

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

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

NS 3N; NS 4♣; NS 2♠; W 1♥; NS 1♦; Par +400

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 N	Pass	2 ♣ ¹
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 N ²
Pass	3 N ³	Pass	Pass
Pass			

1. South should not pass 1 NT with a 4-5 seven points and 2 tens
2. When North denies a major via 2 ♦, South invites 3 NT
3. North should accept

This is an interesting hand when it comes to hand evaluation. There are 7-point hands and there are other 7-point hands! What should South do with her hand? Pass is the obvious answer.

However, when partner opens 15-17 NT, South evaluates her hand to be at least invitational, if not forcing, if North happens to have four spades. If not, South can bid 2 NT, not too dangerous a bid. She does have a 5-card suit, seven points and two tens. South correctly decides she is not going to pass 1 NT. The obvious non-pass action is to start with Stayman 2 ♣. There are only three possible responses: 2 ♦, 2 ♥ and 2 ♠.

As stated earlier, South will be very happy if North bids 2 ♠ but if not, South can bid 2 NT. North should accept the invitation expecting partner to have four spades opposite her shortness and either minor will do.

East has a natural lead of ♠ 3. West wins ♠ A and returns a spade giving South two tricks in spades, and two stoppers. North is up to seven tricks now, needs only two more. Not too difficult a task with ♥ AQJ in her own hand. Before running clubs, play low heart from dummy and finesse, not caring whether it wins or not. The diamond holding provides adequate protection even if the finesse loses. 3 NT making three should be a top.

Granted, the auction was aggressive but bridge gods usually favor the brave.

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

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

E 2N; EW 3♣; W 1N; E 2♦; NS 1♠; E 1♥; W 1♦; Par -120

East should open 1 NT and play there.

South leads ♥ 5, which goes to East's ♥ 7.

Declarer, East, can count 5 clubs, 1 heart and 1 diamond secure in the knowledge that 1 NT is unbeatable. However, at match points, it pays to be greedy by going after possible overtricks.

The suit that offers the best chance of an overtrick or two is diamonds since South should have good hearts and the spade holding is precarious to say the least. The correct way to play AJ10x opposite three small is to take two finesses. Lead diamonds twice through East's ♦ AJ105.

That line of play offers a 76% chance of winning at least two tricks. In fact, three diamond tricks are possible if the suit breaks 3-3 with split honors (♦ K and ♦ Q in different hands) as is the case on this hand.

How does East manage all that? Well, dummy's clubs will provide the necessary entries.

After winning the heart lead, play ♣ 10 at trick two and overtake it with the ♣ Q to take the first diamond finesse.

South may continue the heart attack but it doesn't matter if South shifts to a spade. ♠ K is a stopper and South has another club entry to repeat the diamond finesse *but only after cashing all five clubs*.

Declarer is very likely to make 10 tricks, which is quite a feat on this hand. Defense is not easy; South has to find either a spade or a club lead, and inspired defense to hold declarer to 8 tricks.

But South cannot be faulted for leading a heart. Although she has the majority of the missing points, partner should have 6-8 points, which could easily include one heart honor. In that case, the heart lead would have paid huge dividend holding declarer to seven tricks.

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

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

NS 2♠; EW 2♥; EW 1N; W 2♣; EW 1♦; E 1♣; Par +110

South should open 1♦, and in all honesty, it should go All Pass. Granted, the last pass by East will be a difficult decision for most bridge players but the underlying logic is still sound.

Why? Since West passed, she should not have the strength of a 1NT overcall and probably not even an opening hand. As a result, East could reasonably give South close to 16 points. That leaves West with 8-10 points.

But the negative inference of West's pass is quite strong. East only has a singleton spade so where are all the other 12 spades? West would have overcalled 1♠ if she had five, and the same goes for hearts. Some of you may argue, "Why can't EW have a 4-4 fit in hearts?".

True, EW can compete to 2♥ but NS must also have a 8-card fit in spades. They will not sell out in 2♥. Three small diamonds and stiff spade in the East hand support that observation. To compete over 2♠ by NS (and they should bid it), EW will have to compete to 3-level or 2NT. All indications are that EW will go down one or two tricks at that level.

Now look at it from the flip side. How bad can it be if East passed 1♦? For one, it will prevent NS from finding their spade fit (2♠ making for +110) and two, in 1♦, NS will have to win 9 tricks to score +110, and 10 tricks to beat it. EW should leave NS alone in 1♦.

In this particular example, a huge dividend is paid back to EW when they refuse to compete over 1♦, which goes down for -50 to NS. For the defense, it beats all other outcomes (-110 or -140 in a spade contract, or -90 or -120 in notrump).

Board 4

West Deals
Both Vul

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

W N E
S

♠ K 8 4
♥ A 10
♦ 6 2
♣ 9 8 6 4 3 2

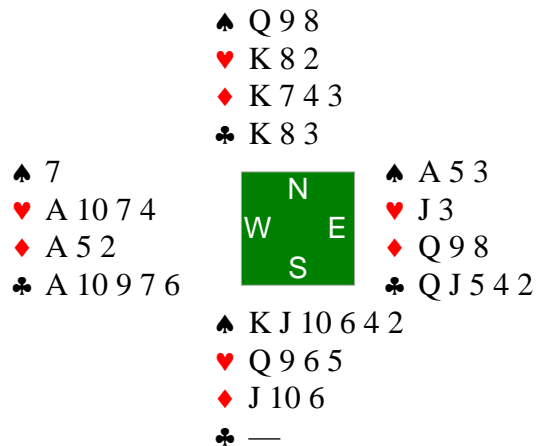
EW 6♦; EW 5N; EW 5♠; EW 5♥; EW 1♣; Par -1370

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	3 ♣ ¹	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	4 N ²	Pass
5 ♠	Pass	6 ♦	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. Fourth Suit Forcing to at least game
2. Many of you know the fallacy of using 4 NT to ask for key cards for a minor because most of the responses put you in slam whether you like it or not.

Any pair that reaches 6 ♦ should make 12 tricks for a very good match point score. There is very little to the play. Even on a spade lead (the other major), West can hop up with the ace, come to ♣ A, draw one or two rounds of trumps ending in the East hand. ♣ K provides a parking place for the spade loser before the declarer touches hearts. Defense gets ♥ A but nothing else; 6 ♦ making six.

Board 5
 North Deals
 N-S Vul



EW 4♣; EW 2N; NS 2♠; Par -130

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	2 ♠ ¹
Dbl	Pass	3 ♣ ²	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. South has a tough decision. In the third seat, you can open a little light. How light? Lower the rule for opening bids by two: Rule of 20 to 18, and the Hi-Le-QT rule of 22 to 20 (Hi-Le-QT stands for high card points + length in the two longest suits + quick tricks). Instead of opening 1 ♠, South may try a weaker 2 ♠ preempt despite holding four hearts to the queen. After all, spades are so much better than hearts.
2. Since East is a passed hand, there is no danger that West will get too excited about the positive 3 ♣ response and punish partner.

There is nothing to the play. East should make ten tricks with clubs as trumps. With only one sure stopper in the opponent's long suit, spades, EW are wise not to venture into 3 NT.

It is worth remembering that a notrump contract does not play well compared to a trump contract since West has a singleton spade and East has a doubleton heart providing ruffing values on both sides of the table. In this example, a notrump contract also does not score higher than 3 ♣ making four for a score of +130.

Board 6

East Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 4		♠ —
♥ A K 10 9 4 3		♥ J 2
♦ K Q J 6 2		♦ 7 5 4
♣ 8		♣ K Q 9 6 5 4 3 2
♠ A K Q 9 8 6 5	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; margin: 0 5px;"> N W E S </div>	♠ —
♥ 8 6		♥ J 2
♦ A 10 9 8		♦ 7 5 4
♣ —		♣ K Q 9 6 5 4 3 2
	♠ J 10 7 3 2	
	♥ Q 7 5	
	♦ 3	
	♣ A J 10 7	

NS 4♥; NS 3N; N 2♦; EW 1♠; S 1♦; EW 1♣; Par +420

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1 ♠	2 ♠	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♠	Dbl	Pass	4 ♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

This is a firecracker of a deal with three players holding 11 cards in two of their longest suits and one with 10 cards. They are all likely to get excited about their own hand! Several tables may see wild bidding sequences especially if East starts the roller coaster with a vulnerable 4♣ preempt (not recommended).

Then the rest of the bidding may take many different routes but a reasonable auction may see West bidding 4♠, a better game contract leaving North with extremely difficult bidding problem.

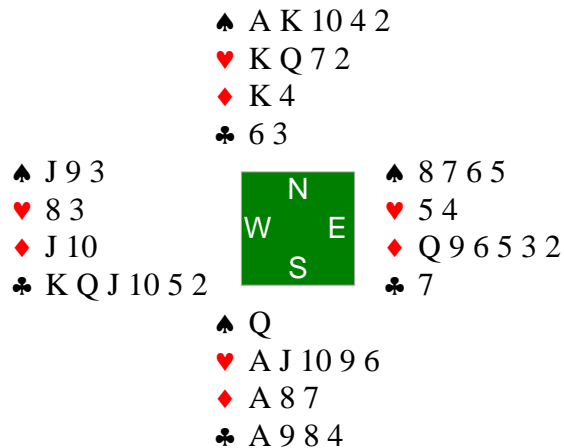
If North bids 4NT, a standard convention showing a strong two-suited hand, she will soon regret it since any black suit contract by EW is going down, and NS can in fact double it for penalty. North has the shape for bidding 4NT over 4♠ but overall strength is not good enough to unilaterally force a 5-level, red-suit contract, on your partner.

North passes 4♠, allowing South to double for penalty (she has already passed once). West should go -800 in that contract, and if East ventures into 5♣, she will go for -1100.

If East starts with a disciplined pass in the first seat, West may open 1♠ but then she may find it difficult to handle the ensuing auction. NS should reach 4♥ via Michael's cuebid by North (refer to the bidding above). Whether West then makes a vulnerable sacrifice in 4♠ or not, is anybody's guess.

However, for West, there is merit in jumping straight to 4♠ opposite a passed hand, in an attempt to shut out NS or tempt them into an unmakeable 5-level contract.

Board 7
 South Deals
 Both Vul



NS 7N; NS 7♠; NS 7♥; NS 3♦; S 3♣; N 2♣; Par +2220

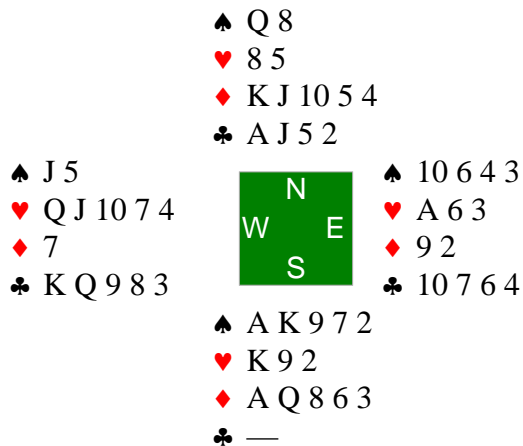
Grand slams are rare indeed but this one is especially difficult to bid. In fact, I would say it is impossible unless you can see through the back of the cards. A reasonable auction gets NS to 6♥.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♥
Pass	2 N ¹	Pass	3 ♠ ²
Pass	4 N ³	Pass	5 ♦ ⁴
Pass	5 N ⁵	Pass	6 ♥ ⁶
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. Jacoby 2 NT, game forcing raise with at least four hearts
2. Singleton or void in spades
3. 1430 RKCB for the established trump suit, hearts
4. Shows 0 or 3 key cards, must be three aces.
5. Asking for specific kings outside of the trump suit
6. No outside kings

No grand slam; North expects to lose a club trick since the ♣ K is missing. Luck is on the declarer's side since ♠ J drops allowing South to discard all three losing clubs!

Board 8
 West Deals
 None Vul



NS 6♦; NS 5♠; NS 4N; NS 1♥; NS 1♣; Par +920

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 N ¹	Pass	2 ♦ ²
Pass	3 ♦ ³	Pass	3 ♥ ⁴
Pass	4 ♣ ⁵	Pass	6 ♦ ⁶
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. My recommendation is to play 1 NT by a passed hand as "almost" forcing.
2. Since North has implied no support for spades, South shows her second suit, 2♦.
3. North has significant extras in support of diamonds so she gives up on the obvious 3 NT to show great support for diamonds
4. 3♥ is a pattern bid showing singleton or void in clubs
5. North sees slam potential and therefore decides to go past 3 NT to show first round control in clubs, a great asset opposite shortness
6. South sees no point in asking for key cards via 4 NT hence the jump to 6♦.

I think 3 NT making four may be the popular contract giving NS an average score. Those who manage to get to 6♦ by South will be in an excellent contract. Declarer may score an overtrick if West decides to lead ♣ K trying to generate a defensive trick. But then both losing hearts in the North hand go away on the 4th and the 5th spade. South is able to discard one heart on the ♣ A and ruff the other two in the North hand.

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 9	♠ A 7 3 2	♠ Q J 10 8
♥ A Q 8 2	♥ 9 5	♥ J 10 6 4 3
♦ 7 6 3	♦ A J 10 8 2	♦ 9
♣ A K 6 3 2	♣ Q J	♣ 10 7 4
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ K 6 5 4	
	♥ K 7	
	♦ K Q 5 4	
	♣ 9 8 5	

EW 4♥; EW 4♣; S 2♦; NS 1♠; N 1♦; Par -500: NS 4♠×-3;
S 5♦×-3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Dbl ¹	2♠ ²	3♥ ³	3♠
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. A clear-cut take-out double for the two unbid suits, hearts and clubs.
2. North should raise 1♠ to 2♠ with four spades and re-double with three (If you don't play Support Doubles, please ignore my comment).
3. East should not be timid here. She can tell partner is short in spades, she is short in diamonds, so in support of hearts, she is within her rights to bid 3♥.

Another difficult hand evaluation problem for EW. NS bidding may come to their rescue though; both East and West visualize the power of two working singletons in opposite hands and a 9-card fit in hearts suggesting 4♥ game on measly 17 points! Eleven tricks are available when the heart finesse wins and ♣ QJ drops under ♣ AK.

But in real life, a normal contract would be 3♥ making five. At some tables, I suspect NS will get too aggressive and either bid 3♠ or 4♦, get doubled and go down two giving EW a top score of +300.

Board 10
 East Deals
 Both Vul

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

♠ 9 5
♥ Q 10 3
♦ K J 5 4 3 2
♣ 3 2

EW 3N; EW 3♥; EW 3♣; EW 1♠; NS 1♦; Par -600

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 N	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
3 N	Pass	Pass	Pass

If East opens 15-17 NT, West will certainly force game, which will be 3 NT since there is no fit in hearts. South has a natural lead of 4th best diamond, the ♦ 4.

East must duck this trick, win the next and hope that North has the ♣ A. Four clubs, three spades and two red suit aces add up to nine tricks, making 3 NT. A little bit lucky for EW because if South had ♣ A, she would cash four more diamonds for down two!

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

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

N	
W	E
S	

♠ K 10 5 4 3
♥ A Q 3
♦ 9 7 3
♣ Q 2

NS 3N; NS 3♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; Par +400

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass ¹
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♥ ²
Pass	2 N ³	Pass	3 N ⁴
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. South does not meet Hi-Le-QT Rule of 22
2. 2 ♥ by South is similar to New Minor Forcing; she could be looking for 3-card spade support
3. North should not bid clubs again. With the unbid suit, diamonds, under control for notrump purposes, 2 NT is the correct continuation.
4. ♣ Q is like gold; South should upgrade her 11-point hand and bid game.

Even a diamond lead from West ducked by South and a heart shift by East after winning ♦ Q does not pose any problems for the declarer because North has that all important ♥ 10. South plays low on the heart return and West has to win the king. Ten tricks!

Board 12
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ 10 4	♠ 7 2	♠ Q J 8 6 3
♥ A 9 6 4	♥ 8 2	♥ Q J 7 5 3
♦ A Q J 4	♦ 10 9 7 6	♦ 8
♣ 6 4 2	♣ A Q 8 5 3	♣ J 9
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;"> N W E S </div>	
	♠ A K 9 5	
	♥ K 10	
	♦ K 5 3 2	
	♣ K 10 7	

EW 3♥; S 2N; EW 2♠; NS 2♦; S 2♣; N 1♣; Par -140

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 N
Pass	Pass	2♥ ¹	Pass
Pass	Pass		

1. When North passes 1 NT, East can place partner with close to an opening bid. Hence, the conventional bid showing both majors. West is happy to pass.

You might have heard me say, "Bridge gods favor the brave", provided you add logic to your brevity and if you have a shapely hand, take action against their notrump opening.

Please note that it is important to play Hello or Cappelletti or Meckwell convention over opponent's 1 NT but what is even more important is to know when to come in. Shapely hands favor some sort of action, balanced hands not so much.