

To make the commentary simpler to write I have used he/him/his as unisex rather than constantly having to qualify it as he/she, him/her or his/hers. I assume most will play a weak NT and 4 card majors.

1	A986
North	T32
None	T3
	AKT5
542	KT7
K7	98654
Q8652	KJ4
983	64
	QJ3
	AQJ
	A97
	QJ72

This one looks like an easy start where everyone will be in 3NT making exactly 9 tricks. Well that won't happen! If North likes his hand with all those nice fillers he may open 1NT, otherwise he will Pass or perhaps open 1♣ if playing a strong NT. Opposite a weak NT South should just bid 3NT despite his 17 points. If North passes then 3NT should also be the final contract. If North plays 3NT then East will no doubt lead a ♥ to ♥Q/K and a ♦ back which should be ducked twice; then the ♠ finesse will lose to give 9 tricks. If South plays the hand then West will lead a ♦, again ducked twice and then the ♠ finesse is taken to give 9 tricks with the 3-3 ♠ split. Just don't be tempted to take the ♥ finesse in this case!

2	J
East	7543
NS	J752
	AQJ8
KT974	Q85
KQT8	A62
93	T86
54	KT96
	A632
	J9
	AKQ4
	732

Here South will open 1NT and will have a tough decision to make if it is passed out. West will lead a ♠ and declarer can see 6 top tricks with the ♣ finesse adding another 2 or possibly 3 if it is on. But if the ♣ finesse loses then there are at least 8 losers. So to take the finesse or not? Who knows, but I would expect most to take it for a -300 score. Anyone who cashes all the ♦s first will score -200 or even -100 if West throws both his ♣s on the ♦s. Any West who comes in over 1NT will regret it, scoring only +110 or maybe +140 for a poor score.

3	A64
South	K63
EW	K653
	975
KJ2	83
	AQJT8752
A9874	2
AKQ63	42
	QT975
	94
	QJT
	JT8

I would expect the EW bidding to be short and sweet, 1♦ – 4♥ – Pass. South may lead the ♦Q to ♦A, in which case declarer will ruff a ♦ to play ♥A and ♥Q to ♥K. Looking at dummy North should quickly place the ♠A on the table otherwise he will lose it. On a ♠ lead from South declarer will almost certainly put the ♠J in and make 11 tricks. So all roads ought to lead to 4♥+1 by East, but I'm sure there will be a few who make 12 tricks for a top.

4	AT65
West	74
All	862
	KQ42
KJ987	Q3
AKT63	QJ95
A9	753
3	J965
	42
	82
	KQJT4
	AT87

How aggressive a bidder are you? This hand will check that out. West will open 1♠ and East will dredge up a 1NT response. Is the West hand worth a 3♥ bid now? I don't think so but if you bid only 2♥ that's where you will play making 10 tricks easily. Of course NS may come to the aid of EW by bidding and raising ♦s. It's unlikely that NS will win the bidding battle so 4♥ should score best, even making 11 tricks if ♦s aren't led in time. Next best could be a penalty from a NS ♦ contract. But I would expect the most common score will be +170 for EW.

5	K6
North	KT853
NS	KQ4
	983
AQ4	JT872
A962	Q4
J32	A8
A52	QJ74
	953
	J7
	T9765
	KT6

25 points and a good ♠ fit – enough for game? Well Yes if played by West but No if played by East (on the ♦10 lead). Played by West on the ♦K lead, declarer wins the ♦A and runs the ♠J to ♠K. If North cashes the ♦Q then West will eventually be able to throw 2 ♣s on the ♦J and ♥A, and if North doesn't cash the ♦Q then West will later discard a ♦ on the ♥A. Poor old North! 3NT by West is a bit easier played in a similar fashion. So the strong NT players will open the West hand 1NT and get to play 4♣, the weak NT players will get to 4♠ by East and will probably get the ♦10 lead to beat it. I expect a lot of -50 for EW and only a few +420 scores.

Our thanks to George Cuthbertson for providing this Commentary

6	AK4
East	43
EW	T8
	AKJT72
QJ86532	97
AJ9	QT752
3	K6
64	Q985
	T
	K86
	AQJ97542
	3

Anyone getting to 6♦ by South will have done very well indeed. 6NT by South will also make but I can't see any way to get there! Firstly what should South open? It's far too good for 3♦, so 1♦ or perhaps 4♦ are possible. Over 1♦ West will no doubt bid 3♠ which gives North a headache – options are 3NT or 4♣ and neither is perfect. South will bid 4♦ or maybe even 5♦ to get over the single suited nature of his hand. That may persuade North to bid slam. If South opens 4♦ then North might decide to bash 6♦ or be more cautious with 5♦. A nasty hand to bid.

7	J42
South	95
All	KQ92
	AT82
KT653	9
Q76	AKJ8432
J65	A4
64	KJ7
	AQ87
	T
	T873
	Q953

East will get to open the bidding with 1♥, then rebid 3♥ over 1♠ and get to 4♥. On a ♦ lead he might have to guess the ♣ position to make, on anything else he can lead a ♠ early and get a ♦ discard on the ♠K. Guessing the ♣ after that will let 11 tricks through. So any EW with +650 on their card will get a top and any with -100 will get a bottom!

8	K8754
West	AJ5
None	J43
	93
9632	AJ
2	KQT3
KQT7	A986
AQ82	654
	QT
	98764
	52
	KJT7

Only 11 points but well placed and with a bit of shape, so plenty will open the West hand. Non vul North might bid 1♠, but whatever happens it looks like EW will play 3NT, although some might wander off to 5♦ even at Pairs. Played by West in 3NT North will lead a ♠ and West can count only 7 tricks, so the finesse of the ♥10 and ♣Q will be needed for game. To make matters worse North might have led from ♠K10xxx so declarer should rise with the ♠A at trick 1 to block the suit! It plays better from the East side on the ♠Q lead if North overcalled, otherwise probably a ♥ lead. Making 5♦ looks like very hard work indeed! Any plus for NS and +400 or better for EW should do well.

9	954
North	T6
EW	QJ95
	KQ73
QT2	K763
Q9852	K
K63	T84
T4	AJ965
	AJ8
	AJ743
	A72
	82

A scrappy one for a change. I can't see many opening the East hand, so it will no doubt proceed 1♥ from South and 1NT from North. This may be the end of the bidding but East might double 1NT as a takeout of 1♥. West of course will wish East would just shut up once in a while then pick between 2♦ (oh dear!) or 2♠ (preferable since East is very likely to have 4 ♠s). The outcome of any contract for either side is difficult to forecast and any plus should be reasonable.

10	QT754
East	J762
All	Q9
	Q3
93	J82
85	KQ3
AKJ7542	T63
J9	T642
	AK6
	AT94
	8
	AK875

South will open 1♣ (even the strong ♣bers!) and West will get in with 3♦. North isn't really good enough to bid at this level although some will no doubt double, so South will reopen with a double. North now has just about enough to go for game, so can bid 4♦ asking his partner to pick a major. If he bids a major at the 3 level then South will have to decide whether to push to game – over 3♥ he may well but over 3♠ he may chicken out. Both majors can produce 11 tricks with 4♥ making this a little easier. There should be a lot of +650 for NS and anything less won't do well.

<u>11</u>	974
South	KQJ7
None	763
	J32
AKJT32	
84	AT63
K98	AQT54
AT	Q876
	Q865
	952
	J2
	K954

Although 6♦ makes I would be surprised to see anyone in it. Most Easts I would imagine would be in 3NT after something like 1♠-2♦-3♠-3NT. South has to find a ♥ lead (holding it to 10 tricks) to stop 12 tricks. So quite a lot of +490 scores for EW with anything better getting a top and anything worse a bottom!

<u>12</u>	AKQ852
West	J
NS	KT7
	QT6
J93	4
QT5	8763
A32	J9854
9732	J54
	T76
	AK942
	Q6
	AK8

Here we have a choice of slams for NS – 6♠ or 6NT. There is nothing to the play in either contract, the problem just lies in how to get there! If North rebids 3♠ after 1♠-2♥ then that should propel them to slam and South might well decide that there are enough tricks in NT to get the best Pairs score. In 6♠ West has to be careful not to duck his ♦A or all 13 tricks will be made with the ♥ suit behaving very nicely. So the scores will be 1460, 1440, 1430, 710, 690, 680. If anything else finds its way onto the scoresheet I would be surprised (but not astonished!).

<u>13</u>	K982
North	AKT84
All	7
	QJ5
AJ7	6543
QJ52	7
KT98	AJ52
T8	9762
	QT
	963
	Q643
	AK43

NS should have a free run in the bidding. One possible auction might be 1♥-2♣-2♥-3♥ after which North might Pass or push to 4♥. The most awkward defence would be to play ♦s to force declarer but that isn't easy for either East or West. A ♠ lead from East helps declarer, as does his trump, so a ♣ lead is probably the best practical option. In theory you can always make 10 tricks but in practice the 4-1 trump break is likely to scupper 4♥. So 4♥ making will be great, 3♥+1 will also be very good for NS, and any plus for EW will be better than average.

<u>14</u>	A92
East	962
None	AKQJ6
	75
QT5	64
AQ73	JT4
943	T875
Q98	AKT3
	KJ873
	K85
	2
	J642

North will open 1♦ and South will respond 1♠. North might then rebid 1NT (valuing it as better than a 14 count) or might raise to 2♠. Over 2♠ South will pass but he may move over 1NT and get into a higher ♠ contract. Whatever NS get to looks likely to go off, with NT having 4 ♥s and at least 3 ♣s, and ♠s having 3 ♥s, 2 ♣s and a trump to lose. Any plus for NS will be rare and the best scores for EW will be at least +100.

<u>15</u>	KQ97
South	Q95
NS	KT53
	53
54	82
AJT	876432
876	A2
AKQJ2	986
	AJT63
	K
	QJ94
	T74

With a stiff K the South hand's 11 points don't look good enough to open, so West will open 1♣. East may bid 1♥ or Pass and South can then get his ♠ bid in. This should make sure that NS win any bidding battle which might ensue. Making 3♠ is easy, as is making 3♥ – anything more for either side looks improbable especially for NS. So my money is on +140 for NS being the most common score, with +140 for EW also being on the sheet.

16	85
West	K2
EW	K96
	AJT762
J6	KT93
T983	AQJ54
AQJ75	T82
K8	4
	AQ742
	76
	43
	Q953

Some will open the West hand 1♦, others will pass. I can't see many passing the North hand whatever West does. And East will also have something to say whether West opened or not. That leaves South who will not be silenced! So a busy bidding frenzy with NS finding their ♣ fit and EW their ♥ fit. On sensible defence it looks like 10 tricks is the limit in ♣s and 9 tricks in ♥s. NS can hold ♥s to 8 tricks by playing 3 rounds of ♠s to let North make the ♥K. So a variety of scores with NS favourite to get a plus.

17	Q652
North	8
None	A6543
	A76
983	AK74
764	AQJT952
JT87	Q2
KQJ	
	JT
	K3
	K9
	T985432

North has a bit of distribution and there will be some exuberant souls who will open 1♦ on it, but most will pass. East will certainly push to 4♥ and NS will do well to leave it at that since 5♣ will, unluckily, go for 500 and a bottom. In fact if South leads the ♠J against 4♥ declarer will have to play out of his skin to make it, winning the ♠K and playing the ♥Q at trick 2 – thus getting 2 entries to dummy with the ♥76 once the ♥8 falls, allowing the ruffing ♣ finesse and reentry. The odds on a bare ♥8 are the same as for a bare ♥K so everyone (?) will play the ♥A followed by the ♦Q. South wins the ♦K to play the ♠10 to establish the setting trick. A plus for EW will score well.

18	KQJ
East	765
NS	AK984
	J5
T982	74
AQ982	T3
62	J53
A2	QT9863
	A653
	KJ4
	QT7
	K74

Opening 3♣ on the East hand is not for me, but here it might even be the final contract! With 3NT on ice for NS that would be awesome so congratulations to anyone brave enough to preempt in first seat. If East passes then NS look set to get to 3NT. On a ♠ or ♦ lead, declarer can unblock the ♠ suit and cash 9 tricks ending in the North hand. West will probably come down to ♥AQ and ♣A2 and declarer can then endplay him in ♥s to lead a ♣ for the 10th trick. A ♣ or ♥ lead gives 10 tricks straight away. So quite a lot of +630 for NS and anything less than +600 will be bad.

19	64
South	
EW	963
	AKQ98654
AKJ	875
AQ95432	T76
742	AKQ85
	T7
	QT932
	KJ8
	JT
	J32

West will open 1♥ and North has to decide how high to preempt opposite a passed partner and at favourable vulnerability. Some play that a jump in the opponent's suit (here ♥s) is asking for a stop for 3NT and if North were to try that here then South would bid 3NT. The spotlight would then be on West whose decision will swing 9 tricks! A ♦ lead to ♦Q, ♥ through, ♦ to ♦K, ♥ through will take all the tricks. A ♥ lead will give 9 tricks! I think most will bid 4♣ or 5♣ here which makes life difficult for EW but may push them into slam. 6♥ is easy to play but will not (?) make 13 tricks. The sacrifice in 7♣ is worthwhile losing only 1100 but that could let EW bid and make 7♥ playing North for a void ♥ on the bidding!

20	
West	AQ642
All	QT532
	Q75
JT3	AK764
JT5	98
97	A8
A8642	KT93
	Q9852
	K73
	KJ64
	J

The openers are getting weaker still – this one is only a 10 count! Over North's 1♥, East will bid 1♠, South is really worth only 2♥ and West will bid 2♠. As the cards lie 4♥ is a make (as is 5♦) but I don't see masses in game for NS. EW also have to be careful not to get too high in ♠ with the foul trump break. So the odd +620 or +600 for NS and a few penalties for NS defending EW ♠ contracts will appear and score well.

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21	AJT863
North	
NS	KJ82
	J75
Q2	5
Q52	JT743
A964	Q
A863	KQT942
	K974
	AK986
	T753

Oh – another 10 count opener! North is too good for a weak 2♠, so should open 1♠. If East has Michaels (or Ghestem or similar) in his methods then he can bid 2♠ (or whatever to show the 2 suiter). Both South and West will be getting excited then! South might bid 4♣ to show shortage there (splinter) and West will do something – probably 4♥ but maybe double or 5♣. The final resting place is hard to predict but NS will make 11 tricks in ♠s (double dummy 12 can be made in the absence of the ♦Q lead) and EW can make 9 tricks in ♣s. So -500 for 6♣x is a good save. 6♥x doesn't do nearly as well!

22	KT96
East	J8654
EW	J7
	A3
8	Q75432
AKQ93	
Q5	A92
J8542	KT76
	AJ
	T72
	KT8643
	Q9

OMG – is this a 9 count opener?! Well according to the Rule of 19 it is, but the ♠ suit is anaemic so perhaps not, or open a weak 2♠? If East passes then South has a hand nearer a weak 2♦ (if that is in the armoury) than a 1♦ opener. And West has perhaps the best hand at the table! So plenty of possible action and the optimum outcome would be a ♣ part score for EW. I can see some EWs playing in ♠s which doesn't go well, and some might get too high in 5♣. NS won't win the bidding battle very often. So any plus for either side should be the target.

23	K4
South	T5
All	KQ764
	AQT7
932	AQJ5
63	AKJ97
A53	J92
98543	K
	T876
	Q842
	T8
	J62

North will open – most 1♦ but some might try 1NT. East will double whatever North bids, South may have some wriggle over 1NTx or might pass, and will pass 1♦x. West won't be too thrilled with his hand but in fact would do quite well out of 1NTx should he pass. There are too many permutations to guess which way the auction will go, but the final contracts I think will be 1NTx by North or 2♥ by East. Against 1NTx East should lead ♥s from the top and if declarer takes the ♣ finesse when in with the ♥Q should go 3 off! In 2♥ declarer has to finesse in ♠s rather than ♥s when in dummy with the ♦A. So there are plenty of traps for both sides and I expect plus scores for both NS and EW.

24	Q6
West	KQT5
None	KQ96
	QJ7
KT7542	A98
96	A8432
7542	A8
6	A85
	J3
	J7
	JT3
	KT9432

Anyone for a (very) weak 2♠ by West? That would certainly get them to 4♠. Otherwise North is going to open and it is going to be a stretch for EW to get there. In practice there are 11 tricks in ♠s with the kind trump split. The plan would be to duck a ♥ and eventually set up the long ♥ for the 11th trick. Many will make only 10 tricks and probably not that many will be in game. So +450 for a top and +420 a good score. It's hard to see where NS can get a plus but I'm sure there will be some kind EW who will help them out!