

ACBL-wide Senior Pairs Game #2

Wednesday, October 15, 2025 – morning or afternoon

Analysis by Mike Roberts



Mike Roberts' best claim to fame as a player is as a Junior on the Canadian team for four World Championships, the first time as the partner of Bronia Jenkins. He has a few scattered regional wins to his credit, although he is proudest of finishing average on the second day of the Reisinger. After finishing his Junior career, he switched to directing, and was a familiar face at NABCs over the last two decades. He now lives in Victoria, British Columbia, and still directs locally, both at tournaments and at clubs.

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

♠ 7 5 4 3
♥ 9 7 5 3
♦ A
♣ A K Q 10

♠ Q J 9
♥ K 6 2
♦ 10 6 5 4 3
♣ 9 3

W N
S E

♠ A K 10 6 2
♥ J 10
♦ K 8 7 2
♣ 6 4

♠ 8
♥ A Q 8 4
♦ Q J 9
♣ J 8 7 5 2

After North passes, East might open 1♠. South will probably double, and West will either splinter, despite the stiff ace, or make some other conventional raise to end in 4♠. If East does pass, South has a light third-seat opener of 1♣, or even 1♥ for the lead; that will make it tougher to get to 4♠, but after East backs in with a spade overcall, West should drive to game. There's little chance that the defense will cash their hearts on the go – if they do, there's no reason to guess trumps, so the defense will take one spade and two hearts. Without a heart lead, declarer needs to ruff two diamonds, and pitch one heart on a high club – that requires careful timing, or a scissors coup to keep North off lead. 4♠ will be bid at almost every table, and most will find some way to make five.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 7 6 5
♥ K
♦ 10 8 5 4 3 2
♣ 6 5

♠ J 4 2
♥ 10 9 7 3 2
♦ Q 9
♣ K 8 2

W N
S E

♠ A 10 8 3
♥ J 8 6
♦ K
♣ J 10 9 7 4

♠ Q 9
♥ A Q 5 4
♦ A J 7 6
♣ A Q 3

South might open 2NT if 19 is within their range for that bid – if it's 20-21, this doesn't really look like a 19 that should be upgraded. A 1♦ opener will shut out West, North will respond 1♥. South should just jump to 4♥. If South does open 2NT, the auction will be quick – 2NT-3♦; 3♥-3NT-4♥. Without hints, declarer will probably use the ♣K to play a heart to the queen – the defense will then take two spades and two hearts for down one; maybe even down two if they can get two diamond ruffs. If West led a spade, East has to avoid the trap of playing the ♠10 at trick 1. If West chooses a diamond as the opening lead, declarer can do some card reading, noting East's original pass, and place the ♥K in West. The ♥A brings great joy – declarer can then cross to the ♣K, finesse the ♥J, and make five. Not crystal clear, but it's not that anti-percentage a play anyway, with ruffs lurking. 4♥ down one will be below average, but a common result.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 5
♥ A 3
♦ A 10 8 7 2
♣ A J 7 3

♠ —
♥ 10 8 4 2
♦ K J 6 5 3
♣ Q 10 8 5

W N
S E

♠ 9 7 6 4 2
♥ Q 9 7
♦ Q 4
♣ 6 4 2

♠ K Q J 10 8 3
♥ K J 6 5
♦ 9
♣ K 9

South will open 1♠, and West should choose 1NT over 2♦ – the suit is pretty bad for a two-level overcall, and 1NT is very descriptive. North might bid 2♦ but will probably pass – either way, South will rebid 2♠ or 2♥. North might raise 2♥ to 3♥, but will pass 2♠. A disciplined West should not act again if they overcalled 1NT; E/W playing a suit contract will be a disaster. In 2♥, South, non-double dummy, has two hearts and the two minor aces to lose – they have to make sure their spades are established, but that's not too tough. As long as the play in hearts start with low to the jack, declarer should be fine. Spades will play a trick or so worse than hearts. If West does bid 2♥ instead of 1NT, it might end up with the same potential contracts (2♠S, 2♥/3♥), depending on South's reopening call, although if South manages to reopen with a double – jackpot! 1NT by E/W will take seven tricks (or more) in practice; the double-dummy analysis presumes a magical heart or club lead.

Board 4West Deals
Both Vul

♠ K Q 10 7
 ♥ A K 7 5
 ♦ 10 6
 ♣ 10 6 5

♠ 9 8 4 3
 ♥ J 8 6 4 3
 ♦ K 4
 ♣ J 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A J 5 2
 ♥ Q 10 2
 ♦ Q J 8
 ♣ A 9 7

♠ 6
 ♥ 9
 ♦ A 9 7 5 3 2
 ♣ K Q 8 3 2

West has enough to open, and 1♣ is standard for most players. North will pass, and East has a very distributional hand with good club support – it could be a very good playing hand, or very poor, depending on partner's honor location. Here, with partner's honors in East's short suits, 3♣ is the limit of the hand, and even that requires West to respect partner's choice. Potential successful auctions include 1♣-2♣ (inverted); 2NT-3♣; Pass, or just 1♣-3♣ (limit); Pass. A 3NT contract is poor, and could end up going down quite a lot. A club contract by E/W plays well; if the defense doesn't cash the ♠A on the go, it can disappear on the ♥A K, and declarer could lose just three tricks in the minors, although they might do worse. +130 should be the top E/W score, unless N/S plays some contract that leads to -200; 2♥, for example. More aggression with the East hands might work out on some other hand, but it doesn't work here.

Board 5North Deals
N-S Vul

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

♠ K J 9 4 2
 ♥ K 7 2
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A K 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 8
 ♥ J 10 4 3
 ♦ 9 8 7
 ♣ 10 9 7 3

♠ 5 3
 ♥ A Q 9 6
 ♦ A 3
 ♣ Q J 8 5 4

North will open 1♠, although if their 1NT range includes a good 14, this hand seems to fit. After 1♠, East can choose between a disciplined pass, an off-shape double, or 2♣ on a poor suit. If East passes, West is going to be bidding diamonds on most auctions, either balancing or right over 1NT. Diamond contracts will play fairly well; there are six diamonds and two hearts (with the finesse) on top, and the ninth trick will probably come from either a spade ruff with the ♦A, or using the ♣Q J as a source of discards. North-South don't have a good fit anywhere – spades is best, and even there, with the heart finesse off and spades breaking badly, declarer will do well to take seven tricks. Any other suit is worse, as is notrump.

Board 6East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 9 8 4
 ♥ A K 5 4
 ♦ 4
 ♣ Q 9 6 4

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J
 ♥ Q 8 7
 ♦ A J 8 7 6
 ♣ J 10 2

♠ K 5 2
 ♥ J 9
 ♦ K 10 3 2
 ♣ A K 8 3

East deals, and should open 1♦ or 1♣ according to taste. 1♦ should silence South, and the auction will proceed to 3NT by East. If East opened 1♣, South will probably overcall 1♦. West can double to show 4-4 in the majors; after East rebids 1NT, West has choices, but they all probably lead to 3NT by East. In 3NT, 10 tricks are possible, but on a diamond lead to the queen and king, declarer should be worried about North getting on lead, and might just cash out for nine tricks. A non-diamond lead will save a quick trick, but declarer has time to attack either major, and will take at least nine with the spades dropping and the ♥10 onside. 3NT will be almost universal, with the results split between nine and 10 tricks.

Board 7South Deals
Both Vul

♠ K J 9 7 6
 ♥ 7 6 5 4
 ♦ K J 2
 ♣ K

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A
 ♥ Q 2
 ♦ A Q 8 7 6 5 4
 ♣ Q 7 2

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

Finally – some distribution! South opens 1♦, and West has a comfortable 1♠ call – the heart suit is too short and too weak to consider Michaels. North has a tough choice – 1NT with no spade stopper, a light 2♣, an off-shape negative double (my choice), or a disciplined pass. I'd choose the negative double, but the textbook call is pass. East will raise spades – if there's a bid that described a "mixed raise" (5-9 points, four trumps, some distribution) – say 3♦ for example – then this hand seems to fit. South is good enough to either bid or double 3♦, but when East backs in with 3♠, it's very tough to bid 4♦, even if partner didn't pass over 1♠. East-West will take eight tricks in spades, barring misplay, and North-South can take 10 tricks in diamonds, losing two diamonds and a heart, but it's tough for North or South to take the push to that level. If N/S wander into clubs, it won't play as well, with the trumps breaking badly and transportation problems, but should still scramble for nine tricks.

Board 8

West Deals
None Vul

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

West has a normal 1♣ opener, although it is technically balanced, and some might open 1NT (which is legal with this shape). After 1♣, East will probably stretch a little to respond 1♥. South might pop in with a light, but interfering, 2♦ overcall – whether South bids or not, West's next call should be 3♣, which will end most auctions. There are five losers in clubs, and not much scope for misdefense. Diamonds by N/S can technically be held to seven tricks, but that requires West to play three rounds of clubs to remove the ♣Q as a winner, and also unblock the ♠K to avoid an endplay. N/S will take eight tricks a lot of the time. If West did open 1NT, East will either transfer or use garbage Stayman to end up in 2♥, and will take eight tricks, as the defense just doesn't have the power to stop them.

Board 9

North Deals
E-W Vul

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

With 21 HCP balanced, one would expect North to open 2NT. South will use Stayman – whether this is puppet or not, N/S will end up in 3NT. The only lead to hold it to three is the ♥J (check those heart spots!), which doesn't seem at all likely, and 10 tricks will be fairly normal.

West might pop in with spades, although the vulnerability urges caution. Spade contracts have eight tricks, so if N/S doubled 3♠ instead of bidding 3NT, they'll score poorly. Without a 2NT opener, the auction will be slower, and West will definitely be involved, but it's hard seeing too many people playing anything but 3NT, with E/W being vulnerable.

Board 10

East Deals
Both Vul

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

After East's pass, South has a pretty normal 1♣ opener nowadays. West will probably just bid 1♥, although some might get frisky opposite a passed hand and bid 2♥ or 3♥. North will make a negative double, showing exactly four spades, and East will raise, possibly to the three level. South has minimum points, but seven clubs, and most will find a 3♣ call, but not more. E/W will compete to 3♥, and North, with extra values, will either raise to 4♣ or make a "do something smart" double, which South should pull.

Clubs takes 10 tricks only if East-West find a diamond shift before declarer can attack spades, and even then, there's potential for error. 11 tricks will be a common result in clubs. If E/W are in hearts, declarer will probably guess diamonds on the auction, since South has many more black cards than North, and when the ♦8 drops, that should be nine tricks. If N/S are lucky enough to wander into spades, that plays very well with the 3-3 split – declarer can duck a trump and take a lot of tricks. That's unlikely to happen, unless South is very brave – if it didn't work, it would be described as foolish.

Board 11

South Deals
None Vul

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

South will start with a pass. West might open a very light 1♠, which will quickly lead to 3NT. If they do pass, and North passes, the auction will start with 1♦ by East. Assuming South passes, West will respond 1♠, and East will rebid 2♦. West has too much to pass, and will bid either 3♦ or 2NT – either way East will bid 3NT. North's opening 1♦ in third seat will make the auction trickier, but might still end up in 3NT by E/W. Absent a 1♦ opener by North, 3NT is a difficult contract on a heart lead – transportation is awful. Winning the ♥Q and running the ♦9 works, and isn't that bad a line, but it looks like if you start with the ♦K, good defense will beat it. Other leads make 3NT more likely to make. Expect to see a fair mixture between 3NT making and 3NT down one.

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K J 8 7 5
♥ 9 7
♦ Q 8 2
♣ Q 5 2

♠ A
♥ A Q 8 5
♦ K 5 4 3
♣ 10 9 7 6

♠ Q 10 9 6
♥ K J 3
♦ A J 10
♣ J 8 3

W N E S

♠ 4 3 2
♥ 10 6 4 2
♦ 9 7 6
♣ A K 4

West hopefully passes, and North will open, probably 1♦. After East's pass, South responds 1♠. North will rebid either 1NT or 2♣; either way, South will probably rebid 2NT, but might bid 3NT or 3♦. North is close to accepting with 3NT – it depends mostly on opening bid style. 3NT should go down on a heart lead – the percentage play in the diamond suit is to play low to the 10, since you can pick up Q-x with East, but not West. Unless the defense sets up the 13th club for declarer before establishing their spade trick, that will be down one. If declarer goes the other way in diamonds, that's at least nine tricks. West might fleetingly consider doubling 3NT on an invitational auction to get a spade lead, but the spade suit isn't that good, and the side suits seem to be breaking well for declarer, so it's not advised.

Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

♠ 8 7 6
♥ K J 9 7 3
♦ Q 4 2
♣ 10 3

♠ 5
♥ 6 5
♦ 9 8 7 5
♣ K J 8 6 4 2

♠ K J 10 2
♥ A Q 2
♦ A J 10 6
♣ A Q

W N E S

♠ A Q 9 4 3
♥ 10 8 4
♦ K 3
♣ 9 7 5

If the auction does start with two passes, South will open 2NT. North will probably hope that clubs come in, and bid 3NT. If West leads the traditional fourth best heart, declarer will win the queen, and should test clubs. When they break 3-2, the clubs are good for six tricks, just as North hoped. South can pitch one spade and one heart easily, but has a choice to make for the other two pitches. Whether they pitch another spade and one diamond, or two diamonds, a pointed suit lead from dummy will get up the tenth trick – good pitching and other defense will hold it to that, but there's scope for error to make five. If West led a spade, either because partner bid them or as a "safe" lead, East might win and switch to a heart – that forces declarer to guess better, but they'll probably end up with 10 tricks as well.

Board 14
East Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 5 4
♥ 10 2
♦ 8 4
♣ A K 10 6 5 4

♠ Q J 8 6 3
♥ A 9 4
♦ 9 2
♣ J 9 7

♠ K 10 2
♥ K J 7 6
♦ A K Q 6
♣ 8 2

W N E S

♠ A 7
♥ Q 8 5 3
♦ J 10 7 5 3
♣ Q 3

South will open a strong 1NT in second seat. If West passes, North will transfer, and either pass or make a pushy 2NT call. 2NT works well, as South, with a good 16 and a promoted ♠K, will bid 4♠. If West interferes with a double or 2♣, the auction will probably proceed the same way, although it might end up played by North. No matter – the defense can cash two clubs and a spade, but declarer should make 4♠ – even if they tangle up their entries, the heart finesse is there as a backup. If N/S wandered into notrump, and West led the ♣A (or K), that would block the suit, and declarer will probably make 10 tricks – they should do everything to try to take 10, because they have to beat the +420 in 4♠.

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A K 10 4
♥ K
♦ A K J 10 8 2
♣ 8 5

♠ J 6 2
♥ 2
♦ —
♣ A Q 10 9 7 6 4 3 2

♠ Q 9 8 7 3
♥ 10 7 5 3
♦ Q 7 3
♣ K

W N E S

♠ 5
♥ A Q J 9 8 6 4
♦ 9 6 5 4
♣ J

South passes. West is a little light to open 2♣, and it would wrong-side (and cramp) the auction if East responded 2♦, so they should just open 1♦. North has a choice of how high to go – at any other vulnerability, 5♣ would be a standout, but here it's so easy to double and go -500 that 4♣ is probably enough. East will bid 4♥, but West probably won't pass, and try 4♠. East will bid either 5♦ or 5♥. In hearts, North should try letting the ♣K hold, in the hopes of getting a diamond ruff. South should read this, and after a diamond ruff and the ♣A, South will get a trump trick to hold East to 10 tricks. If North just overtook the ♣K to play another high honor, and East ruffed high, that's 11 tricks; if they ruffed low, South must return a diamond to hold it to 10. If West plays diamonds, best defense holds this to 11 tricks, and 12 or even 13 are possible on a major-suit lead, but hearts will probably be the more popular contract. Some tables might end up playing clubs. The defense must be careful to get a third spade trick – either via a ruff or declarer misguessing – to hold North to nine tricks.

Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 8 7 4 2
♥ K 5
♦ 10 9 7
♣ A Q 6 3

♠ K 10 9 6
♥ Q 9 7 6 2
♦ Q 8 3
♣ 4



♠ Q 5 3
♥ A 8 4
♦ K 5 4 2
♣ K J 8

♠ A J
♥ J 10 3
♦ A J 6
♣ 10 9 7 5 2

West and North should pass. East might open a third-seat 1♣, but with a poor suit, will probably pass. South should open 1♦ in fourth – 16 Pearson points (HCP + spades) says to open. North will respond 1♥, and South will rebid 1NT. North should probably back out of 1NT given the singleton club, and either choose 2♥ or 2♦ as a resting place. Hearts can be held to seven tricks if E/W get their spade ruff and is careful thereafter – if not, and declarer manages to lead towards the ♠Q, they should make two or three. Diamonds is a bit more challenging, but it's still should take eight tricks on most lines. If North does decide to say in 1NT, a club lead should beat it. If E/W do manage to buy the contract in clubs – say if East did open 1♣ – they should just lose a trick in each suit, and make three, although they do have to guess hearts to do that.

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

♠ 9 2
♥ 8 6
♦ 9 8 7 5 2
♣ K Q 8 6

♠ 10 7 5
♥ A Q 10 7 3
♦ K Q
♣ A 5 4



♠ K Q 4 3
♥ 9 5 4 2
♦ A J 10
♣ 10 2

♠ A J 8 6
♥ K J
♦ 6 4 3
♣ J 9 7 3

Whether North opens 1♥ or 1NT, the contract will inevitably end up as 4♥ by North. This will normally take nine tricks if declarer finesses hearts twice, 10 tricks if they don't. East might double a 1♥ opener; the shape is right, but with minimum points in the wrong suits, it's discouraged. The best line in the suit is to play low to the queen, then the ace, but it's close between that and the double finesse.

Board 18
East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ A J 8 6
♥ J 6
♦ K 4
♣ Q 9 6 5 4

♠ 5 4 2
♥ A 9 8 5 3
♦ Q J 10 9
♣ A



♠ K 7
♥ K 10 7
♦ 8 7 2
♣ K J 7 3 2

♠ Q 10 9 3
♥ Q 4 2
♦ A 6 5 3
♣ 10 8

After two passes, West will probably take advantage of the vulnerability to open 1♣ (or even 1♠!) in third seat. North will overcall in hearts, and East will either make a negative double (if West opened 1♣), or raise spades (if West opened 1♠). South will raise hearts, and it becomes a matter of competitive judgment. Spades will probably win the day, and as a practical matter, it will probably take nine tricks – the defense has to be very passive to hold it to eight. Hearts by N/S will take eight tricks at best, and might even only take seven, if the defense engineers a diamond ruff, and declarer doesn't pick up trumps after that. I'd expect E/W to be plus at most tables, but it's going to vary between +100, +110, +140 and +200.

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 3
♥ A K Q 8 7
♦ Q 7 2
♣ Q J 7 4

♠ Q 9 7 6 5
♥ 9 5 4
♦ K 6 3
♣ 9 3



♠ A K J 10 8 4
♥ 10 3
♦ J 4
♣ A K 10

♠ 2
♥ J 6 2
♦ A 10 9 8 5
♣ 8 6 5 2

South deals and opens 1♠. West might double if the hearts weren't so good, but will probably just overcall 2♥. North has five trumps, but nothing else attractive – except the vulnerability. Adherents to the Law will bid 4♠ right away, but others might just bid 2♠S or 3♠S (weak). East can bid 3♥ over 2♠, but again, red vs. white will discourage them. Regardless, South will probably just bid 4♠, with six trumps and a nice suit otherwise. As long as declarer has to play diamonds themselves, it's down one. Good defense can hold hearts to eight tricks: spade to the king, ♣K A, club ruff, and exit with a heart to wait for your diamond trick. This doesn't look too tough. E/W who compete too high should be punished. This would be a very different analysis if N/S were vul, and E/W were not vul, but here 4♠ down one will be a very common result.

Board 20
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ 9 5 4 3
♥ K 3
♦ K 9 5 4
♣ 10 5 4

♠ Q 8
♥ A 10 8 6 4 2
♦ Q 7 3
♣ A Q



♠ A K 7
♥ Q J 5
♦ J 6
♣ K J 9 8 7

♠ J 10 6 2
♥ 9 7
♦ A 10 8 2
♣ 6 3 2

This is a straightforward hand. North will open 1♥, South will bid 2♣, North will rebid 2♥. South will raise – if N/S don't play 2/1, they'll bid 4♥, which will end the auction. If South bids 3♥, North might cuebid once, but with no diamond control, and neither hand holding huge extra values, it will be unlikely they'll get past 4♥. East West can cash the ♦ A K, but there's no sign to lead them, absent a very informative auction. On a non-diamond lead, declarer can win in dummy, take the heart finesse, and end up with 13 tricks. If N/S wander into 3NT (hey, it happens), that will work out well, taking the same tricks as hearts, although against 3NT a diamond lead is more likely.

Board 21
North Deals
N-S Vul

♠ K 6
♥ Q 8 7 6 5 4
♦ 4
♣ K J 10 7

♠ 9 7 2
♥ J 9 3
♦ Q 9 8 3 2
♣ 9 5



♠ Q 8
♥ A K 10
♦ A K J 10 7 6
♣ Q 6

♠ A J 10 5 4 3
♥ 2
♦ 5
♣ A 8 4 3 2

After North passes, East probably opens 1♠; pass isn't modern bridge, and the hand is ill suited for any preempt. South is too strong to overcall 2♦ and should start with double. West will do something – 2♥, especially if nonforcing, or maybe 1NT. East will rebid 2♠, and South will bid 3♦. West should raise spades, and North has a similar problem to board 19, but here they're vulnerable. Five trumps feels like it must raise once, but the flat hand means they shouldn't bid 5♦. East will probably bid 4♠ (6-5 come alive!), and that should end the auction – South shouldn't double just on points. 4♠ depends on guessing the black queens, and they're somewhat indicated to be in South, but it's not going to be very clear. Expect most to finesse the spade through North, but get clubs right to make four. N/S do poorly in diamonds with the black queens being useless on offense – it's not that easy to double, but N/S should only take eight tricks. They have to cash clubs early – if they don't, South can cash a heart, ruff out the spades and exit a club to avoid the heart loser.

Board 22
East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ Q 4
♥ K 5 3
♦ J 10 6
♣ 10 8 7 6 4

♠ A J 10 6 2
♥ A 9 8 6 4
♦ K 9
♣ 3



♠ K 9 8
♥ Q
♦ 8 4 3
♣ A K Q J 9 2

♠ 7 5 3
♥ J 10 7 2
♦ A Q 7 5 2
♣ 5

This one is interesting. South will open 1♣, and North will respond in the higher of their five-card suits, with 1♠. A very aggressive East might act, but will probably be deterred by the colors. South's ♥Q is probably wasted, but the clubs look solid, and the ♠K is a very good card; it's probably worth 3♣. Either way, North will rebid hearts (unless 2♥ is nonforcing, a common expert treatment), and South will bid spades. If South rebid 2♣, North will just sign off in 4♠; if South rebid 3♣ (or 2♠), North is barely worth one slam try, but South should shut it down. Assuming the contract is some number of spades, the opening lead will be crucial – a singleton club works well, but the reasonable ♥J lead turns out horribly, as declarer can now take a ruffing finesse against the ♥10. On a club lead, if declarer reasonably counts on the clubs for six tricks, they might start out playing trumps, finessing against West to protect the ♦K. They get the good news in trumps on the second round, but if they just draw the third round of trumps, ending in dummy, the bad club split might hold spades to 10 tricks, if West covers the ♥Q. The ♥7 turns out to be a very big card. Any lead other than the singleton club will probably lead to 11 tricks, but on a club lead, unless declarer can see all the cards, they will probably take a maximum of 10. On this hand, 3NT (by North) will be a winning score if North guesses spades – 10 or 11 tricks, depending on the lead.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ A K J 9 5
♥ K 5 4
♦ J 5 4
♣ 8 6

♠ 8 7
♥ A 10 9 6
♦ 9 7
♣ K 9 7 4 2



♠ Q 4 3 2
♥ Q J 3
♦ Q 8 3
♣ A Q 10

♠ 10 6
♥ 8 7 2
♦ A K 10 6 2
♣ J 5 3

Well, it's technically 13 points, so South has to open, but with only one high honor, bad spots and 4-3-3-3, they shouldn't be happy about it. West will overcall 1♠, and North should scrape up enough for a negative double. If East passes, South will rebid 1NT – that might end the auction, but North can retreat to clubs. East might pop in with diamonds at some point, but E/W have to be careful they don't compete to 3♦, which will be down two if N/S can cash their hearts early enough.

If South does play notrump, a diamond lead and the ♠10 switch will beat it one, but on any other defense, declarer can take at least eight tricks, and maybe 10, assuming they take the heart finesse. If South plays 2♣ or 3♣, the defense has a shot at holding it to two – cashing the ♦A K, then the ♠A K, and then playing a third spade forces declarer to guess who has the ♣J, and it's close to a pure guess – if they get it wrong, it's eight tricks. If they get it right, or the defense errs, it will be nine.

Board 24
West Deals
None Vul

♠ —
♥ K 4 3
♦ K Q 7 6 5 4
♣ 10 5 3 2

♠ Q J 8 5 3
♥ 8 5
♦ 9 8
♣ K 9 7 6



♠ 9 7 4
♥ Q 10 9 7 6 2
♦ J 2
♣ 8 4

♠ A K 10 6 2
♥ A J
♦ A 10 3
♣ A Q J

East has a monster 23 count. West could choose to open 2♦ – that will instantly get East into the slam zone. If they find out about the ♥K (via a feature ask), and the ♦K Q (via RKC), they should be comfortable bidding 6NT, which makes seven when the ♣K is onside. 7♦ is not a bad shot – it would be a great contract if West was 2=3=6=2, and at worst it would be on a club finesse.

If West doesn't open 2♦, and North passes, East will open 2♣. South might interpose some number of hearts to rob EW of bidding room – West can introduce diamonds naturally, and that will drive East to slam, but might talk them out into 6♦ instead of 6NT or 7♦. If West plays a diamond contract, a club lead might scare them into rising with the ace, but that seems to be the only rational line that would not lead to 13 tricks.

Anyone who doesn't bid slam will be getting a poor board.

Board 25
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A Q J 9 7 3
♥ J 2
♦ K 9 8
♣ K 5

♠ —
♥ Q 10 9 7
♦ 10 7 4 3 2
♣ Q 9 7 2



♠ K 10 5 2
♥ 5 4 3
♦ 6 5
♣ A J 10 6

♠ 8 6 4
♥ A K 8 6
♦ A Q J
♣ 8 4 3

Another E/W monster. East opens 1♣ in second; that should shut out South. West will respond 1♠, and East will rebid 1NT. West is justified simply going to 4♠, but with a flat hand, they might investigate 3NT. When they find out that partner has three spades, they'll probably settle in 4♠.

The play should be straightforward: declarer will start by playing a spade to the queen, and finds out the good/bad in spades. With approximately 245 entries to the East hand, declarer should be able to finesse spades three times, draw trumps, and still be able to lead towards the ♣K.

3NT isn't an anticipated contract, unless E/W is very hungry for a top, but if E/W do end up there, they'll take 12 tricks in roughly the same manner – it will just be a little scarier.

Board 26
East Deals
Both Vul

♠ J 9 7 5 4
♥ J 9 6 5
♦ 8 7
♣ A 10

♠ K Q 8 6 2
♥ A Q
♦ K 6 5 3 2
♣ J



♠ 10
♥ 10 8 3
♦ Q J 9
♣ Q 8 7 4 3 2

♠ A 3
♥ K 7 4 2
♦ A 10 4
♣ K 9 6 5

East opens 1♣, which will quiet South. Unless playing Meckwell (more on that below), West will respond 1♠. North has the best hand at the table, and might try 2♦, despite the poor suit. East should pass, as it's not strong enough for 2♥ or 2NT. That might cause E/W to lose the heart suit, especially if South raises after East's pass.

If E/W arrive in hearts, bad breaks are going to make it tricky to take even eight tricks on a diamond lead, but the perfect layout in hearts will help. N/S do OK in diamonds; a trump lead will do very well, but in real life East will probably end up giving up a trick or two in the majors, and eight or nine tricks wouldn't be a surprise. Meckwell, you ask? A 2♥ (some use 2♦) response to 1 of a minor shows five spades, four or five hearts, and a "one-bid" hand (5-9 points). It finds all major-suit fits quickly – it sometimes works poorly if there's no fit, but great when it does. On this hand, East should pass 2♥ if North passes.

Board 27
South Deals
None Vul

♠ 8 6 2
♥ 6 5 4 3
♦ 10 8 5 2
♣ A K

♠ 10 5 3
♥ 9 2
♦ K Q J 6
♣ 9 8 6 4



♠ Q J 7 4
♥ J 10 8 7
♦ A 9 7
♣ 10 7

♠ A K 9
♥ A K Q
♦ 4 3
♣ Q J 5 3 2

After three passes (unless North gets cheeky in third seat), East will either stretch to open 2NT, or open 1♣. Either way, E/W should end up in 3NT on an uncontested auction. A major-suit lead leads to a quick 10 tricks – if South doesn't know the major-suit distribution they might feel squeezed on the run of the clubs, but best pitching will hold it to 10. N/S can only hold 3NT to three on a diamond lead – and they have to be careful not to block the suit – but that seems unlikely unless North bid or is on opening lead.

Board 28
West Deals
N-S Vul

♠ J 3
♥ J 10 7
♦ 10 8
♣ K Q J 9 7 5

♠ K Q 10 9 5
♥ 8 5 4 3
♦ J
♣ 8 4 2



♠ A 8 4 2
♥ A K Q 6 2
♦ 7
♣ A 10 6

♠ 7 6
♥ 9
♦ A K Q 9 6 5 4 3 2
♣ 3

Not vul vs. vul, West might very well open 3♣ in first seat. Whether they do or not, North will pass, and East has to decide how far to go with their solid nine-card diamond suit. 5♦ feels right – it chews up most of the N/S bidding room, but is at a safe level. South will probably say double, and North is close between pass (+300), or 5♠. If they do bid 5♠, East is still at the safety level if they compete with 6♦ – N/S have to double this, because 6♠ is down one. I'd expect 5♦ doubled to be the most common score – preempts work. If North does, oddly, choose to open 2♠, it's hard to blame South for bidding 6♠, and if they sound confident enough, they might talk East into sacrificing in 7♦.

Board 29
North Deals
Both Vul

♠ A 10 9 4 3
♥ 7
♦ Q 7 3 2
♣ Q 6 5

♠ Q J 8 5 2
♥ A 10 5 2
♦ A
♣ A 10 3



♠ K 6
♥ K Q 9 4
♦ 10 9 6
♣ K J 7 4

♠ 7
♥ J 8 6 3
♦ K J 8 5 4
♣ 9 8 2

North will open 1♠, and South will either bid 2♣ (Standard, or a pushy 2/1), or bid 1NT if forcing. Either way, North will bid 2♥, and South will probably just bid 4♥. North very well might take a push with some kind of slam try, which South will reject, but it doesn't feel like N/S quite have the power to be playing 6♥, even though it's a decent spot looking at the N/S hands. Unfortunately, E/W have cards as well. A singleton spade lead, followed by a ruff, will at worst hold it to five, and declarer still has to guess clubs for 11 tricks. A diamond lead makes it more interesting – declarer has guesses in trumps and clubs. Anywhere from 9 to 11 tricks seems possible. Aggressive slam bidders will not be rewarded on this hand.

Board 30
East Deals
None Vul

♠ A K
♥ J 4
♦ K Q J 10 3 2
♣ Q 8 3

♠ J 8 6 5 2
♥ Q 10 7 2
♦ 7
♣ J 10 7



♠ 10 4 3
♥ K 9 8 5
♦ 8 4
♣ 9 6 5 2

♠ Q 9 7
♥ A 6 3
♦ A 9 6 5
♣ A K 4

E/W have 13 top tricks in either diamonds or notrump, but can they get there? After East opens a strong notrump, West can find out about the three aces and the ♣K with Gerber or Blackwood, but finding out about the ♠Q is very tough. Relayers might have a shot, but for mere mortals it will require a leap of faith.

Board 31
South Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 10 9 6
♥ A 9 8
♦ K 9 3
♣ 10 8 4 3

♠ K 5 4
♥ J 10 7 5
♦ A Q 10 7
♣ J 7



♠ A Q J 8 7 3 2
♥ K 6 3
♦ 6 2
♣ 5

♠ —
♥ Q 4 2
♦ J 8 5 4
♣ A K Q 9 6 2

South deals, and probably opens 1♠, although at these colors a heavy 3♠ isn't out of the question. If South did open 3♠, North will probably raise to 4♠, and East will bid 5♣. Someone should double that – it takes a diamond lead, or bad guessing, to beat it two, otherwise down one. After a 1♠ opener, North has a limit raise. Depending on methods, that's either a 3♠ call, or a forcing 1NT, planning to jump to 3♠. Whatever East does – double or 2♣ – South will rebid spades, and the knowledge of a 6th spade should be enough for North to bid 4♠; even if they only raise to 3♠, South will probably bid on with an extra spade. 4♠ should make exactly four, losing one club and two hearts or some variation. The 3-0 trump splits means endplays aren't going to happen, but E/W might lose an overtrick if they play hearts and declarer guesses right.

Board 32West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 6
♥ Q J 4 2
♦ 6 5 2
♣ K Q 6 4 3

♠ Q 5 4
♥ A K 9 8 6 3
♦ J
♣ 9 8 5

♠ J 7 2
♥ 10 5
♦ K 10 9 8 4
♣ 10 7 2

♠ A K 10 9 8 3
♥ 7
♦ A Q 7 3
♣ A J

After West passes, North is close between 1♥ and 2♥; but it seems too good for 2♥ nonvulnerable. Over 2♥, South can hopefully bid 2♠ forcing – North should at least raise to 3♠, and if they can bid 4♦ as a splinter raise, so much the better – South might make a slam try and get to 6♠. If North opens 1♥, South will bid 1♠. West might pop in with 2♣, which makes life easier for N/S as a support double clarifies the fit at a low level. If West passes, North will probably rebid 2♥ (2♠ is attractive, though!), after which South rebids 3♦, North rebids 3♠, and South will get to 6♠. In 6♠, seven is only makeable if you float the ♦J, and ruff two diamonds, giving up on 3-3 hearts – the ♥A K takes care of the club loser. Most will make only six, but sheer point count will mean that more bid it than don't.

Board 33North Deals
None Vul

♠ Q 10 6
♥ 9 7 3
♦ Q J 9 3
♣ J 8 5

♠ J 9 5 3
♥ A J 6
♦ K 8 4
♣ Q 9 2

♠ A K 7
♥ K Q 4
♦ 10 7 6 5 2
♣ A 6

♠ 8 4 2
♥ 10 8 5 2
♦ A
♣ K 10 7 4 3

The auction might be as simple as Pass-1NT-All Pass; if East-West don't play a 15-17 1NT they might end up in a diamond partscore. There doesn't seem to be a way for N/S to enter the auction. Diamonds will take nine tricks, losing one heart, one club and two diamonds, unless North covers the ♦Q lead from dummy – ouch! In 1NT, a club lead immediately will get N/S 7 tricks, as long as North plays the ♣9 if dummy plays the 5 or 8. Even on a major suit lead, if South switches to a club when they win the ♦A, E/W goes down one. But if the club suit isn't attacked, declarer has time to set up their long diamonds, and will take seven, and maybe eight, tricks. Fourth best from your longest and strongest, just like your grandmother told you!

Board 34East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 9 6 2
♥ A K Q 9 3
♦ Q 10 4
♣ J 8

♠ A K 10 5 3
♥ 8 7 6 2
♦ J 9 2
♣ 10

♠ Q J 8 7 4
♥ 10 5 4
♦ 8 6
♣ A K 6

♠ —
♥ J
♦ A K 7 5 3
♣ Q 9 7 5 4 3 2

South had better be careful. Assuming they open 1♣ in second seat, West will overcall 1♥, and North will bid 1♠. East will raise hearts – either a simple 2♥ or maybe a 2♣ or 2♠ cuebid. South has a lot of distribution, but not many points. 3♣ works out OK, but if they chose 3♦, it turns out the shape doesn't make up for it. In 3♣, declarer has to lose one heart, one diamond and three clubs – there's a double-dummy line to make nine, but it's very unlikely to happen at the table. Diamonds has a better shot at nine tricks; declarer has to play it as a crossruff, and utilize dummy's ♦J 9. E/W contracts don't do too badly – hearts should take eight tricks if North leads a spade and they take their ruff; it might make nine otherwise. If E/W end up in spades (e.g. if East opened 1♠) – that will play at least a trick worse. Anyone who plays a making contract will get a good score.

Board 35South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A J 5
♥ A 8
♦ A K Q 4 2
♣ A K Q

♠ 7 6 4 3 2
♥ 5 2
♦ J 8 6 3
♣ 6 4

♠ 9 8
♥ Q 9 6 3
♦ 7 5
♣ J 9 8 7 3

♠ K Q 10
♥ K J 10 7 4
♦ 10 9
♣ 10 5 2

After South passes, West will open 2♣. East will either respond 2♦ (waiting), or 2♥ (bust hand). South will probably show hearts, either bidding 2♥ over 2♦, or doubling a 2♥ response. If E/W can stay in 3NT only, good for them, but with 27 points, West might very well drive past 3NT by themselves. Notrump is tough to make more than nine tricks; dummy should never take a trick, and a 10th trick only comes via a squeeze/endplay against South's major suit holdings. There will be many E/W minus scores.

Board 36West Deals
Both Vul

♠ 7
♥ 9 8 2
♦ A 10 9 8 5 2
♣ K 10 2

♠ Q 10 8 6 5 3
♥ 7 6
♦ K Q 6 4
♣ 3

♠ A J 4
♥ K Q J 4
♦ J 3
♣ J 9 8 7

♠ K 9 2
♥ A 10 5 3
♦ 7
♣ A Q 6 5 4

Last one! West might open a weak 2♦ if available. North should pass, and whether East passes or bumps to 3♦, South should double. North might pass, but with six spades, bidding spades looks better; 4♠ is attractive, but the ♦K Q is probably not good for offense. If West starts with a pass, North will open 2♠ – South has a choice between 3♠ or 4♠. If they can ask (Ogust, e.g.), they might stay out of 4♠. Spades can take 10 tricks, but that's looking at all four hands. In real life, declarer will probably lose two spades, a heart and a diamond.