Board # 1

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ AJ
♡ KT94
◇ A2
♣ AQT72

WEST
♠ Q742
♡ 73
◇ KT8643
♣ 8

EAST
♠ KT9865
♡ Q2
◇ Q7
♣ 543

SOUTH
♠ 3
♡ AJ865
◇ J95
♣ KJ96

HCP:
18
5 7
10

N-S have 28 combined points.
Suitable Level: Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	12	12	1	1
♠	5	5	8	8
♡	12	12	1	1
◇	6	6	7	7
♣	13	13	0	0

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	6♣n	Q◇	=	920	
	4♡s	4♠	+2	480	
	4♡s	8♣	+2	480	
	5♡n	7◇	+1	480	
	4♡s	8♣	+2	480	
	4♡s	2♠	+2	480	

North opens 1CC and if East meekly passes, South will bid 1♡ and North may get all the way to slam, which makes twelve tricks unless South finesses into East's Q♡. (The percentage play with nine is to play the top two and hope the queen drops.) If however, East finds a pre-emptive 2♠ overcall after North's opener, now E-W will compete vigourously in spades and N-S will have a much harder time getting to the slam. Interesting note: 13 tricks are available in clubs because a diamond can be pitched on the extra heart winner.

Board # 2

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ QT6
♡ QT4
◇ A76
♣ KQJ2

WEST
♠ J987
♡ K52
◇ Q9
♣ A643

EAST
♠ 43
♡ J87
◇ JT542
♣ T87

SOUTH
♠ AK52
♡ A963
◇ K83
♣ 95

HCP:
14
10 2
14

N-S have 28 combined points.
Suitable Level: Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	11	11	2	2
♠	11	11	2	2
♡	11	11	2	2
◇	8	8	5	5
♣	10	10	3	3

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	4♠	+2	660	
	3Nn	4◇	+1	630	
	3Nn	4◇	+1	630	
	3Nn	4◇	-1		100
	3Nn	4◇	-1		100
	3Nn	4◇	-1		100

South, with no five card major to open, bids 1◇ after East passes, and if West passes, North's best response is a jump to 3NT. If West finds a takeout double of 1◇, North can make East's life very difficult with a redouble! Poor East would have no good bid available, and a pass would only transfer the pressure back to West, who goes down many tricks doubled, in whichever suit is chosen. 1♡, 1♠, 1NT, and 2♣ all are down five tricks doubled for 1100, far more than the 660 that should be easy in 3NT. Only 1◇ doubled survives, costing only 300, but passing that out is not something any player would do. Even a 100-year old convention like takeout doubles can go wrong when someone stretches a bit too much!

Board # 3

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ QT8
♡ AT652
◇ T
♣ KQ96

WEST
♠ AK93
♡ KQ8
◇ 853
♣ T42

EAST
♠ J4
♡ 97
◇ A92
♣ AJ8753

SOUTH
♠ 7652
♡ J43
◇ KQJ764
♣ -

HCP:
11
12 10
7

E-W have 22 combined points.
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	8	9
♠	7	7	6	6
♡	7	7	5	5
◇	7	7	6	5
♣	3	3	9	10

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3◇s	4♣	-1		50
	3◇s	A♠	-2		100
	3♡n	A♣	-2		100
	3♡n	A♣	-2		100
	3♣e	T◇	=		110
	3Nn	7♣	-3		150

The old rule is NOT to open a weak two in first or second seat with a side four-card major that partner may have a fit for, but here we can forgive South for treating 7652 as a three-card suit! If South passes, West will open 1♣ and North will overcall 1♡, a suit that South can support. If South opens 2◇, E-W will find it difficult to come into the auction and will collect only 50 or 100 against the 110 they can make in clubs. Trouble is, by the time the auction gets to East, it may be too high for a club bid to be safe!

Board # 4

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ J53
♡ AK75
◇ KT82
♣ 76

WEST
♠ A2
♡ 832
◇ 9654
♣ 9853

HCP: 11
4 10
15

EAST
♠ K864
♡ 964
◇ Q73
♣ AJT

SOUTH
♠ QT97
♡ QJT
◇ AJ
♣ KQ42

N-S have 26 combined points.
Suitable Level: Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	10	10	3	3
♠	10	10	3	3
♡	9	9	3	3
◇	9	9	3	3
♣	8	8	4	4

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Ns	9◇	+2	660	
	3Nn	3◇	+1	630	
	4♡n	T♣	=	620	
	3Ns	3♣	=	600	
	1Nn	4♠	+3	180	
	3Ns	9♣	-1		100

North has just enough to open 1◇, and East will happily pass. South has the best hand at the table and should get the auction to 3NT after first bidding spades to uncover a fit there if one exists. With four top hearts and two diamonds, declarer should play spades to develop two more tricks to make a total of eight, and the KQ♣ should provide a ninth. Best technique in clubs is to lead from the North hand towards the KQ42, which gets two club tricks if East has the ace. The defenders should get only the two top spades and the ace of clubs.

Board # 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ AQ
♡ K962
◇ AQJ2
♣ KQ4

WEST
♠ J64
♡ 5
◇ KT764
♣ AJ87

HCP: 21
9 8
2

EAST
♠ K9832
♡ AJ83
◇ 853
♣ 9

SOUTH
♠ T75
♡ QT74
◇ 9
♣ T6532

N-S have 23 combined points.
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	8	8	5	5
♠	5	5	7	7
♡	9	8	4	4
◇	4	4	7	8
♣	8	8	5	5

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	2Nn	3♠	+2	180	
	2Nn	3♠	+1	150	
	2Nn	3♠	=	120	
	2Nn	3♠	=	120	
	2Nn	3♠	-1		100
	2Nn	3♠	-1		100

2NT followed by three passes should be the auction everywhere. I tell people that you can travel across the globe and when you hear 1NT or 2NT followed by three passes, you immediately get a sense of the declarer's skill level by the reaction. New players are terrified to be dropped into a notrump contract, but experienced players recognize a chance to outplay the rest of the room and get themselves ready to focus and find the elusive tricks everyone else might miss. In this case, it's a cakewalk: East leads a spade to North's queen and a heart is played. East ducks, dummy wins, and switches to a club. With the A♣ onside, South should get two clubs, two spades, and four tricks in the red suits easily, possibly five for an overtrick.

Board # 6

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ T
♡ KJT854
◇ A8752
♣ 6

WEST
♠ K72
♡ A3
◇ 643
♣ AKJ92

HCP: 8
15 10
7

EAST
♠ A865
♡ 976
◇ KQJT
♣ T3

SOUTH
♠ QJ943
♡ Q2
◇ 9
♣ Q8754

E-W have 25 combined points.
Suitable Level: Likely Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	7	7
♠	4	4	9	9
♡	7	7	5	5
◇	4	4	8	8
♣	3	3	9	9

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3◇w	T♠	-2	200	
	3Nw	J♡	-2	200	
	3Nw	8♡	-2	200	
	3Nw	K♡	-2	200	
	4♡n	K◇	-2		100
	4♡n	K◇	-2		100

West opens 1NT in third seat and North overcalls 2♡. East has ten points and no heart stopper, a difficult hand which most handle by bidding 3NT and hoping partner has a stopper. Doubling an overcall after partner opens 1NT is usually regarded as penalty-oriented, not takeout, so East has no other option, except perhaps 2NT, which might miss a game if West has a heart stopper. There is no way to stop North from getting five heart tricks and the A◇, so 3NT is doomed to failure unless North decides to lead a different suit, allowing West to finesse the Q♣ for a ninth trick to go with three diamonds, the A♡, two top clubs, and two top spades.

Board # 7

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ 52
♡ AKJ85
◇ 432
♣ Q64

WEST
♠ AQT6
♡ 9732
◇ Q9
♣ AK9

HCP: 10 / 15 / 8 / 7

EAST
♠ J974
♡ Q6
◇ A
♣ JT8753

HCP: 15 / 8 / 7

SOUTH
♠ K83
♡ T4
◇ KJT8765
♣ 2

HCP: 10

E-W have 23 combined points.
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	4	4	7	7
♠	3	3	9	9
♡	6	6	6	6
◇	9	9	4	4
♣	3	3	10	10

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3◇s	A♣	+1	130	
	2♠w	A♡	=		110
	3♠e	2♣	=		140
	3♠w	A♡	=		140
	3♠e	2♣	+1		170
	3♡s*	A◇	-5		1400

If South passes as dealer, E-W will have no trouble finding their spade fit and will play in 3♠, making nine tricks without much difficulty. If however South opens 3◇, it's not as easy for E-W. West might find a takeout double and this will work, but West might also decide to pass and allow South to play 3◇, which makes. Don't count your points and pass without a close look at your distribution! Pre-empts work and missing them gives the opponents a free ride to their best spot.

Board # 8

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ 865
♡ Q4
◇ AK64
♣ 9753

WEST
♠ AT43
♡ JT98
◇ 83
♣ KJ6

HCP: 9 / 9 / 13

EAST
♠ 9
♡ 52
◇ QJT72
♣ AQT82

HCP: 9 / 13

SOUTH
♠ KQJ72
♡ AK763
◇ 95
♣ 4

HCP: 9

N-S have 22 combined points.
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	7	7	6	6
♠	10	10	3	3
♡	8	8	4	4
◇	4	4	7	7
♣	4	4	9	9

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♠s*	8◇	=	590	
	5♣e*	A♡	-2	300	
	2♠s	J♡	+2	170	
	2♠s	J♡	+2	170	
	3♠s	6♣	=	140	
	3♠n	5♡	-1		50

Three passes to South and the choice with 5-5 is 1♠, the higher of two five card suits. This gets an immediate raise to 2♠ from North, and East may have a shot at 2NT showing both minors, but South will certainly find a 3♠ call. 22 combined is not really enough for game, but the two hands make maximum use of those 22 points and South should have no trouble making ten tricks. Should N-S have bid this game? Probably not, on only 22 combined.

Board # 9

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ 763
♡ T8
◇ 9864
♣ AJ84

WEST
♠ 984
♡ A53
◇ 32
♣ QT653

HCP: 5 / 6 / 10

EAST
♠ AKQ2
♡ QJ942
◇ AK75
♣ -

HCP: 19

SOUTH
♠ JT5
♡ K76
◇ QJT
♣ K972

HCP: 10

E-W have 25 combined points.
Suitable Level: Likely Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	9	10
♠	1	1	11	11
♡	1	1	12	12
◇	4	4	9	9
♣	4	4	9	9

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♡e	T◇	=		620
	4♡e	Q◇	+1		650
	4♡e	Q◇	+2		680
	4♡w	9◇	+2		680
	4♡e	Q◇	+2		680
	4♡e	Q◇	+3		710

East-West should have no trouble with this one: 1♡ - 2♡ - 4♡ is as far as it should get. With the K♡ onside, twelve tricks are likely. Many years ago, a player with a hand almost identical to the East hand (he had 20 points, not 19) asked me what he should have done after his partner responded to his 1♡ opener with a jump to 6♣! I told him the obvious answer was to raise. With a void? he asked. Sure, I said. On this auction, if it turns out partner needs help in clubs, he probably shouldn't have jumped to six....

Board # 10

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ AT853
♡ A74
◇ K4
♣ K86

WEST
♠ J6
♡ 953
◇ T98652
♣ T5

EAST
♠ K742
♡ KQ862
◇ QJ
♣ 73

SOUTH
♠ Q9
♡ JT
◇ A73
♣ AQJ942

HCP:
14
1 11
14

N-S have 28 combined points.
Suitable Level: Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	10	10	1	1
♠	11	11	1	1
♡	8	8	5	5
◇	7	7	6	6
♣	12	12	1	1

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	6♡	+3	690	
	3Nn	6♡	+3	690	
	3Nn	6♡	+2	660	
	3Nn	6♡	+2	660	
	3Nn	K♡	+1	630	
	2♠n	Q◇	-1		100

East has 11 points and two doubletons but an opener would be unwise here: counting QJ doubleton as three points and one more for the doubleton is very creative accounting. South should open 1♣ (or overcall 2♣ if East opens 1♡) and North will get the pair to 3NT after a spade bid or two. Ten top tricks in notrump are there, which is good when the opponents get to set up hearts at trick one. 6♣ makes but it took me a moment to figure out how. (Lead low from the A♠ towards the ♠Q9 after pulling trumps, giving East the king but setting up the rest of the suit for key discards.)

Board # 11

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ A4
♡ K9765
◇ K986
♣ K7

WEST
♠ T7
♡ Q8432
◇ Q32
♣ QT9

EAST
♠ J98
♡ AT
◇ AJ4
♣ 65432

SOUTH
♠ KQ6532
♡ J
◇ T75
♣ AJ8

HCP:
13
6 10
11

N-S have 24 combined points.
Suitable Level: Possible Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	8	9	3	4
♠	10	10	3	3
♡	7	8	5	5
◇	9	9	3	3
♣	6	6	6	6

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♠s	2◇	=	420	
	1Nn	3♣	+2	150	
	4♠s	9♣	-1		50
	4♠s	3◇	-1		50
	4♠s	T♣	-1		50
	3Nn	6♣	-2		100

If South opens 1♠, North will ensure the pair gets to game, and 4♠ is not easy to make, as you can see from the results. If South passes, North opens and after 1♡ - 1♠, 2◇ - 2♠, North-South may be able to avoid getting too high. To make ten tricks in spades, South needs to find some way to not lose three diamond tricks, which will happen if South leads the suit and the defenders play their cards right. If South can make the opponents lead diamonds, South may manage to win a trick in the suit and make ten tricks for a good score.

Board # 12

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ QT7643
♡ JT5
◇ 4
♣ K63

WEST
♠ KJ9
♡ A
◇ KQJ952
♣ JT4

EAST
♠ 852
♡ K73
◇ T63
♣ AQ98

SOUTH
♠ A
♡ Q98642
◇ A87
♣ 752

HCP:
6
15 9
10

E-W have 24 combined points.
Suitable Level: Possible Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	2	2	9	9
♠	6	6	7	7
♡	6	6	5	5
◇	2	2	11	11
♣	2	2	7	7

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3◇w	J♡	+2		150
	3◇w	J♡	+2		150
	3◇w	J♡	+2		150
	3◇w	J♡	+2		150
	4♡s	K◇	-2		200
	3Nw	6♠	+2		460

Six to the queen-ten or queen-nine is not enough to enter an auction vulnerable with a pre-emptive call, so East-West get to open 1◇ and respond 1NT without interference. Since the 1NT call denies a four-card major, odds are that East has something in clubs, and this might make West confident enough to venture a jump to 3◇. If so, East may try 3NT and be successful. But most will simply rebid 2◇ and go no further when partner raises to 3◇, making eleven tricks for 150.

Board # 13

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ AJ76
♡ Q976
◇ AQ
♣ KT2

WEST
♠ 9832
♡ AK
◇ JT643
♣ A5

EAST
♠ T5
♡ 8542
◇ K75
♣ 9873

SOUTH
♠ KQ4
♡ JT3
◇ 982
♣ QJ64

HCP:
16
12 3
9

N-S have 25 combined points.
Suitable Level: Likely Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	6	6	5	5
♠	8	8	5	5
♡	8	8	5	5
◇	6	6	7	7
♣	8	8	4	4

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	5◇	=	600	
	3Nn	9♣	=	600	
	2Nn	9♣	=	120	
	3Nn	3♣	-1		100
	3Nn	2♡	-1		100
	2Nn	9♣	-2		200

North opens 1NT and South raises to 2NT, inviting 3NT. Is the North hand a maximum or a minimum? It's 16, right in the middle of the range. Partner didn't use Stayman so there is no major suit fit, and there's nothing special about this particular 16 count, but neither is it a bad 16. In theory, N-S have only eight tricks available in notrump, leading diamonds through declarer when in with heart winners eventually sets up the suit. But a few pairs managed to bring home nine tricks somehow. Most pairs hate to miss a chance at game, and will bid 3NT on almost any 16. On this hand, odds are that won't work so well.

Board # 14

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ 9743
♡ 83
◇ 97
♣ AQ974

WEST
♠ KQ862
♡ A9764
◇ 5
♣ J3

EAST
♠ T5
♡ QT5
◇ KQT8
♣ KT82

SOUTH
♠ AJ
♡ KJ2
◇ AJ6432
♣ 65

HCP:
6
10 10
14

Highcard points are split 20-20
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	5	5	8	8
♠	5	5	8	7
♡	4	4	9	9
◇	7	7	6	5
♣	6	6	7	6

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♡e	A♠	-2	100	
	2Ne	6♣	-2	100	
	4♡e	6♣	-1	50	
	2Ne	4◇	-1	50	
	3◇s	K♠	-2		100
	2Ne	8◇	+1		150

East passes, South opens 1◇, and West has a Micheals cuebid of 2◇, showing five-five in the majors. North passes and East prefers hearts with a 2♡ call. South rebids 3◇ and West should let East make the decision about whether to bid on: West's first bid promised 5-5 in the majors and about the value of an opener: West certainly doesn't have significantly more than that and therefore should let East decide what to do. This is sound judgment, for the limit is eight tricks in hearts while 3◇ has no chance of succeeding. This is a common bridge theme: recognizing when your previous bid has given enough information to let partner make the key choice based on his hand and what you are known to have.

Board # 15

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ K74
♡ K83
◇ KJT
♣ AKT7

WEST
♠ Q853
♡ AJT974
◇ 95
♣ 6

EAST
♠ AT96
♡ Q6
◇ Q82
♣ J984

SOUTH
♠ J2
♡ 52
◇ A7643
♣ Q532

HCP:
17
7 9
7

N-S have 24 combined points.
Suitable Level: Possible Game

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	9	9	4	4
♠	5	5	8	8
♡	5	5	8	8
◇	10	10	3	3
♣	10	10	3	3

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	6♠	=	600	
	2Nn	6♠	+2	180	
	2Nn	2♡	+1	150	
	3♡w*	A♣	-1	100	
	3♡w	A♣	-1	50	
	3Nn	Q♡	-2		200

South passes and West does too, not wanting to open 2♡ with a side four-card spade suit, so North gets to open 1NT. This is passed around to West, who now has no trouble bidding 2♡. North has a maximum but bidding 2NT could be disastrous if South has nothing, so North passes, and so does East. South knows the pair has the majority of the highcard points but how to safely convey this is a difficult problem. I would probably choose 2NT as a gamble: knowing that it could be bad if partner has no heart stopper. 2♡ is likely to make, and notrump by North is good for nine tricks, so the gamble works: this time....