

**Board 22**  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

Two Spades -- Problem

♠ K 10 7 6  
♥ Q 10 7  
♦ A Q 6  
♣ K 7 2



♠ Q 9 8 3  
♥ K 6  
♦ 10 5  
♣ Q 9 8 6 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	Pass
Pass	2 ♠	All pass	1 ♠
2 ♠ by South			
Lead: ♦ 2			

Join me as declarer for the first of several deals from the 2023 Gatlinburg regional tournament. All the events are A/X Pairs (top flight, matchpoint scoring).

West leads the ♦ 2. What is your plan? What can go wrong with it?

**Board 22**  
 South Deals  
 N-S Vul

Two Spades -- Solution

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

NS 2♠; NS 1N; NS 2♣; EW 1♥; EW 1♦; Par +110: NS 2♠=  

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	All pass	
2 ♠ by South			
Lead: ♦ 2			

Our potential losers include two in each black suit and one in each red suit. In addition, we may need to ruff two red cards in hand. Not knowing how the cards lie, we are unlikely to produce the double dummy result and make the contract. A sensible plan is to establish and enjoy the club suit, to take red-suit pitches.

Not seeing the danger, I called for a greedy ♦ Q from dummy, and paid a heavy price. East won the ♦ K and returned the suit. When the opponents got in again, they forced me to ruff. With so much work to do, I was not able to both establish and enjoy the clubs. I finished two in the glue, -200.

Leading from kings is risky business, as most players in this event should know. Expecting the ♦ K to be off-side, we should take out insurance against the force, playing low from dummy at trick one. If this loses to the ♦ J, East will have to shift - and any shift can only help. When East wins the ♦ K and returns the suit, we have a trick and a tempo. This alone should prevent the dreaded -200.

Pass or Open? -- Problem

**Board 7**  
East Deals  
Both Vul



♠ Q 10 6 4 3

♥ J 5 4

♦ 3

♣ A K 10 9

*West*

*North*

*East*

*South*

Pass

?

What's your call?

**Board 7**  
 East Deals  
 Both Vul

Pass or Open? -- Solution

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

NS 3♠; EW 3♦; NS 3♣; EW 1♥; Par +140: NS 3♠=  
*West North East South*  
 Pass ?

What's your call?

This hand is a Bergen 19: 10 HCP + 5 spades + 4 clubs. We need 20 to open. Seems like an obvious pass.

Not so fast! When in any doubt, add a point for a spade suit, especially in second seat. That gives us a Bergen 20, and none of the HCP are degraded by being in diamonds.

Why especially in second seat do we count a point for a spade suit? Because, if we pass, fourth-seat partner will apply Pearson's rule of 15; on this deal, with 15 Pearson points (12 HCP + 3 spades), less one for 4-3-3-3 shape, partner is likely to pass the deal out.

Hearts! -- Problem

Board 6  
South Deals  
N-S Vul



- ♠ J 10 7
- ♥ A Q J 10 9 7 6 5
- ♦ 10
- ♣ 5

West      North      East      South  
?

What's your call?

**Board 6**  
 East Deals  
 E-W Vul

Hearts! -- Solution

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

N
W    E
S

♠ A Q
♥ K 3 2
♦ 8 6 2
♣ A 10 6 3 2

NS 3♣; NS 1N; EW 1♥; S 1♦; Par +110: NS 2♣+1  
*West            North            East            South*  
 ?

Our hand contains seven tricks. Yes, if we can get to dummy and finesse one or more times, we make an eighth when we find the ♥ K onside. This hand counts as seven tricks.

We should use the rule of 2-3-4 to resolve such issues. At equal vulnerability, that would mean down 3 in hand: open 4♥. With this suit quality, this bid is fine, whether both or neither side is vulnerable. The fit is horrible, and the contract should be down three, undoubled. If partner had one trick for us, we would be down two -- a good deal if the opponents double, but have a game.

However, the vulnerability here is unfavorable. With our gilt-edged seven tricks, this is a 3♥ opening. South cannot act, but if North decides to reopen with a double, South will probably bid 3NT -- a top for us after the lead of the ♦ K. If North passes 3♥, we still save 100 points.

Won't we miss some games, opening such hands at the 3-level? Not that likely -- partner can count too, and should raise with three likely winners.

Both Minors -- Problem

**Board 1**  
West Deals  
None Vul



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

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

Join me for this auction - what would you do now?

**Board 1**  
 West Deals  
 None Vul

Both Minors -- Solution

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

  

♠ A 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 6 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7		♥ J 10									
♦ A Q 10 8 4		♦ 6 5 3 2									
♣ K Q J 9 3		♣ 6 4									

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♥	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♣
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♣
Pass	4♦	Pass	4NT
All pass			

Bid 4♣, unconditionally forcing. Removing 3NT is a slam try, or perhaps insisting upon playing at least game in a suit.

When partner gives preference to diamonds, we return to notrump. This makes it clear that we have at least 5-5 in the minors, a spade control (going back to notrump), and slam interest. Our values are enough that 4NT should be a safe contract, and indeed, my partner made exactly 4NT. However, if partner held as little as

♠ K 7 4   ♥ A 5 4 3 2   ♦ K 7 3   ♣ 10 7

6♦ would be a good contract, and partner should know it.



Guilty As Charged -- Problem

**Board 2**  
North Deals  
E-W Vul



♠ K 8  
♥ A 8 3  
♦ 10 3  
♣ K 9 7 6 4 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	2 ♣ <sup>1</sup>
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	?

1. Invitational or better.

Join me for this deal. What would you do now?

Guilty As Charged -- Solution

**Board 2**  
North Deals  
E-W Vul

♠ J 10 6 2		♠ A Q 9 3									
♥ K Q 9		♥ J 10 4 2									
♦ 2		♦ A J 7 6									
♣ A J 10 5 2		♣ Q									
♠ 7 5 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 9 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 7 6 5		♥ J 10 4 2									
♦ K Q 9 8 5 4		♦ A J 7 6									
♣ 8		♣ Q									
♠ K 8											
♥ A 8 3											
♦ 10 3											
♣ K 9 7 6 4 3											

NS 5♣; EW 2♦; NS 1♥; Par +400; NS 5♣=

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	2 ♣ <sup>1</sup>
Pass	3 ♣	Pass	?

1. Invitational or better.

You should know that I am a scientific bidder; I believe in bidding accuracy, and not depending on keeping the opening leader in the dark. However, I tried 3 NT and went down *four*, -400.

North has the shape, but not the strength, for a 3 ♦ splinter at the second turn; 3 ♣ was impeccable.

The correct bid on our hand is 3 ♥, denying a diamond stopper and showing a heart stopper. This lack of diamond strength may encourage opener to leap to 5 ♣, +400; or to bid a pessimistic 4 ♣, +150.

**Board 27**  
West Deals  
None Vul

Six Notrump -- Problem

♠ A K 5 4 2  
♥ 8 6 4  
♦ A 7 2  
♣ 10 2



♠ 10 8  
♥ A Q 7  
♦ K Q J 10  
♣ A K Q 9

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	6 NT

All pass  
6 NT by South  
Lead: ♦ 8

On the opening lead of the ♦ 8, East discards a heart. We have ten top tricks.

Plan the play at 6 NT. Be specific.

How would you play, if the contract were 7 NT?

**Board 27**  
 West Deals  
 None Vul

Six Notrump -- Solution

<p>♠ 9 6          ♥ 9 2          ♦ 9 8 6 5 4 3          ♣ J 4 3</p>	<p>♠ A K 5 4 2          ♥ 8 6 4          ♦ A 7 2          ♣ 10 2</p>	<p>♠ Q J 7 3          ♥ K J 10 5 3          ♦ —          ♣ 8 7 6 5</p>	
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<p>♠ 10 8          ♥ A Q 7          ♦ K Q J 10          ♣ A K Q 9</p>	<p><i>West</i></p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>All pass</p> <p>6 NT by South</p> <p>Lead: ♦ 8</p>	<p><i>North</i></p> <p>1 ♠</p> <p>2 ♠</p>	<p><i>East</i></p> <p>Pass</p> <p>Pass</p>	<p><i>South</i></p> <p>2 ♦</p> <p>6 NT</p>
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**7 NT.** We cannot duck a spade, so we start by running diamonds to apply pressure to East, who we need to guard all three of the side suits. On the fourth diamond, we discard a heart from dummy. East can afford a second heart and a spade, but now must discard a club. We counter by cashing the top clubs, expecting that East no longer can stop the suit; the ♣ J appears from West on the third round, as dummy discards another heart. We play the ♣ 9, discarding a spade from dummy.

Our minors are gone, but our original five major suit cards are intact. Dummy has ♠ A-K-5-4 and ♥ 8; East must discard from ♠ Q-J-7 and ♥ K-J-10. As we can see, West cannot help in either major (if they could, East would have to figure that out, and discard in that suit).

We cross to dummy and cash the second spade. If spades are good, we discard two hearts and take the ♥ A for 13 tricks. If East retained a spade, we take the heart finesse and the ♥ 7 becomes our thirteenth trick. It's important to defer this finesse to the end, as we need an entry in the suit.

**6 NT.** At matchpoints, overtricks are important. We could play for 7 NT, or we could start out that way. After cashing diamonds or both minors, we could lead the ♠ 10, hoping to duck it to East. If West covers, we'll have to continue as for 7 NT. Of course, with four club tricks, all we need is the heart finesse.

The alternative is to win the diamond in hand, lead the ♠ 8, and duck in dummy (covered or not). If spades break 3-3 (a 36% chance), we are home. However, if spades do not break, we have trouble. The return of a spade (high from East) will break up any possible squeeze, reducing us to the heart finesse and guessing the clubs. The return of a heart by East will force us to guess prematurely whether to finesse. This is kind of revolting. A clueless East may play a "safe" club -- not the way to bet -- in which case, we run the same squeeze -- always making, if spades were splitting all along.

Another look: we duck the ♠ 8 to East, who does not see to return the other spade honor, but returns a heart. Still with only ten tricks, but two losers, we rise with the ace and run a similar repeating squeeze. On the remaining three diamonds, East discards two hearts, but then must part with a club. We cash the clubs, and on the fourth, East must discard from ♠ Q-J-7 and ♥ K. If we don't see the ♥ K, we try to run the spades. The advantage of this line: we avoid the heart finesse, if the spades are breaking. However, it's better not to give an astute East the chance to kill the squeeze. The 7 NT line appears better, especially at matchpoints.