

D 1		N North		E East	
		♠A73 ♥AKQ52 ♦54 ♣Q73		♠1064 ♥86 ♦QJ763 ♣K92	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠KJ985 ♥97 ♦9 ♣AJ854		1♥	Pass	3♥	
		3♠	4♥	4♠	Dbl
		Pass	Pass	Pass	
		S South			
		♠Q2 ♥J1043 ♦AK1082 ♣106			
				4♠x West	
				0 0	

The spade suit is the "boss suit," because it can be bid at the same level over any suit bid by the opponents. The question is whether West will do it at the three level. If he does, East can bid 4♠ as a sacrifice.

Sad news for South here: the hearts are stacked behind him! But at some tables he won't be doubled, if East-West are playing "maximal overcall doubles," where the double of the suit directly under is a game try (and not a penalty double). In that case West will have to pass 3♥ and collect 100 a trick.

D 2		N North		E East	
		♠532 ♥6 ♦QJ965 ♣8754		♠KQ6 ♥9 ♦1073 ♣QJ10932	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠AJ1084 ♥KJ743 ♦K82 ♣		1♠	Pass	2♠	3♥
		Dbl			
		S South			
		♠97 ♥AQ10852 ♦A4 ♣AK6			

D 3		N North		E East	
		♠A73 ♥KJ842 ♦853 ♣86		♠852 ♥75 ♦J102 ♣AJ974	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠Q96 ♥AQ1063 ♦Q7 ♣Q32		1♥	Pass	Pass	1♦
		Pass	Pass	Pass	Dbl
		S South			
		♠KJ104 ♥9 ♦AK964 ♣K105			
				1♥x West	
				0 0	

Everyone will overcall 1♥ with the West hand. Some Norths will let West off the hook. But this is a vulnerable fish. North's pass allows South to reopen with a double. South will get his revenge from the previous hand.

After a diamond lead by South, East wins the 9, and comes to hand with a spade to lead the ♣8. North wins and switches to a heart. Declarer continues clubs with the 10 to the ace. Then another heart. Declarer leads a diamond to the queen and has nine tricks. Yes, a spade opening lead works better for N-S, and the ♣5 lead instead of the ♣8 works better for East, but I'm describing the normal best play, without looking at all the cards.

D 4		N North		E East	
		♠86 ♥Q9864 ♦8 ♣AK743		♠AKJ ♥J732 ♦AQJ5 ♣85	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠Q103 ♥AK ♦974 ♣Q10962		Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
		3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
		S South			
		♠97542 ♥105 ♦K10632 ♣J			
				3NT East	
				0 0	

D 5		N North		E East	
		♠9 ♥AK ♦K53 ♣AKQ7652		♠10762 ♥842 ♦QJ84 ♣43	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠KJ43 ♥76 ♦A9762 ♣98		2♣	Pass	2♥	
		Pass	3♣	Pass	3♥
		Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
		Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
		S South			
		♠AQ85 ♥QJ10953 ♦10 ♣J10			

This is the easiest auction to slam. If South bids 3♠ instead of 3♥ on the second round, North will bid 3NT. Now South bids 4♥ and North might bid Blackwood followed by 6♣. If North is really clever, he will bid 6NT and that will be a winner!

Both sides have nine-card fits but hearts is higher than diamonds, so N-S should buy the contract, especially at favorable vulnerability, where down one will be OK.

D 6		N North		E East	
		♠Q874 ♥A7652 ♦A8 ♣97		♠J106 ♥J8 ♦10432 ♣AK85	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠A32 ♥K4 ♦KQJ76 ♣1042		1♦	1♥	2♦	2♥
		3♦	Pass	Pass	3♥
		Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
		S South			
		♠K95 ♥Q1093 ♦95 ♣QJ63			
				3♥	North
		0	0	0	0

D 7		N North		E East	
		♠AK92 ♥A1064 ♦Q975 ♣3		♠1063 ♥9 ♦AJ864 ♣A974	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠Q754 ♥Q832 ♦10 ♣J1065		Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
		Pass	4♣	Pass	4♥
		Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
		S South			
		♠J8 ♥KJ75 ♦K32 ♣KQ82			
				4♥	South
		0	0	0	0

If North bids up the line, South will be declarer in 4♥ after North makes a splinter bid in clubs on his way to game. West leads the ♦10 and the simple defense is ♦A, ruff, ♣A, ruff.

I must admit I would overcall 3♣ with the South hand. Since 1♣ may be three cards, most play the overcall of clubs as natural. I will have to say sorry to partner.

D 8		N North		E East	
		♠J107 ♥KJ942 ♦J875 ♣7		♠Q93 ♥108 ♦A109632 ♣62	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠AK42 ♥A653 ♦Q ♣Q854		1♣	Pass	2♦	3♣
		Dbl		Pass	Pass
		S South			
		♠865 ♥Q7 ♦K4 ♣AKJ1093			
				3♣x	South
		0	0	0	0

D 9	N North		E East	
	♠KJ8 ♥Q9654 ♦1042 ♣63		♠9432 ♥108 ♦A8 ♣AQ987	
	W West	W N E S	S South	
	♠Q107 ♥AK72 ♦Q7 ♣KJ42	Pass Pass 2♦ Dbl 3♦ 3NT Pass Pass Pass	♠A65 ♥J3 ♦KJ9653 ♣105	
				3NT East 0 0

Over 3♦, East may double, bid 3♠ or 3NT. Double will get him 3♥ from partner and he may bid 3NT then, implying four spades and a choice of games. The less confusing bid with the nice club suit and diamond stopper is 3NT direct.

I don't blame South for bidding 4♠. It's the normal bid with five spades and a singleton. North has a skinny overcall vulnerable. Perhaps West should double 4♠, thinking he can make 4♥, but you could hardly blame him for passing. East has no idea he can beat 4♠ but he has a good hand and he might also guess to double. If nobody doubles, N-S steal it for minus 100.

D 10	N North		E East	
	♠AJ743 ♥52 ♦92 ♣A1084		♠10 ♥AJ9 ♦AQ1043 ♣KJ76	
	W West	W N E S	S South	
	♠62 ♥KQ764 ♦KJ ♣9532	1♦ Pass 1♥ 1♠ Dbl 4♠ Pass Pass Pass	♠KQ985 ♥1083 ♦8765 ♣Q	
				4♠ North 0 0

D 11	N North		E East	
	♠QJ4 ♥AJ109 ♦KQ9 ♣Q102		♠82 ♥5432 ♦J5432 ♣J7	
	W West	W N E S	S South	
	♠K10963 ♥Q8 ♦107 ♣9854	Pass 1♥ Pass 2NT Pass 6NT Pass Pass Pass	♠A75 ♥K76 ♦A86 ♣AK63	
				6NT South 0 0

West should lead the ♣9, a safe lead against 6NT. Declarer should not put in the ten. He wins the ♣Q and leads the ♥J for drill. East plays low and South plays the king to finesse through West. It's his lucky day and he ends with 12 tricks.

This is the most flat hand of the set. West should make 11 tricks: three spades, three hearts, three diamonds and two clubs. First he goes after hearts and then he goes after diamonds. No need to touch the club suit.

D 12	N North		E East	
	♠J10852 ♥843 ♦1054 ♣52		♠Q64 ♥KJ9 ♦AQ93 ♣K107	
	W West	W N E S	S South	
	♠AK9 ♥Q1062 ♦J86 ♣AJ9	1NT Pass 3NT Pass Pass Pass	♠73 ♥A75 ♦K72 ♣Q8643	
				3NT West 0 0

D 13		N North		E East	
W West		S South		3NT East	
♠A105432 ♥84 ♦J2 ♣K65		♠KJ ♥Q1073 ♦AKQ ♣Q932		0 0	
♠Q9 ♥KJ6 ♦1076 ♣AJ1084		2♠ 2NT 3♠ 3NT Pass Pass Pass		0 0	
		♠876 ♥A952 ♦98543 ♣7			

South may or may not bid 3♠ but it pays to bid it to help partner on defense to 3NT. The spades all fall at tricks one and two, and declarer takes a confident club finesse. He should have stayed in bed. North takes his spades and the defense totals seven tricks for down 3. It's a different story, however, for those tables where North did not open 2♠. There South probably leads a diamond and declarer gets out for down one, good bridge.

The natural auction lands the partnership in 3♦, a good partscore. But the contract can be defeated with good defense. East leads the ♣Q to the ace. West shifts to a spade to the king and East returns a spade. When declarer takes the diamond finesse, West gives partner a spade ruff. E-W can sit back now and get the setting trick in hearts. Or even two more heart tricks if declarer plays West for the king.

D 14		N North		E East	
W West		S South		3♦ North	
♠7632 ♥J96 ♦K6 ♣A853		♠AQ94 ♥Q103 ♦Q1093 ♣K2		♠K5 ♥K84 ♦874 ♣QJ1074	
		Pass Pass Pass 1♦ Pass 1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass 3♦ Pass Pass Pass		0 0	
		♠J108 ♥A752 ♦AJ52 ♣96			

Some Wests will open 2♦ because of the favorable vulnerability (the diamond suit is not robust, so most will pass), and then East might sacrifice in 5♦. Otherwise, the auction proceeds as shown, with 2♠ showing four trump and the double of 3♥ as the "maximal overcall double" inviting game in spades. South makes 650.

D 15		N North		E East	
W West		S South		3♥ North	
♠K9 ♥Q52 ♦1098432 ♣A10		♠AQ42 ♥J1043 ♦Q ♣KJ32		♠86 ♥AK876 ♦K765 ♣86	
		Pass 1♣ 1♥ 1♠ 2♣ 2♠ 3♥ Dbl Pass 4♠		0 0	
		♠J10753 ♥9 ♦AJ ♣Q9754			

This time it's easy for South to bid spades over hearts, as he is white vs. red. West should double after his partner has invited game in hearts. After the club lead, and heart switch, declarer will play on spades with ♠A and another. When he reaches dummy, he can lead a diamond to his 10. If West holds up his king, however, declarer will still lose two heart tricks, for down one. A close one!

D 16		N North		E East	
W West		S South		3♠ South	
♠K42 ♥9 ♦K832 ♣AK984		♠J97 ♥J75 ♦J954 ♣J75		♠6 ♥KQ10842 ♦Q7 ♣Q632	
		1♣ Pass 1♥ 1♠ Pass Pass 3♥ 3♠ Dbl Pass Pass Pass		0 0	
		♠AQ10853 ♥A63 ♦A106 ♣10			

D 17		N North		E East	
W West		W N E S		S South	
♠AK862 ♥9 ♦Q95 ♣KQ42		♠J10 ♥J543 ♦KJ106 ♣983		♠Q7 ♥KQ872 ♦42 ♣AJ106	
		Pass 1♥ Pass 1♠ Pass 2♣ Pass 2♦ Pass 2♥ Pass 3♣ Pass 3♠		♠9543 ♥A106 ♦A873 ♣75	

Goren was wrong on this one: 26 points but there is no game. What can you do? West will use fourth suit forcing (2♦) followed by 3♣. East will show his secondary spade support. West will probably avoid 3NT, though his ♦Q95 might be a stopper. If he bids 4♣, East might throw in the towel, as some play that 4 of a minor can be passed when looking for 3NT but then bypassing it. West might also try 4♠ over 3♠. This will fail by one trick.

What you lead against 3NT, you don't necessarily lead against 4NT. South thinks: Since North is not going to hold the ♦A when the opponents have 30-31 points, and South has 7, I won't risk a diamond lead. After the ♥J, declarer sees ten tricks: at least 3 spades, 4 hearts if the ♥10 is onside, and 2 clubs. He has several finesses to take and probably starts with a club finesse. He cashes the ♣A and then must guess where the ♠Q lies. It's moments like this that I like to tell the story of Helen Sobel, who partnered Charles Goren. When she wanted to guess a queen, she would lift her skirt an inch and whoever was not looking at her legs (she said) had the queen. Helen would not be able to manage that on BBO (someday perhaps with video).

Let's say for convenience in keeping entries in both hands, he leads the ♠2 to the jack. Success. Now he tries the ♣K but they don't break. He can probably ensure 12 tricks by giving up a club.

D 18		N North		E East	
W West		W N E S		S South	
♠A1082 ♥KQ92 ♦Q92 ♣AJ		♠Q74 ♥8543 ♦83 ♣10853		♠KJ3 ♥A6 ♦A65 ♣K7642	
		1NT Pass 2♣ Pass 2♦ Pass 4NT Pass Pass Pass		♠965 ♥J107 ♦KJ1074 ♣Q9	

NOTE: All the hands in bridgetoschool games are shuffled and dealt without edits or selection. The analysis of the bidding and play is designed to coach the reader to become a better player. There are many routes in the bidding, so the auction given is only one example. In the card play, the analysis is more clear-cut. I hope you enjoyed this, and will play in our bridgetoschool games on BBO every Tuesday at 1 p.m. starting in January 2022. Proceeds to charity.
 — Matthew Granovetter (bridgetoschool.com and bridgetoday.com)

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