

ACBL -wide Charity Game — Thursday Morning, April 14, 2016 — Set 126027

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

After North opens 1♣, planning a reverse to 2♦, most Easts will overcall 1♠, forcing South to pass. When West produces a cuebid raise of spades, North ought to introduce his diamonds, and South can now support clubs. Might N/S work out to bid on to game here? They probably shouldn't, since repeated trump leads seem to prevent declarer from ruffing out the diamonds, making 5♣ a poor contract. But the fall of both top diamonds in three rounds may allow North to survive even an initial trump lead. +550 may well be a relatively common result for N/S, as will penalties of 300 against 4♠x.

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

A few may pass the North cards, but most will open 1♦ in first chair. The most flexible way into the auction for East is to double, ignoring the five-card major. When South bids 1♥, West can join in with 2♣, after which a support double from North will see N/S find hearts, where they can collect +110. But (assuming East does not overcall 1♠) can E/W find a way to compete in spades — which plays respectably on any defense except repeated trump leads? On this deal any making contract should earn the successful declarer a very nice score.

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

You'd expect East to reverse into diamonds after hearing a 1♠ response from West. Now E/W should have an agreement as to how West can slam the brakes. Some play 2NT by responder at his second turn as an artificial negative; some use the cheaper of the fourth suit and 2NT as the weakest action. If West can show a non-forcing raise to 3♦, he will allow East to play that contract. Not that 3NT is terrible; indeed, West might make his game on anything but very precise defense. But no game is any better than the diamond finesse.

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

When East opens 1♣, South will be torn between a simple call of 1♠ and bidding that suit at the two, three or even four level! If he makes the simple overcall, then West can also go low or go high. A call of 2♥ would be hard to criticize; now when North raises spades, you'd certainly expect N/S to compete to 4♠ — possibly under their own steam, and certainly if E/W bid on to 4♥. Hearts plays for 10 tricks but not 11, while 4♠ can be set one trick on careful defense, but will surely be let through from time to time.

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

The West hand is inconveniently strong for an overcall of 1♠ over 1♦, but doubling might backfire if the opponents could up the ante in a red suit. I prefer the simple overcall, whereupon North will make a negative double, South will bid his clubs, and that leaves West with nothing to say, temporarily. However, when North corrects to 2♦, West may well balance with a double, and now E/W rate to settle in 2♠. Can N/S work out to bid on to 3♦? I'm not sure if many will, but that is the par contract today.

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

No grand slam is ever that simple to bid, but if West opens 1♥ and splinters to 4♣ in response to 1♠, East can use keycard, follow up with 5NT to find the ♦K and can then jump to 7♠. With five plain-suit winners, even if West has neither red queen, there should still be a play for 13 tricks, assuming a 2-1 trump break. He might also need a reasonable heart break, I admit, but at pairs, if everyone will be in slam (yeah, right!) you ought to bid the grand slam. At the local club... It may not be so clear-cut.

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

E/W's unopposed auction is likely to start: 1♠ - 1NT - 2♦ - 3♦. West ought to introduce his diamonds rather than rebid his weak six-card spade suit, and that lets E/W find a sensible strain. However, West might now bid on over 3♦ with 3♠ — after which East should drive to game — and it looks reasonable simply to jump to 5♦. If North cashes his ♥A, declarer will lose just a trump and a heart; if he goes passive with a club lead, there is a cross-ruff for 11 tricks. Even 4♠ could come home, but West would have to guess the trump suit very well.

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

North is almost worth a 15-17 1NT, especially at this vulnerability, which rewards aggression. If North opens 1NT, a crawling Stayman auction should see South settle in 2♥. Equally, after a sequence such as: 1♦ - 1♠ - 1NT - 2♥ we will be at a comparable point in the auction — but might some Norths give false preference to 2♠? The 5-3 heart fit plays better than the 5-2 spade fit today — not entirely surprising. In hearts, declarer will ruff spades in dummy and try to scramble home with his small trumps. Anyone coming to +170 will deserve their good result.

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

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

♠ A 10 8 6 5
 ♥ 5 3 2
 ♦ 4
 ♣ A K 4 2

Most Easts will open a minor, not a strong notrump. After South overcalls 1♠, West will double. East will jump to 2NT, the least lie, and be raised to 3NT. If East initially downgrades his hand to open 1NT, many Souths will overcall 2♠ (be it just spades, or spades and a minor). He may buy it in 2♠, but many Easts will reopen with a takeout double to get West to 3♥. There aren't that many losers — but equally, there aren't nine top tricks, and the 5-1 diamond break complicates matters. If declarer finds the ♥Q, he can make both 3♥ and 3NT.

Bd: 13 ♠ A 10 4 2
 Dlr: North ♥ A Q 9 8 2
 Vul: Both ♦ K 5 4
 ♣ 6

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

♠ Q
 ♥ K J 3
 ♦ 8 6 3
 ♣ A K 10 8 7 2

With limited values and just an eight-card major fit, the N/S field rates to play 4♥. But outliers may explore for slam and discover they are missing only one keycard. If so, they might attempt 6♥. With the ♦A onside, trumps 3-2 and clubs behaving well, the defenders do best to lead spades to try to tap the dummy, but 12 tricks can be developed painlessly. Declarer wins ♠A, ruffs a club in hand, draws trumps ending in dummy and runs clubs, to pitch three spades and a diamond. Then he tries a diamond to his king; bingo! (And maybe he should buy a lottery ticket tonight.)

Bd: 10 ♠ J 7
 Dlr: East ♥ Q 10 8 4 3
 Vul: Both ♦ A K 7 6 4
 ♣ K

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

♠ K Q 4
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ J 8 3 2
 ♣ A J 9 2

N/S should bid unopposed, with South showing a balanced hand but rejecting any suggestions from North that it may be right to play in a red suit as opposed to settling in notrump. Against 3NT, West may work out to lead spades (perhaps the 10 rather than the eight?). A logical line to follow now is to win the first spade in dummy and unblock the ♣K, then try a heart to the king. When it holds, you can cash ♦AK, unblocking the ♦8, then win the third diamond in hand with the ♦J to play a second spade. You rate to end up with 10 tricks this way.

Bd: 14 ♠ 7 6 4
 Dlr: East ♥ K 5 4 2
 Vul: None ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ K 10

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

♠ A K 9 2
 ♥ A 9 6
 ♦ J 9 8
 ♣ 6 4 3

At most tables, the auction will go 1♣-1♦-1♠-1NT by N/S. Since no contract makes for N/S (though North may bring home 1NT after a club lead), perhaps discretion really is the better part of valor. If South should pass, when West opens 1♣, East will respond 1♥. Would you as South contemplate doubling or overcalling 1♠? At this vulnerability, anything goes, I suppose, but bidding here is truly something of a caveman action. If South stays silent, his side will defend 1NT; if West is declarer, North will lead a diamond and probably hold him to +90, whereas East might collect +120 when the defenders go after spades.

Bd: 11 ♠ 10 6 2
 Dlr: South ♥ A Q J 10 8 3
 Vul: None ♦ 8
 ♣ J 4 2

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

♠ A Q 7 4
 ♥ 2
 ♦ Q 7 5 4 3
 ♣ A 6 5

When South opens 1♦, West will overcall 1♥, temporarily silencing North. East will surely respond 1♠, and when West rebids 1NT, North should be confident that a call of 2♥ is natural and non-forcing. (Whether South is going to be as sure...) 2♥ is technically the par spot — North can come to at least eight tricks in hearts by leading a trump to the eight and ought surely to find that play. Since this is the only making two level contract on the board, there will no doubt be many penalties recorded here.

Bd: 15 ♠ Q J 10 4
 Dlr: South ♥ A 10 4 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ 7
 ♣ A K 10 8

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

♠ K 9 8 6 2
 ♥ 2
 ♦ K 9 8 2
 ♣ 9 6 2

North will double West's 1♦ opener, letting East respond 1♥. Now maybe South can advance with 1♠ or even jump to 2♠ — sensible, if you play a 2♦ call here would be a limit raise in spades. The N/S cards don't seem to fit too well, with the ♦K virtually wasted. Still, with the club honors onside, South can follow reverse dummy lines in 4♠, while taking repeated club finesses, and come to 10 tricks on careful play. After a heart lead, +170 looks a healthy result, +620 an outstanding one for N/S. If E/W get too high in a red suit, they are unlikely to enjoy themselves.

Bd: 12 ♠ J 5
 Dlr: West ♥ A 7 6 4
 Vul: N-S ♦ J 10 2
 ♣ Q J 6 2

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

♠ A K 8 2
 ♥ Q 10 8 3
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A K 4 3

In third seat, few if any players will pass the East hand. More will open 1♠ than go for an idiosyncratic lead-directer in diamonds, but one could understand the latter approach. After a 1♠ opener by East, a few Souths will pass, but many will overcall 1NT; now some will eschew Stayman and end up in notrump rather than hearts. Should East open some number of diamonds, South has a textbook double, and N/S will get to 4♥ rather more straightforwardly. At this vulnerability, E/W do have a save of sorts in 5♦x; but they may struggle to escape for 500 there.

Bd: 16 ♠ K 9 7 4 2
 Dlr: West ♥ A 5
 Vul: E-W ♦ A 6 2
 ♣ J 10 8

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

♠ J 6
 ♥ 9 7 4 2
 ♦ Q 8 3
 ♣ Q 9 6 4

West will open 1♦ and hear North overcall 1♠. East will bide his time and pass, I expect, though some may overcall 1NT or make a negative double, both actions having obvious flaws. If the 1♠ overcall is passed back to West, it looks normal to double for takeout, and now East has a second uncomfortable call. The winning action is to pass because the defenders can maneuver at least eight tricks on defense. But I'm sure many E/W pairs will buy the hand in a red-suit partscore, collecting about +110, one way or another.

Bd: 17 ♠ A 9 5 4 2
 Dlr: North ♥ J 4
 Vul: None ♦ A 8 5 4
 ♣ 9 3
 ♠ K J 10 6 ♠ Q 7 3
 ♥ Q 10 7 3 ♥ K 8 6 5 2
 ♦ Q 3 ♦ J 10 6 2
 ♣ J 8 2 ♣ 4
 ♠ 8
 ♥ A 9
 ♦ K 9 7
 ♣ A K Q 10 7 6 5

South is too strong (and with an obvious flaw) for a 3NT opening — even if you play it as gambling, plus guards. It feels right to open 1♣, intending to force to game if North can respond. The plan would be to rebid 3NT facing spade length or values. West has a choice of majors to attack against 3NT (yes, the ♠K might be right — if only to get your name in the papers). Whatever he does, declarer has 11 top winners in notrump but no realistic chance of a 12th trick. 6♣ looks equally unlikely to make; but it is slightly easier to let misdefend?

Bd: 21 ♠ A
 Dlr: North ♥ Q 9 6 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 5 3 2
 ♣ 10 7 4 2
 ♠ K Q 5 ♠ J 10 9 6 4 2
 ♥ A K 4 2 ♥ J 10 8 7 5
 ♦ A 7 6 ♦ —
 ♣ J 8 6 ♣ A 9
 ♠ 8 7 3
 ♥ —
 ♦ K J 10 9 8 4
 ♣ K Q 5 3

A few Easts may open 2♠, ignoring their unusual side-suit shape. Then West can raise to 4♠, and South rates to kick off with a top club. East will win the ♣A and lead a heart up, rather than playing a slightly safer line for his contract by tackling trumps. Alas, South can ruff the first heart and cash a club, and the defenders still have a trump and a ruff to come. Of course, if South overcalls (or is allowed to open a preempt) in diamonds, N/S can save in 5♦. This is the best possible kind of sacrifice, since South can take 11 tricks with his side's combined 17-count.

Bd: 18 ♠ A 10 7 2
 Dlr: East ♥ A K
 Vul: N-S ♦ 10 4 3
 ♣ 8 6 3 2
 ♠ K Q 6 5 3 ♠ J 9 4
 ♥ J 10 ♥ 9 8 7 6 5 4
 ♦ Q J 8 5 ♦ K
 ♣ Q 4 ♣ J 9 5
 ♠ 8
 ♥ Q 3 2
 ♦ A 9 7 6 2
 ♣ A K 10 7

Very few Easts are going to preempt here, and rightly so. Most will pass, and South will open 1♦, letting West overcall 1♠. Now North can invite by responding 2NT. After South explores with 3♣, North should bid 3♦; that lets South bid 3♥, and North might close proceedings with 3NT. If the defenders lead spades, declarer can only succeed at double dummy. He wins the third spade, cashes his two top hearts and plays three rounds of clubs, eventually squeezing West in diamonds and spades. 5♣ can be defeated if the defenders press on with spades at every turn.

Bd: 22 ♠ A Q 6 5 4
 Dlr: East ♥ J 7 6 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q J
 ♣ 10 6
 ♠ J 10 9 2 ♠ 3
 ♥ 8 5 4 ♥ K Q 10 9 2
 ♦ 8 6 3 ♦ A 5
 ♣ K 4 3 ♣ A J 8 7 2
 ♠ K 8 7
 ♥ A
 ♦ K 10 9 7 4 2
 ♣ Q 9 5

E/W may compete to the three level in either hearts or clubs, but if North bids spades in response to his partner's simple overcall in diamonds, he is likely to find himself at the helm in 4♠. Declarer's chances of success are doomed by the bad trump break. After a top heart lead, North's best line is to win and go after diamonds. The defense should win the second diamond, cash ♣AK, then play a second heart. Declarer ruffs in dummy, tests trumps, then pitches his heart losers on the minor-suit winners, to hold his losses to down one.

Bd: 19 ♠ 5 3
 Dlr: South ♥ A 8 6 5 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 8 4
 ♣ J 9 3
 ♠ A 6 4 ♠ K 10 9 7 2
 ♥ K Q 10 4 ♥ 2
 ♦ 5 3 ♦ A Q J 7 6
 ♣ A K 6 4 ♣ 7 5
 ♠ Q J 8
 ♥ J 9 7
 ♦ 10 9 2
 ♣ Q 10 8 2

E/W will surely bid unopposed to 4♠, most often declared by West, after East shows diamonds and spades in response to West's 1NT opener. North has a choice of black suits to lead (although a case could be made for the ♥A). Whatever he selects, the favorable lie of the diamonds means that 11 tricks can be taken in spades, but the same result is likely at notrump too. Of course spades can probably survive a bad diamond break, and the lure of the eight-card fit will surely persuade most pairs to play the suit game.

Bd: 23 ♠ K J 2
 Dlr: South ♥ A J 8
 Vul: Both ♦ A Q 9 2
 ♣ Q J 6
 ♠ A ♠ 10 9 6 5 4 3
 ♥ K Q 9 6 4 ♥ 7 5
 ♦ J 7 5 ♦ K 10
 ♣ K 10 4 3 ♣ 9 7 2
 ♠ Q 8 7
 ♥ 10 3 2
 ♦ 8 6 4 3
 ♣ A 8 5

When West opens 1♥, North must overcall 1NT — too dangerous is no excuse, even facing a passed partner. If E/W are discreet, they will sell out to 1NT, and North is going to struggle there unless he can guess to drop the ♦K offside. If East competes to 2♠ — an aggressive action when vulnerable — South will want to be able to double this for penalties. The defenders must get clubs going early in order to establish their sixth winner. With making contracts at a premium, you'd expect +100 to be decent for N/S, +200 nearly a top for them.

Bd: 20 ♠ —
 Dlr: West ♥ A J 10 7 6 3
 Vul: Both ♦ 6 4 3
 ♣ J 9 7 2
 ♠ J 9 7 5 ♠ 10 8 6
 ♥ K 9 5 2 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ A Q ♦ J 10 5 2
 ♣ Q 8 6 ♣ A K 5 3
 ♠ A K Q 4 3 2
 ♥ 8
 ♦ K 9 8 7
 ♣ 10 4

Most Wests will open 1♣ and North will preempt to 2♥. East must surely bid 3♣ now, to end the auction. It would be highly aggressive for South to compete to 3♠... but there are a lot of cock-eyed optimists around. 3♣ sinks like a stone if the defenders find their cross-ruff. However, after a diamond lead, West can unblock the two top diamonds, then play queen and another club and pass the ♦10. He should now find his way to at least eight tricks. No triumph — but no disgrace either. -200, or worse, on either side of the scoresheet, will be a very common outcome.

Bd: 24 ♠ 9 5
 Dlr: West ♥ J 10 8 5
 Vul: None ♦ K J 8 7 4
 ♣ 8 2
 ♠ Q 10 7 6 ♠ A J 4 2
 ♥ A K 6 3 ♥ 2
 ♦ 9 6 5 ♦ A 10 2
 ♣ 9 7 ♣ K Q J 6 5
 ♠ K 8 3
 ♥ Q 9 7 4
 ♦ Q 3
 ♣ A 10 4 3

E/W's sequence will start: Pass-1♣-1♥-1♠-2♠. Now East has a beautifully put together hand, with some extra shape and high cards, maybe just enough to make a try for game. As the cards lie, 4♠ is not cold on the ♦Q lead. Best is to win the second diamond, then cash ♥K to pitch the diamond loser. Now take the trump finesse. If it holds, declarer must change tack and drive out the ♣A. Best defense is to duck the first club and win the next, but whether the defenders now play hearts or clubs, East will survive on accurate play.

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

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

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

When East doubles North's 1♦ opening, most Souths will respond 1♥. After that E/W can compete in spades, and given that they have the balance of high cards and a double fit, they might hope that their side that could make game. Today, the bad breaks and unfavorable lie of the missing honors mean they can take just seven tricks in spades, while N/S with their combined 18-count have 11 tricks in hearts or diamonds. The traveler here will consist mainly of plus scores for N/S, quite a few doubled in game, or collecting sizable penalties.

Bd: 29 ♠ K 6 4
 Dlr: North ♥ 8 7
 Vul: Both ♦ K Q J 10
 ♣ 10 9 6 5

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

♠ J 5 3
 ♥ 10 6 4
 ♦ A 8 3 2
 ♣ A Q J

South is likely to open 1♦ and hear West overcall 1♥. Now despite his good trumps North should only raise to 2♦. East must compete to 2♥, on his limited values. Now the Law of Total Tricks argues that nobody should bid any more. It would only be right for North to bid on if N/S can make 3♦ (when South might have acted already) or if 3♦ escapes for down 100 against a heart partscore. But today could just be that day: 3♦ will normally escape a double, and get out for down one, while 2♥ ought to scramble +110 one way or another.

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

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

♠ K J 10 2
 ♥ A 8 4
 ♦ A K 9
 ♣ A 8 4

South will open 1♣ (there is no reason to upgrade this hand to open 2NT — except for an abiding distrust of partner's declarer play), and when West overcalls 1♠, North figures to show a limit raise of clubs by cuebidding 2♠. South will jump to 3NT, against which West may well try his luck with a spade, hoping to find East with ♠J or an entry. If he does, South rates to end up with +660. Best defense requires West to lead and continue hearts, when declarer has no more than 10 tricks. Passive defense rarely gets the credit it is due, but it would today.

Bd: 30 ♠ Q 10 9 3 2
 Dlr: East ♥ A K 8 4
 Vul: None ♦ 9 8 4
 ♣ K

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

♠ 6 5
 ♥ 9 6 3
 ♦ J 10 7 3 2
 ♣ A J 8

If ever a 12-count cried out to be passed, it is this East hand. But with nobody vulnerable, pairs is a bidder's game, and nobody ever got rich by passing with these cards (they sometimes stay out of trouble — but that is a different story). If East passes, then a few Wests might try 3♣, but rather more will open 1♣. E/W want to try to declare the contract in a club or notrump partscore, and +120 in notrump represents par on the deal. Where East opens, some will find themselves in 3NT — a contract that may need cooperative defense to come home.

Bd: 27 ♠ A 6 4 3
 Dlr: South ♥ 9 8 4
 Vul: None ♦ K J 10 2
 ♣ A 9

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

♠ K J 9 7 2
 ♥ A K J 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ 10 3

After South opens 1♠, North has just enough to drive to game via a Jacoby 2NT. East can hardly do less than bid 4♣ (and many would bid 5♣). After a 4♣ preempt South will end up in 4♠. After a club lead, he should win ♣A, cash ♠K and ♠A, then take four rounds of hearts, ruffing the last, to exit in clubs. East will win but be endplayed to broach diamonds for declarer and concede 420. Since 5♣x goes for 500, and 4♠ is going to be defeated occasionally, perhaps this simply proves that it doesn't always pay to preempt to the limit.

Bd: 31 ♠ 9 7 3
 Dlr: South ♥ K 10 7 4 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ 6 3
 ♣ K 5 3

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

♠ Q J 6
 ♥ 5
 ♦ A Q 9 7 5
 ♣ A J 6 2

N/S rate to buy the hand in a minor-suit partscore, but which? After N/S bid 1♦ - 1♥ - 2♣, North should probably pass. Not only might clubs play better than diamonds, but you really don't want to hear South bid on over your 2♦ false preference. Indeed, 2♣ certainly looks easier to handle than 2♦. If East balances with a double of 2♣, it gets West to 2♠, which he will not particularly enjoy, after the defenders take the first five tricks in the minors. A third club will leave declarer very awkwardly placed to escape for even down one.

Bd: 28 ♠ 7 6
 Dlr: West ♥ J 9 8 6
 Vul: N-S ♦ K J 8 7 6
 ♣ A 6

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

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

West's 1NT opener will see some Norths intervene, even at unfavorable vulnerability (with a double if playing Woolsey, or 2♦ if playing DONT). Most Norths will pass, letting East transfer to spades, then reject an invitation to game if West breaks the transfer. The final contract of 3♠ can be set on either a heart lead or a club ruff. Thus +110 is going to score E/W well, +140 even better. What does it prove that N/S can bring home nine tricks in either red suit? Not much; but if West is playing a weak notrump, N/S may be able to come in rather more easily.

Bd: 32 ♠ A 8 6
 Dlr: West ♥ A J 7
 Vul: E-W ♦ A Q J 3
 ♣ Q 10 8

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

♠ K 9 7 5 2
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ 10 6 5
 ♣ J 9 2

At most tables North will open 1♦ and jump to 2NT over a 1♠ response. Now it looks clear for South to spurn a possible 5-3 spade fit and simply raise to 3NT. With his values in his short suits, he wants his partner to declare the contract from the strong hand, and he can see that there is relatively unlikely to be any value in taking ruffs with the long trumps. So it proves: 3NT by North on a heart lead should come to at least nine tricks. By contrast, 4♠ by South must lose one diamond, two clubs and a trump trick.