-
E	-	-	-	2	-
W	-	-	-	2	-

West has a perfect Weak Two or Multi in spades. The former works best, east bouncing to game, north having no suitable call. East should obey the Law of Total Tricks over a Multi, bidding 3♥, pass or correct.

South certainly has enough to double 3♥, but some may not bid 5♥ over the 4♠ raise, indeed may not even double. The same positions arise where west passes, north opens 1♦, south responds 1♥ and west pre-empts with 2♠.

Those brave enough to bid 5♥ find north with some useful cards. With the diamond king onside eleven tricks are there. The 650 recorded is a great improvement on the 100-300 available defending spades.

**13**

♠ K  
♥ 1087  
♦ J9862  
♣ AJ85

♠ 1087  
♥ K9652  
♦ 103  
♣ Q102

♠ J542  
♥ AQJ4  
♦ 75  
♣ K73

♠ AQ963  
♥ 3  
♦ AKQ4  
♣ 964

Dealer: North  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	6	-	4	2
S	5	6	-	4	2
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

The power of even a little shape is demonstrated here when south's 1♠ fetches a north 1NT and south rebids 2♦. North surely has enough to raise, holding 5 card support and a working spade honour.

With 15HCP south should advance, and should get to 5♦. North might respond a passed hand 2♦ instead, but that is a distortion with a poor suit, and he will be backpedalling thereafter, but could get there.

Even on a club lead there are twelve tricks in diamonds, south's trump entries used to ruff a spade and pull trumps. North's clubs go on spades, only a heart lost.

Anyone trying 3NT on the south hand goes light on a heart lead. Even where this is missed there are only nine tricks, for a worse score than 5♦+1.

**14**

♠ A85  
♥ Q1085  
♦ J1082  
♣ 84

♠ KQJ63  
♥ 7  
♦ 974  
♣ J532

♠ 109  
♥ J64  
♦ AQ63  
♣ Q1097

♠ 742  
♥ AK932  
♦ K5  
♣ AK6

Dealer: East  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	4	1	3
S	-	1	4	1	3
E	2	-	-	-	-
W	1	-	-	-	-

Acol opens south's cards 1♥ on this offering and could well get to the 4♥ game. This makes ten tricks when a club can be ruffed in north and there proves to be no diamond guess.

By contrast, a south strong NT could well be passed out, north knowing of a maximum of 24HCP. South will be annoyed to make nine tricks with the diamond ace onside after an opening spade lead has been ducked. The 150 scored doesn't get close to 420.

System can affect results, often randomly.

**15**

♠ AKQJ1094  
♥ A87  
♦ 109  
♣ 4

♠ 8732  
♥ J52  
♦ 653  
♣ Q108

♠ 6  
♥ K9643  
♦ AKQ7  
♣ K96

♠ 5  
♥ Q10  
♦ J842  
♣ AJ7532

Dealer: South  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	1	-	4	3
S	1	1	-	4	3
E	-	-	1	-	-
W	-	-	1	-	-

Many norths will open 4♠, missing a slam unlikely opposite a passed partner. Pass and hope for a set looks best for east, any action costly.

Length signals are important here when east leads a top diamond, east needing to know many cashing diamonds there are. Many play "ace for attitude, king for count". This is ideal on this hand, east cashing two diamonds then switching.

East needs to keep his nerve when declarer pulls trumps and plays a low heart. A smooth duck will almost certainly see the 10 finessed and the contract beaten.

Will many manage it?

**16**

♠ A109732  
♥ K10542  
♦ 76  
♣ 76

♠ J6  
♥ 8  
♦ AQJ1076  
♣ J842

♠ K84  
♥ Q763  
♦ K4  
♣ A1093

♠ Q5  
♥ AJ9  
♦ 98532  
♣ KQ5

Dealer: West  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	4	5	-
S	-	-	4	5	-
E	2	2	-	-	2
W	2	2	-	-	1

The north hand has problem. What to open, if anything? Playing Weak Twos one could open 2♠ and hope to bid hearts later. In practice, 2♠ could well be passed out.

Where north passes he is maybe better placed, east opening 1♣ or a weak NT. North can double west's 1♦ response to 1♣, alternatively show his majors where west passes 1NT, assuming he has the machinery.

How many will get playing a major N/S, even if only part-score? Spades are best, it possible to pick up hearts, losing only two black suit tricks. Hearts are much more awkward, particularly should east, with an awkward lead, select the diamond king, shortening north. It is possible to make ten tricks, but far from easy.

There could be a lot of different scores on this one.



**17**

♠ 108654  
♥ 6  
♦ 98653  
♣ A4

♠ A32  
♥ K54  
♦ Q2  
♣ J7653

♠ KQJ97  
♥ A  
♦ AKJ107  
♣ Q9

♠ QJ1098732  
♥ 4  
♦ K1082

Dealer: North  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	5	-	5	1
S	-	4	-	5	1
E	3	-	4	-	-
W	3	-	4	-	-

We have another high pre-empt, east opening proceedings with 4♥. South will not take this lying down, either doubling or trying 4♠. West could easily raise hearts to the 5 level.

Few norths will sell out, most going on to 5♠ with their shapely hand. The only danger is that south might risk slam though, looking at two club losers, this is unlikely. Where they do they are unlucky that north's shape mirrors south's, a club loser inevitable.

E/W actually do best to sacrifice at the 6 level, but most will follow the dictum that "the 5 level belongs to the opponents" and give up.

It looks like a lot of 450s on the N/S side of the traveller.

**18**

♠ A8  
♥ K10975  
♦ Q632  
♣ A2

♠ 93  
♥ AQ86  
♦ AJ975  
♣ 84

♠ KQJ42  
♥ J2  
♦ 108  
♣ 10653

♠ 10765  
♥ 43  
♦ K4  
♣ KQJ97

Dealer: East  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	1	1	2
S	2	-	1	1	1
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

South could well try 1NT when his partner overcalls west's 1♦ with 1♥, and east bids his spades.

Unfortunately, this has the effect of "wrong-siding" the contract, a spade lead through the doubleton ace setting up the whole suit. Declarer can duck, isolating east, but he counters by switching to the diamond 10, setting up west's suit. By contrast, 2NT by north cannot be beaten, the spades safe from attack with east on lead, and declarer able to make the heart king for his eighth trick. At most, the defence make four diamonds and a heart.

Normally it is best for no trumps to be declared from the side with the doubleton honour. South's bid protects against attack in one danger suit - diamonds - but not against the other - spades.

**19**

♠ AK72  
♥ J98  
♦ Q10642  
♣ K

♠ J1084  
♥ 743  
♦ 53  
♣ J864

♠ 9653  
♥ A102  
♦ A98  
♣ A72

♠ Q  
♥ KQ65  
♦ KJ7  
♣ Q10953

Dealer: South  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	4	3	2	3
S	2	4	3	2	3
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

This looks like 3NT, though either north or south could declare. There are ten possible tricks, though entries are very awkward. and declarer can be cut off from his diamond tricks, certainly on a spade lead.

Fortunately, the club pips come to the rescue and, along with the helpful heart break, allow south to be established for the loss of the club ace and knave.

Will many make ten tricks? Will any go light, which is perfectly possible?

**20**

♠ 87  
♥ AKQJ1062  
♦ K108  
♣ Q

♠ K  
♥ 53  
♦ AQ65  
♣ K108764

♠ AQJ6432  
♥ 8  
♦ 3  
♣ J952

♠ 1095  
♥ 974  
♦ J9742  
♣ A3

Dealer: West  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	2	3	-	-
S	-	2	3	-	-
E	5	-	-	4	-
W	5	-	-	4	-

North doubtless overcalls west's 1♣ with hearts. Many will simply bid 4♠ with east's cards. Like #17, there is a profitable sacrifice available, but few will find it, N/S preferring to take their chances in defence.

4♠ is held if north wins the first heart and switches to a club, getting a ruff. In practice, it is probably held anyway, east mis-guessing the club lie.

Again, we could have a lot of identical scores, this time 420s in the E/W column.

**21**

♠ 73  
♥ K95  
♦ J9872  
♣ A54

♠ KQ105  
♥ 10  
♦ 10543  
♣ KJ106

♠ 984  
♥ QJ7642  
♦  
♣ 9732

♠ AJ62  
♥ A83  
♦ AKQ6  
♣ Q8

 Dealer: North  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	4	-	1	3
S	-	4	-	1	4
E	1	-	1	-	-
W	1	-	1	-	-

West doubtless leads the spade king against south's 3NT, and has to switch to a red suit after it holds. However, this doesn't save him in the end-game if declarer reads the situation correctly after cashing red suit winners.

Indeed, west has to be careful not to throw a spade, or he can be end-played in the suit to lead clubs, whilst a long spade gets set up.

I can see few being held in this one, but how many will manage eleven tricks is the question?

**22**

♠ 963  
♥ 1086  
♦ J954  
♣ A75

♠ 84  
♥ A93  
♦ K108  
♣ K9643

♠ KQ102  
♥ KQ5  
♦ 632  
♣ 1082

♠ AJ75  
♥ J742  
♦ AQ7  
♣ QJ

 Dealer: East  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	1	1	1	-
S	-	1	1	1	-
E	2	-	-	-	1
W	2	-	-	-	1

South is likely to be passed out in his opening bid, whether it be a strong no trump or an Acoll 1♥. Some could be in 1♠ having opened this, ostensibly playing Acoll.

1NT should be beaten on a club lead, the defence collecting three clubs, a diamond and three hearts. The suit contract is much better, the trumps suit stopping the run of clubs.

E/W are better declaring, perhaps east doubling south's 1♥ in the protective seat, and west scoring 90 in 2♣, an improvement on the +50 there in defence against 1NT, or the loss of 80 against the suit contract.

It seems strange that south is better opening the spot he shouldn't make, 1NT, rather than the one he can, 1♥.

**23**

♠ A973  
♥ KQ8  
♦ K1086  
♣ A7

♠ Q2  
♥ J53  
♦ AJ52  
♣ 10963

♠ 10854  
♥ 1096  
♦ 743  
♣ Q84

♠ KJ6  
♥ A742  
♦ Q9  
♣ KJ52

 Dealer: South  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	5	5	6	5	6
S	5	5	6	5	6
E	-	-	-	-	-
W	-	-	-	-	-

South could be in the hot seat again, declaring 3NT after either his weak 1NT opener or rebid.

Eleven tricks are there when two tricks score in diamonds with a finesse or on the lead. There are another three in clubs and four in hearts when the suit divides. If hearts are played early west is squeezed in three suits, and declarer can then make an extra minor suit trick, or fell west's spade queen (which he can anyway).

Will many manage the 690 possible, even on best defence?

**24**

♠ J93  
♥ 872  
♦ 82  
♣ Q8752

♠ Q1062  
♥ QJ54  
♦ 1064  
♣ 94

♠ A  
♥ K10  
♦ KQJ975  
♣ AJ106

♠ K8754  
♥ A963  
♦ A3  
♣ K3

 Dealer: West  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	-	-	-
S	-	-	-	-	-
E	2	4	2	1	3
W	2	4	2	1	3

Although E/W can make 3NT few will get there unless west stretches to a 1NT call when south overcalls his partner's 1♦ with 1♠. Most will pass and east either double or rebid 2♣, getting preference to diamonds.

2♦ is the easier spot, declarer able to knock out the heart ace and, when trumps break evenly, ruff a club to access west's winning hearts.

Should E/W get declaring no trumps north is effectively out of the game if declarer guesses spades correctly, the suit blocked when dummy rises with the queen.

Will many manage to get there and make nine tricks?

**25**

♠ KJ1094  
♥ Q42  
♦ J  
♣ Q1032

♠ 875  
♥ J10765  
♦ AK  
♣ J95

♠ AQ63  
♥  
♦ Q109872  
♣ A64

♠ 2  
♥ AK983  
♦ 6543  
♣ K87

Dealer: North  
E-W Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	2	-	-
S	-	-	2	-	-
E	-	3	-	1	3
W	-	3	-	1	3

This looks a competitive affair, south overcalling east's 1♦ with 1♥, west calling 1NT and north supporting hearts. There is no point in east introducing spades, since west would have doubled or bid the suit with four or five. So east is best to simply advance to 3♦.

3♦ should be straightforward whether south leads a top heart or his singleton, though declarer does need to use a dummy trump entry to finesse spades if the suit is not already played.

N/S could conceivably go on to 3♥, where they may well be doubled. This plays surprisingly well, the defence unable to force south without setting up spade tricks in dummy. The club suit and singleton diamond are all working, and the defence can only get five tricks, for a smaller penalty than their part-score is worth.

**26**

♠ K43  
♥ 108  
♦ 1082  
♣ 95432

♠ A8  
♥ AQ7632  
♦ 743  
♣ Q10

♠ 1076  
♥ K54  
♦ AKQJ6  
♣ K7

♠ QJ952  
♥ J9  
♦ 95  
♣ AJ86

Dealer: East  
Both Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	1	-	-	1	-
S	1	-	-	1	-
E	-	6	6	-	6
W	-	6	6	-	6

This could be another flattish board, E/W playing in 4♥, possibly by east after a strong no trump. It matters not whether south cashes a club or not at the start, since only two of west's three losers can be pitched on diamonds, N/S still getting a trick.

There could be optimists in the 28 HCP slam, cold when there are eleven top red suit winners, an ace, and only one top loser off.

Could any be in no trumps, either in game or slam? They make the same number of tricks.

**27**

♠ J108  
♥ A6532  
♦ A74  
♣ Q4

♠ Q9532  
♥ QJ  
♦ 10  
♣ KJ1096

♠ AK76  
♥ 7  
♦ J98532  
♣ 32

♠ 4  
♥ K10984  
♦ KQ6  
♣ A875

Dealer: South  
Neither Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	5	-	2
S	-	-	5	-	2
E	1	1	-	3	-
W	1	1	-	3	-

It is rare to get more than one or two paying game-level sacrifices in a set, but we have yet another one on this board, E/W likely finding the 4♠ save over N/S's 4♥, when west overcalls south's 1♥ with Michaels or 1♠.

Again, the 5 level is the place to be, N/S cold for 450, but E/W only light two in 5♠. It looks as if E/W might make ten tricks but, even on a correct club guess, there are not enough small trumps in east to ruff the suit good.

Will the field get this one right, perhaps guided by #17, #20 and the Law of Total Tricks - the sum of each sides' longest fits, which suggests 20 Total Tricks. N/S should therefore go to the 5 level - right whether they are making nine, ten or eleven tricks. E/W are right to go on to the 5 level too, but not if both sides are making exactly ten tricks. Tricky.

**28**

♠ AQ974  
♥ KQJ3  
♦ 103  
♣ J4

♠ KJ108  
♥ A9  
♦ 8754  
♣ Q98

♠ 5  
♥ 8652  
♦ KQJ962  
♣ A10

♠ 632  
♥ 1074  
♦ A  
♣ K76532

Dealer: West  
N-S Vulnerable

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	2	-	2	3	-
S	2	-	2	3	-
E	-	3	-	-	1
W	-	3	-	-	1

There are more decisions on this last hand, E/W going to 3♦ when south supports north's opened spade suit - best even in Acoll, holding three trumps and a singleton.

N/S can actually make 3♠ with a correct club guess, so it may be E/W with the final decision. Again, the Law of Total Tricks helps. It suggests you are safe bidding to the level of your fit - with a 10 card fit the 4 level.

This proves correct when E/W are only one light in 4♦, losing a trick in each suit.

There have been a few tough decisions on the set, exemplified by the last two hands. It is hoped the competitors enjoyed them.

Ave HCP	N 9.93	S 10.07	E 10.04	W 9.96	Balanced	N 9	S 10	E 12	W 15
Voids/singletons	N 3/12	S 3/11	E 4/10	W 0/8	7+ suit	N 3	S 1	E 3	W 0