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Board 4	♠ AK93 ♥ JT9 ♦ 97 ♣ AKJT	Both Vul
♠ J72 ♥ 762 ♦ T652 ♣ 743	<i>Declarer</i> <i>West East</i> <i>Dummy</i>	♠ QT86 ♥ K4 ♦ Q3 ♣ Q9865
	♠ 54 ♥ AQ853 ♦ AKJ84 ♣ 2	

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

South transfers to Hearts, then her 3♦ is natural and game-forcing. What are North's options here? One common style is as follows:

- 4♥ shows Heart support, and a hand that does not want to encourage slam.
- 3♥ shows Heart support, more slammish than 4♥.
- 3NT is natural, no Heart fit, black suits covered.
- **Other bids** show Diamond support and deny Heart support.

Is North's Heart support slammish? The Heart fillers look useful, there's a ruffing value in Diamonds, and good controls. The downside is that the controls are not in Partner's suits. We'd bid 3♥ anyway, and no doubt South will zip into 6♥ one way or another.

Against 6♥, East leads a low Spade. It's often a winning plan for Declarer to set up the side-suit early, and here if one defender has ♦Qxxx there will be two ruffs required. So, Dummy's ♦AK are cashed, but when East plays the ♦Q, Declarer may get greedy, crossing to the ♣A and running the ♥J. This is risky business, and fatal if West has ♥Kxxx and fiendishly ducks the first trump ... also if West has ♥Kxx and ducks, then wins the second trump and plays a third round. If Declarer thinks that West is tricky enough to duck, then the safe line is to ruff a Diamond before touching trumps (getting over-ruffed as it happens, and making 12 tricks). But the greedy finessers get 13 (lucky) tricks and all the matchpoints ☺

On **Board 9**, some N-S pairs will declare a Diamond part-score from the North side. Here is the trump suit:

Declarer Q7642
Dummy T843

If the suit is 2-2, there are two losers regardless. And if the suit is 3-1, what is the best chance for only two losers? Lead towards the Queen, and if West plays the Nine, play low from hand, hoping East has singleton Ace or King.

Q7642
 KJ9 A
 T843

That's the actual layout on Board 9 and Declarer does indeed escape with only two losers. But if West wonders why Declarer has not cashed the ♦A first, he might "squander" the Jack on the first round. Declarer will surely cover in case this is a singleton, and now she loses *three* trumps. A dazzling false card!

Board 17 looks innocent enough, but there are some points of interest on the way to E-W's 3NT contract.

	♠ 32 ♥ 975 ♦ JT9852 ♣ 85	
♠ AQ975 ♥ K ♦ K764 ♣ KT3	<i>North</i> <i>West East</i> <i>South</i>	♠ J8 ♥ A843 ♦ Q3 ♣ A7642
	♠ KT64 ♥ QJT62 ♦ A ♣ QJ9	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass ^A	1♥
1♠ ^B	Pass	1NT ^C	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

- East's hand passes the Rule of 20, but it's rather a miserable specimen, don't you think? No Tens, and the ♠J and ♦Q have no visible means of support. Not worth opening, but rearrange it to ♠84, ♥AJ83, ♦32, ♣AQ642 and we would.
- West has support for all the unbid suits, but with five Spades it's better to overcall than to double.
- Opposite an overcall, a 1NT bid shows around 8-11 HCP. So East is at the top of his range and will accept the game invitation. 10 tricks.

Board 25

	♠ Q43 ♥ QT75 ♦ Q73 ♣ AK6	E-W Vul
♠ 98 ♥ 2 ♦ KJ85 ♣ JT9874	<i>North</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>South</i>	♠ AJT76 ♥ A9843 ♦ T4 ♣ 2
	♠ K52 ♥ KJ6 ♦ A962 ♣ Q53	

West North East South
1♣ 2♣ ??

Digressing for a moment, after our 1♥ or 1♠ opening and their [Unusual No Trump](#) (showing the minors), many pairs play Unusual vs Unusual, whereby the minor suit cue-bids of 3♣ and 3♦ show something or other in the major suits (methods vary). In the auction above, though, over North's *minor* suit opening, East bids [Michaels](#) showing a *major* two-suiter. Now things are different, perhaps. One could use 2♥ and 2♠ here as cue-bids to show different flavors of minor suit holdings, but maybe it's more useful to show major suit stoppers.

Of course, South has stoppers in *both* majors and enough for game. Should she therefore bid 3NT directly? Well, 3NT from the South hand goes down on a Spade lead, and South would do better to bid 2♥. Now, North can get 3NT played from her side, and that makes on any lead.

For **Board 28**, if you were hoping that we could give you an intelligent auction which gets N-S to the good Diamond slam then we must disappoint you. But we do claim to know the best way to play that slam.

♠ AQ96 ♥ ♦ KQ8652 ♣ KT6
<i>Declarer</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Dummy</i>
♠ JT3 ♥ JT9764 ♦ A7 ♣ AJ

Against 6♦, East leads the ♥K, which you ruff. You can count three Spades, six Diamonds (let us assume), and two Clubs. That's 11, where's the 12th? You could cash the ♦K, cross to the ♦A, and run the ♠J. If it loses, you must guess the ♣Q. That may seem to be about a 75% chance (one of two finesses), but there's a snag. Yes, East might hold ♠Kxxx ... he [fiendishly ducks](#) the first Spade, wins the second, and gives West a ruff. Ouch!

A better line is immediately to cash two Clubs and ruff a Club. That works whenever Clubs are no worse than 5-3 ... or when East has two Clubs and three Diamonds ... or when West overruffs the third Club and the Spades

behave. Assuming 3-2 trumps, that comes to over 90%, with no opportunity for East to be brilliant. The full deal:

	♠ AQ96 ♥ ♦ KQ8652 ♣ KT6	
♠ 8742 ♥ A832 ♦ JT ♣ Q42	<i>Declarer</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Dummy</i>	♠ K5 ♥ KQ5 ♦ 943 ♣ 98753
	♠ JT3 ♥ JT9764 ♦ A7 ♣ AJ	

One more wrinkle. You take your Club ruff, you cash the ♦A, how do you return to hand to draw trumps? Don't take the Spade finesse! If you do, it loses, and East will return a Club, ruffed by West and promoting a trump trick for East's lowly Nine! Yes, indeed, it's an [Upper-Cut](#).

Board 29

	♠ K32 ♥ 9632 ♦ KJ95 ♣ J5	Both Vul
♠ QT7 ♥ KJ7 ♦ T4 ♣ Q8742	<i>North</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>South</i>	♠ A9854 ♥ QT ♦ Q762 ♣ T9
	♠ J6 ♥ A854 ♦ A83 ♣ AK63	

West North East South
Pass Pass 1NT
Pass ??

Opposite a 15-17 1NT opening, do you always invite game with 8-counts? Not a good idea with "bad" eights, and this one is no great shakes (no Tens, and the stranded ♣J), just not strong enough to invite. Of course, with only two Clubs, another option is to bid 2♣, planning to pass whatever South responds:

- If South bids 2♠, the 4-3 fit should work OK
- If South bids 2♥ (as on the actual deal) N-S score well in their 4-4 fit (+140, beating the 1NT brigade who get +90 or +120).
- But, whenever we try this ploy, South always seems to respond 2♦ with 3=3=2=5 shape ☹