

ACBL-wide Charity Game — Tuesday Evening, Nov. 22, 2016 — Set 126029

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

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

♠ K 9 7 2
 ♥ 7 4
 ♦ Q 9 7 6
 ♣ K Q 7

South has a couple of matchpoint conundrums here. His first is whether to respond 1NT to 1♥ and bypass his spades — only those playing Flannery will be sure that this is the right thing to do. The second problem comes when, having responded 1♠, he hears North rebid 2♣. Should he now give false preference to 2♥, a mild underbid, or stretch to bid 2NT? I prefer the former, which happens to work better today, since hearts plays for +140, notrump for just +120. Some Wests will overcall or balance in spades and will regret their decision if doubled.

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

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

♠ A 8
 ♥ A 9 7 4
 ♦ A K 7 6
 ♣ A 10 5

Plenty of Souths will open 2NT in third seat with a 19-count, assuming their passed-hand partner is not going to drive them to an unmakeable slam. On this occasion North will simply bid 3NT — reaching the same contract that would have been achieved facing a 1♦ opener, but declaring it the other way up. 3NT by either player might attract a spade lead (holding declarer to 10 tricks), but on either a diamond or heart lead N/S ought to take 12 tricks by setting up hearts. The defenders probably won't be able to deflect declarer from taking three heart tricks.

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

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

♠ 10 7 6 4
 ♥ K J 7 5 3
 ♦ 9 6 4
 ♣ 9

Most Easts will open their long suit or a nebulous club (this hand is not one to be upgraded out of a weak notrump range into a 14-16 notrump, is it?). If East opens a minor, his partner is likely to invite game with a call of 2NT, and East can pass gratefully. After a club lead, declarer has no guaranteed way to build an extra diamond trick, but as the cards lie he can't go wrong. Some N/S pairs will find a way to let through a ninth trick, rather more Wests may attempt 3NT unsuccessfully. Incidentally, notrump by East could prove awkward on repeated heart leads.

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

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

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

E/W will surely have an unopposed auction to 3NT, without seriously considering going higher. And rightly so, because after an unlikely spade lead, 3NT might require a favorable club break to make even nine tricks. Nonetheless, the lie of the N/S cards is almost as favorable as humanly possible, so it should prove relatively simple to take +660 at notrump. And at double-dummy (which involves cashing two top hearts early) you can run clubs and squeeze South in unusual fashion for no fewer than 12 tricks.

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

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

♠ K J 8 3
 ♥ J 5 2
 ♦ A Q 6 4
 ♣ J 10

When North hears his partner open 1♦, he is well worth an inverted raise to 2♦, treating his hand as a limit-raise. East should step in with 3♣, but now it will be very hard for West to guess that his side can score up 3NT. Indeed, were the ♦A and ♣K switched, you could imagine some N/S pairs getting close to making 3NT their way. Instead, it looks reasonable for each side to attempt four of a minor. 4♣ takes 10 tricks — at least at double dummy — while in 4♦ South needs to negotiate the spades to get out for two down.

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

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

♠ A 9 8 4 3 2
 ♥ 2
 ♦ Q 9 7 6 5
 ♣ 10

South's hand will look like a weak two-bid for those who believe extra side-suit shape makes up for the feeble anchor suit. Facing a 2♠ call, North is not worth a drive to game, but some may take that tactical gamble, with most others producing a preemptive raise to 3♠. Now East will want to come in with a takeout double or perhaps an overcall of 3NT — if that is available. Today is not a good one to be aggressive, though, if we look at absolute par, since both sides need to try to stop in three of a major. There are not likely to be many making contracts recorded here, however, many Easts will fail to find the best defense to a spade game of ace and a low diamond.

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

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

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

North will have the opportunity to jump to 3♠ after opening 1♣ and hearing his partner respond 1♦. This is a splinter raise, promising a very good hand with diamond support and spade shortage. South might now look for a grand slam — though his club void complicates matters. (Exclusion Blackwood in partner's suit is an experiment that has failed dramatically on more than one occasion.) You'd expect any pair reaching 7♦ to get a very good score, anyone in the near impossible-to-reach 7NT will surely achieve a global top.

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

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

♠ 10 8 4 3
 ♥ K 8 6 4 3
 ♦ Q
 ♣ 10 3 2

Some Wests will open 2NT, others might see a 2♣ opener plus a rebid of either 2NT or 3♦ — you pays your money, you takes your choice! Today, getting diamonds into the act clearly works best. 6♦ is cold, though much better when declared by West, while game is the limit in other strains. If East declares 6♦ on a heart lead, there is scope to misguess the play; it looks right to rise with the ace, cash the two top trumps, then try to run spades to pitch the heart loser. When North ruffs in, declarer will be relieved (and surprised) to find that he has no heart to play, however, many Easts will fail to find the best defense to a spade game of ace and a low diamond.

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

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

♠ 5 2
 ♥ K 9 6 4
 ♦ 8 7 5
 ♣ A Q 10 7

You'd expect East to double North's 1♦ opener, after which N/S should find their hearts, while E/W ought to be able to locate their spade fit, sooner or later. The question is how far each side will compete. South rates to bid on to 3♥ over 2♠, but will either West or East have any reason to bid further? I think not; at a different vulnerability West might risk the three level, and perhaps consider himself unlucky not to be able to play clubs for one loser. The same favorable lie in clubs lets South score +170 in hearts, of course.

Bd: 13 ♠ K 8 5
 Dlr: North ♥ K 7
 Vul: Both ♦ K 8 6 3
 ♣ A Q 7 5

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

♠ Q 3
 ♥ 8 6 5 4
 ♦ 10 7 4 2
 ♣ K 9 8

Where strong notrumps are in use, you'd expect the vast majority of Norths to be left to stew in that unappetizing spot. As East, I'd kick off with a club — be it a low or high one — rather than a spade. To my mind, the former is far less likely to cost blood. If this board proves anything, though, it is not to listen to me on opening lead, since a low club lets declarer win in dummy and play a diamond to the king. Now the defense can do no better than take seven tricks. A low spade by East on opening lead might see the defenders garner eight or nine tricks on defense.

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

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

♠ 7
 ♥ K Q 4
 ♦ 10 9 8 4
 ♣ Q 8 5 4 2

When East opens 1NT, West must decide whether to bid on after a transfer to 2♠, thus jeopardizing his side's plus score in the search for game. At teams, especially if vulnerable, West might risk advancing; but at pairs West is probably supposed to pass 2♠. (This would be especially true if East could break the transfer with a call of 2NT to show a maximum and three good trumps.) West's discipline will be rewarded, as the bad trump break puts 3♠ in severe jeopardy. To make +140, East must eliminate the red suits and cash ♣AK before endplaying North in trumps.

Bd: 14 ♠ K Q 9 3
 Dlr: East ♥ A 8 2
 Vul: None ♦ K Q 7 6 4 3
 ♣ —

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

♠ 6 4
 ♥ J 9 3
 ♦ 9 8
 ♣ K 9 7 6 3 2

Depending on West's style, he will respond either 1♦ or 1NT to 1♣. If he selects 1♦, he will be faced with a second problem over East's 1♥ rebid. This is the sort of deal where E/W can make notrump on power, but you could easily imagine one side or the other playing clubs or diamonds, and not enjoying the experience at all. While this is a hard hand to predict, I'll go with there being few successful contracts except at notrump, with penalties of 100 and 300 predominating.

Bd: 11 ♠ 6
 Dlr: South ♥ 8 3
 Vul: None ♦ K 8 4 3 2
 ♣ A K Q 10 9

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

♠ 7 5 4 3 2
 ♥ 10 7 6 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ 8 7 3 2

When West opens 1♥ North can try 2NT for the minors. That lets East double, aiming for a penalty. However, when South jumps to 4♣ preemptively, it feels right for West to try 4♥ rather than letting East try to collect a number. Even though you are acting in front of your partner, your honors and side-suit pattern suggest you take the decision yourself. To hold West to 10 tricks, the defenders must take two diamond ruffs (not likely to happen unless South can find a Lightner-style double). Meanwhile, 5♣ will cost 800 if the defenders lead trumps early.

Bd: 15 ♠ A K 9
 Dlr: South ♥ A J 10 6 5
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q
 ♣ A 5 4 3

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

♠ 7 5 2
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A 10 5 3
 ♣ J 8 7 6 2

The West hand is probably closer to a 1♥ opener than a preempt — though I admire the intestinal fortitude of anyone who opens 4♥ here. A four level preempt is going to end the auction (who could find a bid if North's double is primarily takeout?). If West starts with 1♥, then North might perhaps find an off-shape call of 1NT, and East rates to join in with 2♠. Over this bid, only the most stoic of Wests will pass rather than try 3♦. N/S can make 4♣ — but how would they ever find their fit? The best N/S scores will come from a judicious use of the red card.

Bd: 12 ♠ A 8
 Dlr: West ♥ 10 6 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 10 7
 ♣ K J 9 8 7

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

♠ Q 10 6 4
 ♥ A K Q 4
 ♦ K 9 8 4
 ♣ 2

Most Souths will be allowed to open 1♦ in fourth chair (yes you can imagine one of the other players getting in first at one table or another, I suppose). West may now overcall 1♥, but whether he acts or not, North might stretch to bid 2♣. After this, South ought to rebid 2NT and play there. With all the spade and club honors outside, and declarer a favorite to find the ♦J, there will be many tables taking nine, or even 10, tricks in a notrump partscore. Top prize goes to the N/S pairs bidding game, or catching E/W in whatever strain they may choose to settle in.

Bd: 16 ♠ A Q 4 3
 Dlr: West ♥ Q 6 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ Q 6 5 4
 ♣ J 10

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

♠ J 6 2
 ♥ 9 2
 ♦ A J 2
 ♣ K 9 8 4 3

West's strong notrump is likely to be passed out at many tables. North would do best to lead ♣J and have South encourage the suit. If the defenders can find this start, declarer should be held to three heart and two club tricks. Conversely, if North leads a low spade, West might come a lot closer to bringing his partscore home. Any E/W pair playing weak notrump are likely to find their way to hearts, one way or another. They can take eight tricks but not nine in hearts and may find it hard to stay low.

Bd: 17 ♠ 10 7 6
 Dlr: North ♥ K 10 7 5
 Vul: None ♦ 7 6 4
 ♣ 10 9 2

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

♠ Q J 4
 ♥ A 6 3 2
 ♦ 10 8 3
 ♣ A K 8

There will be plenty of Easts prepared to open 1♣, despite their absence of aces, because of the easy rebid. Assuming East opts for 1♣, South can choose between pass and double. If he doubles, West also has a choice: both redouble and 1♥ make perfect sense. It is N/S who fare best in a heart partscore — they can take seven tricks there. Equally, E/W can bring home eight tricks in a number of strains, and might well be allowed to make +120 at notrump. This feels like a deal where any positive score should matchpoint respectably for either side.

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

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

♠ Q 4 3
 ♥ 8 5 2
 ♦ A 9 2
 ♣ 10 7 6 5

At many tables a natural sequence for E/W will see them bid three suits and come to rest in 2NT (only an optimistic East would raise his partner's invitation to game). North has a nightmare lead; my choice of a low heart would work about as badly as anything, and it certainly presents West with a chance to come home with nine tricks. As against that, a spade lead should see South get in early, and play hearts through declarer. North can now duck the first heart to keep his side's communications in place, and hold West to eight tricks.

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

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

♠ A 4 3
 ♥ Q 10 9 8
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ A 8 7 3

Over East's routine 1NT opener, West has three sensible options. He can pass and hope it is a partscore board, he can aim for a safe 3♣, or he can try for game in notrump, perhaps prepared to play clubs facing a minimum hand, if his methods allow it. All these routes make sense, but today the clear winner for West would be to settle in clubs. With both clubs and diamonds lying unfavorably for East in notrump, the minor suit is E/W's highest scoring partscore. Also, note that N/S can also compete very successfully in the majors.

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

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

♠ K 8 4 3
 ♥ A 2
 ♦ 5 3
 ♣ Q 10 9 7 3

Will somebody somewhere pass that East hand, vulnerable in first seat? I believe it is very far from an opening bid — but that won't stop anyone. Not entirely surprisingly, West's chunky 12-count gives E/W virtually no play for 3NT. South can lead a club if East becomes declarer, after which East will struggle to come to an eighth winner — he can do it by going after hearts. If West declares 3NT on a heart lead he will try to set up spades, but it is hard to see him making more than eight tricks, whatever he does, without a significant defensive error.

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

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

♠ A Q 8 7 3
 ♥ Q 4 3
 ♦ 10 3
 ♣ 6 4 2

At the plurality of tables East will be allowed to treat his hand as a strong notrump (you could argue his hand is too strong for that action — I don't agree). West can transfer to hearts and might then invite game, if feeling optimistic, by re-raising in hearts. That seems to be wrong in theory — since the defenders can hold East to nine tricks by attacking spades early. But in practice the defenders might miss the point of the deal: if South starts off with a diamond, or if he leads a club and North fails to find the right shift, 10 tricks roll in.

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

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

♠ J 7 6 5
 ♥ K Q 2
 ♦ J 4 3
 ♣ A Q 8

When South opens 1♣ many (maybe most?) Wests will bid 2NT, unusual, for the red suits. We've all taken much wilder actions than that, but today it exposes E/W to penalties of at least 500 in 3♥x. East will not make matters any better if he tries to play in spades, where six tricks also look to be the limit. Of course, N/S may not go head-hunting and may settle for the calmer waters of 3NT. Declarer can come to nine tricks there without a struggle, and might just produce +630 on accurate reading of the club suit.

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

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

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

When West opens 1♠, North can double for takeout. Some Easts will raise to 2♠, some to 3♠, and yet a third group will produce a mixed raise (suggesting 6-9 HCP and four trumps). South cannot sensibly act over a 3♠ call, but if he can bid 3♥, he ought to do so. North's real problem comes if he doubles 1♠ and hears 3♠ passed back to him. He may not feel he is worth a double now; but his side can make 4♥ easily enough by ducking an early diamond to West. Meanwhile, E/W have just nine tricks in spades, so selling out cheaply works very badly for N/S.

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

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

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

West might open any number of diamonds between one and five here (I admit, few will select 2♦). 4♦ looks right to me; if this is passed round to South, he should take his life in his hands and balance with a double. North has the luxury of selecting either major — on this occasion it doesn't matter which. Both spades and hearts lie incredibly favorably, so +420 is available in either strain. Since E/W have a paying sacrifice in diamonds, maybe East would do best to boost to 5♦ directly. Now N/S might well either sell out, or go minus at the five level.

Bd: 25 ♠ 7
 Dlr: North ♥ Q J 6 3
 Vul: E-W ♦ A K 9 5 2
 ♣ J 10 9

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

♠ 5 4 2
 ♥ A 7 5 4
 ♦ J
 ♣ Q 6 5 4 2

When North opens 1♦ (most will, won't they, at these colors?), East should dredge up a 1♥ overcall, and South can only pass. Now West can respond 1♠ — if it is forcing — or 2♠ if it is not, and E/W will reach 4♠. Although the defense figures to start happily enough by cashing their diamonds and taking the ruff, declarer can then put his cards on the table and claim the rest. It may appear that N/S could do better than this, either on defense or offense, but their eight-card fits will not play at all well today.

Bd: 29 ♠ 10 6
 Dlr: North ♥ K Q 9 8 4 3 2
 Vul: Both ♦ Q 10 6
 ♣ K

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

♠ A K Q 9 7 4
 ♥ A J 6
 ♦ 8 4
 ♣ 7 4

The North hand could conceivably be opened at the one, two, three or four level. I'd vote for 3♥, and South should simply raise to game, to end the auction. If East starts with the ♣A, the position in that suit becomes obvious at once. East will shift to diamonds, and E/W can cash out to hold South to +620. It is worth noting that if North preempts and South bids game, a few defenders may experiment unsuccessfully with a major-suit lead; not a success. Conversely, some will play spades by South and now the defenders must arrange heart ruffs to beat him.

Bd: 26 ♠ 7 4
 Dlr: East ♥ J 10 4 3
 Vul: Both ♦ K 2
 ♣ 10 9 8 7 4

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

♠ A K Q 8 2
 ♥ 8 7 6
 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ K J 2

South has a normal 1♠ opener, West a simple 2♦ overcall (unless playing intermediate jumps when vulnerable — by no means a bad idea), and you'd expect East to bid 2NT and be raised to three. Now South can try and lead out his spade honors, hoping for the best, or go for the brilliancy prize — and either a matchpoint top or bottom — by underleading his spades to trick one. As you can see, only the underlead works to defeat 3NT; will anyone find it? And if they do, will they send ACBL the details please!

Bd: 30 ♠ Q 8 5 2
 Dlr: East ♥ 9 7
 Vul: None ♦ A 10 9 8 6 4
 ♣ 8

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

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

When East opens 1♣, some hyperactive Souths will feel obliged to double (maybe their partners never bid diamonds?). If South doubles, West has a choice between redoubling and introducing his hearts. Since North might get both his suits into the auction, it is going to be interesting to see how high he plans to go before the red card comes out. If South passes initially, then West may respond 1♥, with East perhaps finding a simple raise to 2♥. Now E/W rate to go off the rails; very few pairs will emerge with as many as eight tricks, whichever side ends up declaring.

Bd: 27 ♠ 10 8
 Dlr: South ♥ A 9 7 6 4
 Vul: None ♦ J 8 3
 ♣ 9 7 5

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

♠ Q 5 3 2
 ♥ 10 5
 ♦ 7 6 4 2
 ♣ K 8 4

Some ne'er-do-wells will open the West hand 1NT, but the saner amongst us are going to prefer 1♣, planning to reverse into diamonds at the next turn. Now you'd expect East to bid spades, rebid notrump while setting up a game-forcing sequence, and then to invite slam with a 4NT call. At that point West will have no real extras for his reverse, plus no great fit, so should probably pass 4NT. Slam is certainly no better than the club finesse, but today with clubs 3-3 and the ♣K inside 12 tricks are a walk in the park.

Bd: 31 ♠ Q 10 6
 Dlr: South ♥ J 10 5 3
 Vul: N-S ♦ K J 2
 ♣ K J 8

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

♠ J 7 5
 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ 10 9 7 6
 ♣ A 9 3 2

In third seat North has a classic 11-count that really doesn't look like an opening bid...or does it? Being in third seat does funny things to people. If North doesn't open, very few Easts will pass the deal out. Thus you'd expect E/W to settle in a partscore in notrump; they may be able to play on both majors, and set up a long spade, to take seven tricks. Conversely, if North gets into the bidding, all but the most cautious of Wests ought to find a way to show the majors. Now his side should achieve at least eight tricks in a spade or heart partscore.

Bd: 28 ♠ K 9
 Dlr: West ♥ A K J 4 2
 Vul: N-S ♦ Q 9 5
 ♣ 10 8 4

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

♠ A J
 ♥ 7 6
 ♦ A 10 4 2
 ♣ K J 6 5 2

Whether West finds an aggressive opening bid or not, N/S should end up in 3NT, more often from South than North. The defenders do best to lead spades, after which declarer needs hearts to lie very favorably. He can subsequently play on diamonds for the extra tricks he needs. For example, South can win the spade lead with the ♠A, finesse in hearts, then pass the ♦Q. This line produces nine tricks but declarer will struggle to do better than that. His most successful line is actually leading up to the ♦Q before tackling hearts, when he can take +630.

Bd: 32 ♠ J 10 4
 Dlr: West ♥ 10 4
 Vul: E-W ♦ K 9 8 3
 ♣ A Q J 5

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

♠ K
 ♥ J 3 2
 ♦ J 7 6 5 2
 ♣ 10 9 7 4

If any West opens anything but 1♥ — such as a weak notrump — please don't tell anyone. Come what may, E/W should locate their spades, and East will settle in 4♠. N/S will cash two club winners, but if they then play a third, East will ruff, and can now go all out for 11 tricks by taking a first round spade finesse, or he can make the safety play of playing off ♠A first. Equally, after two rounds of clubs, a diamond switch by North gives declarer the option of finessing, or rising with ♦A, in the search for 11 tricks. Accordingly, making +620 here figures to score E/W well.