Board # 1

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ T96
♡ K76
◇ A754
♣ J76

WEST
♠ KQ87
♡ AT95
◇ QJ9
♣ 53

EAST
♠ A5432
♡ 2
◇ T632
♣ AQ9

SOUTH
♠ J
♡ QJ843
◇ K8
♣ KT842

HCP:
8
12 10
10

Available Tricks:

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

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	2♠e	3♡	+1		140
	3♠w	K♡	+2		200
	2♠e	2♣	+3		200
	3♠e	2♣	+2		200
	4♠e	Q♡	=		420

The power of distribution on display in this hand, where E-W have only two points more than an average 20 combined, but can easily make game in spades, losing only a club and two diamonds. Getting there might be a problem, especially if South opens an ultralight 2♡ in third seat (where five card suits are often a good gamble when non-vulnerable). If West gets to open 1◇ in fourth seat, one possible auction might be 1◇ - 1♠, a takeout double by South and a redouble by West (showing a good hand). North would escape to 2♡, South might even raise to 3♡: but when West bids 3♠ after redoubling earlier, ten points and a singleton in the opponents' suit has to be enough for East to bid game.

Board # 2

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ Q3
♡ Q752
◇ 976
♣ 9832

WEST
♠ AT98
♡ T963
◇ T84
♣ KQ

EAST
♠ KJ6
♡ AJ
◇ AKQJ
♣ AJ64

SOUTH
♠ 7542
♡ K84
◇ 532
♣ T75

HCP:
4
9 24
3

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	0	0	13	13
♠	0	0	13	13
♡	2	2	11	11
◇	0	0	13	13
♣	0	0	13	13

E-W have 33 combined points.
Suitable Level: Likely Slam

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3♣e	5♣	+2		150
	3Ne	2♠	+4		520
	3Ne	5♠	+4		520
	6Ne	2♠	+1		1020
	6Ne	2♠	+1		1020

An unlucky expert hand, this: East-West will get to 6NT and a spade lead gives declarer a twelfth trick to go with eight in the minors, the A♡ and the two top spades. A non-spade lead forces declarer to guess which defender has the Q♠. Good players will play four clubs and four diamonds first, discovering that North has one more card in the minors than South. This makes South the odds on favorite to hold more spades than North, and therefore the favourite to hold the Q♠. People tend to finesse the jack and miss the equally likely chance of the finesse of the ten, but an expert may go down by playing low to the T♠ on the second round!

Board # 3

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ JT42
♡ QT83
◇ AJ
♣ J82

WEST
♠ Q983
♡ A654
◇ 8
♣ A643

EAST
♠ AK5
♡ 7
◇ T7642
♣ KT95

SOUTH
♠ 76
♡ KJ92
◇ KQ953
♣ Q7

HCP:
9
10 10
11

Available Tricks:

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

Highcard points are split 20-20
Suitable Level: Partscore

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	PASSOUT	0	=	0	0
	2♡n	A♠	-2		100
	2♣e	K◇	+1		110
	2♠w	3♡	=		110
	1Nw	3♡	+1		120

I would pass all four of these hands, but four tables found an opening bid. South has eleven and two doubletons but no aces. West has 10 and some shape and 1♣ is not too bad. North might double 1♣ and would be rewarded by a heart bid from South, but often that would be risky. East will bid 1◇ over the double and may bid 3♣ over South's 2♡ call, winning the hand for East-West. How someone made 1NT with the East-West cards after a heart lead is beyond me. Must have been the crowded conditions in the Bistro last week!!

Board # 4

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ T754
♡ 873
◇ AQ53
♣ A8

WEST
♠ AKQ
♡ 65
◇ 9764
♣ J432

HCP: 10 10 10 10

EAST
♠ 98
♡ K9
◇ KJ82
♣ KT976

HCP: 8 8 14 10

SOUTH
♠ J632
♡ AQJT42
◇ T
♣ Q5

Highcard points are split 20-20
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♣e	T◇	-2	200	
	2♡s	A♠	+2	170	
	2♡s	A♠	+1	140	
	3♣w	3♡	-1	100	
	3♣e	T◇	=		110

The result here hinges on who makes the opening bid, and everyone has exactly 10 points! West will pass, North might pass or find a 1◇ opener. East should pass but might find a 1♣ opener or a 2♣ overcall and get E-W into the auction. If it gets to South without an opener, 1♡ is best, and if North responds 1♠ South can pass (new suits by a passed-hand responder are not forcing). North is better off raising to 2♡, since East may be able to get in over 1♠. N-S can make nine tricks in hearts or spades, but if E-W are allowed into the auction in clubs, they can cause some tough decisions for N-S.

Board # 5

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ 3
♡ KJT
◇ Q742
♣ Q9832

WEST
♠ JT64
♡ A76
◇ T963
♣ K5

HCP: 8 8 14 10

EAST
♠ AQ752
♡ 9853
◇ K8
♣ AJ

HCP: 6 11 14 9

SOUTH
♠ K98
♡ Q42
◇ AJ5
♣ T764

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

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♠e	4♣	-1	50	
	PASSOUT	0	=	0	0
	2♠e	2♡	=		110
	2♠e	2◇	=		110
	3♠e	7♣	=		140

Looks like one of the East players miscounted points or hid an ace, and passed a 14-count! Once East opens 1♠, East-West should end up in 2♠ or maybe 3♠ if N-S compete in clubs. In fact, N-S can make nine tricks in clubs with their 18 combined points, while East-West can make only eight in their nine-card spade fit. This must be why there was a popular bridge book some time ago called _Points Schmoints!_

Board # 6

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ 2
♡ KJT87
◇ Q762
♣ 832

WEST
♠ J6
♡ AQ942
◇ A543
♣ 76

HCP: 6 11 14 9

EAST
♠ AKT75
♡ 63
◇ KJ
♣ QJT4

SOUTH
♠ Q9843
♡ 5
◇ T98
♣ AK95

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

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Ne	A♣	-2	200	
	3Ne	T◇	-1	100	
	3Nw	T♡	-1	100	
	3Ne	A♣	-1	100	
	3Nw	8♡	=		600

East opens 1♠, West responds 2♡, and East rebids 3♣. Every partnership should have discussed what a bid of the fourth suit means in this common situation: natural or 'no stopper, bid NT only if YOU have one.' Either way, 3NT should be the final contract and declarer has five top tricks (AK♠, A♡, AK◇) and needs four more. For some, the opening lead will help, but more winners are sorely needed. One good way might be to lead a low spade toward the jack. If South wins the queen, declarer goes from two spade winners to four! If South ducks, the jack wins and South gets three spades. Establishing a club trick is also needed, and a finesse of the jack of diamonds should be enough to struggle home with nine tricks (although most did not).

Board # 7

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ KJ
♡ AQJ987
◇ T5
♣ AJT

WEST
♠ T98732
♡ -
◇ AKQJ4
♣ K9

EAST
♠ A65
♡ 63
◇ 862
♣ 75432

SOUTH
♠ Q4
♡ KT542
◇ 973
♣ Q86

HCP:
16
13 4
7

Available Tricks:

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

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	4♡n	A◇	=	620	
	5♠w*	T◇	-1	200	
	4♠w	A♡	=		620
	4♠w	A♡	=		620
	4♠w	A♡	=		620

South passes and West opens 1♠. Not 1◇. Open your longest suit first. There is no way to tell partner you have a longer suit than the one you opened. North overcalls 2♡ and East passes. South has five card support and should find a raise of hearts. I would bid 4♡ but 3♡ will suffice here, since North will certainly go on with the best hand at the table. Problem is, a single raise to 3♡ allows West to bid 4◇, showing a shapely two-suiter, and East may bid 4♠ over 4♡, checkmating E-W because both majors make 10 tricks! If South jumps to game on the power of the known 10-card fit (11 actually!), there is virtually no chance E-W will even consider 4♠. Any time you have five card support for an overcall, raise! And don't be shy!

Board # 8

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ A87
♡ AQJT5
◇ 954
♣ 72

WEST
♠ QJ6
♡ K873
◇ JT7
♣ A86

EAST
♠ T32
♡ 96
◇ K8632
♣ T53

SOUTH
♠ K954
♡ 42
◇ AQ
♣ KQJ94

HCP:
11
11 3
15

Available Tricks:

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

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	3◇	+3	490	
	3Ns	4♡	+2	460	
	3Ns	3♡	+2	460	
	3Nn	3◇	+1	430	
	1Ns	J◇	+3	180	

Don't know if North opened 1♡ at your table, but if so I hope South avoided the urge to respond 1♠. 2♣ is better; with 15 points opposite an opener South will have plenty of time to bid spades later. 1♡ - 2♣, 2♡ - 2♠, 3◇ (asking) - 3NT is one way to get to the best spot. North's rebid should show six hearts but sometimes you have to make the least worst bid. If North passes, South opens and the auction is 1♣ - 1♡, 1♠ - 3♡, 3NT: here the jump to 3♡ is invitational since a 2-level fourth suit (2◇ in this case) rebid by responder is usually played as an artificial game force. 11 or 12 tricks in notrump should be easy with the K♡ and K◇ both onside.

Board # 9

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: E-W

NORTH
♠ KQ4
♡ Q842
◇ QJ832
♣ 7

WEST
♠ AT5
♡ A9
◇ A94
♣ KJ862

EAST
♠ 982
♡ JT763
◇ KT76
♣ 4

SOUTH
♠ J763
♡ K5
◇ 5
♣ AQT953

HCP:
10
16 4
10

Available Tricks:

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

Highcard points are split 20-20
Suitable Level: Partscore

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3♡w	7♣	-1	100	
	2♣s	A♡	-1		50
	2♠s	A♡	-1		50
	3♣s	A♡	-2		100
	4♣s*	2♣	-2		300

Another cursed hand where neither side has a single eight-card fit and the highcard points are evenly split. Three passes to West, who opens 1NT. North passes and East bids 2◇, a transfer to hearts. South gets in there with 3♣ and if I were West I would double for penalties and collect probably 300. 2♡ is the highest making contract on this layout, which is high for a 20-20 hand without any fits: sometimes only one or two actual contracts can be made at all on these types of deals. Unlucky for whoever declares, unless the defense slips and lets a trick through...

Board # 10

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ A53
♡ AKT94
◇ QJ2
♣ QJ

WEST
♠ T864
♡ 32
◇ A53
♣ 8742

HCP: 17
4 15
4

EAST
♠ KQ97
♡ 7
◇ K976
♣ AK96

HCP: 7
16
17

SOUTH
♠ J2
♡ QJ865
◇ T84
♣ T53

HCP: 4

N-S have 21 combined points.
Suitable Level: Partscore

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3♡n	A♣	+1	170	
	3♡n	K♠	-1		100
	3♡s	4♠	-1		100
	3♡s	T♠	-1		100
	4♡n	A♣	-2		200

This would be a slam hand if East and North were partners! East opens 1◇ and this is passed round to North, who should start with a double and bid hearts later. This sequence, the 'fake' takeout double followed by "I'm now bidding my own suit, partner" shows a strong hand, usually single-suited, the takeout double isn't really for takeout but the first step in a two-bid message. East has a shapely 15 and bids 1♠, and South passes. West does as well and North now bids 2♡, confirming the big hand. East completes the picture (why not?) with a 3♣ call, and South will get in with a 3♡ bid, which to N-S's surprise is already too high despite the ten-card fit and a (bare) majority of the highcard points. Oh well.

Board # 11

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ 84
♡ T842
◇ 98
♣ 87632

WEST
♠ AT9
♡ 73
◇ A43
♣ AKJ95

HCP: 0
16 7
17

EAST
♠ 7653
♡ AQ65
◇ JT7
♣ T4

HCP: 11
4

SOUTH
♠ KQJ2
♡ KJ9
◇ KQ652
♣ Q

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

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3♣w	9◇	-1	50	
	2♡n	T♣	-1		50
	1Nw	9◇	+1		120
	1Nw	8♣	+2		150
	2♣w*	8♠	=		180

This time it's West and South who could make a slam if they were partners. South opens 1◇ and West overcalls 1NT. North passes and East bids 2♣, hoping not to hear 2◇ from West... South bids 2♠ and West passes. North knows that South will have longer diamonds and bids 3◇, with a silent prayer that South will not go further. South doesn't and West can pass it out and try to beat 3◇, or take a chance on 3NT on the theory that partner's Stayman call has to mean something. 3◇ may escape for down one, but down two is more likely. 3NT is a surprise: the diamond lead eventually makes a ninth trick out of East's 7◇ after the jack and ten force out South's honours and drop North's doubleton ◇98!

Board # 12

Dealer: West

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ T5
♡ KT7
◇ K8654
♣ AQJ

WEST
♠ KJ3
♡ AJ8
◇ Q93
♣ 9852

HCP: 13
11 12
4

EAST
♠ Q9
♡ Q643
◇ AJ2
♣ K764

HCP: 4

SOUTH
♠ A87642
♡ 952
◇ T7
♣ T3

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

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	2♠s	5♣	=	110	
	1Nn	4♣	=	90	
	2♡e	T◇	=		110
	2Nn	3♡	-3		300
	3◇n	6♣	-3		300

West passes and North opens 1◇. East has a good hand but no safe bid: a takeout double risks a spade response, an overcall on a four-card suit is flawed, so pass is the only option. It looks like several Souths in the main game last week tried a pre-emptive 2♠ call (the old meaning of the jump is strong, but many pairs play it as pre-emptive), which explains the 2♠ and 2NT contracts. If South passes, West will double or try 1NT (11-15 in the passout seat, by the way), and likely end up in 2NT, which is safe. A spade bid from South might buy the contract but a plus score in spades is unlikely.

Board # 13

Dealer: North

Vulnerable: Both

NORTH
♠ T965
♡ KJ7654
◇ -
♣ AT6

WEST
♠ QJ742
♡ Q982
◇ Q73
♣ 8

HCP: 8
7 15
10

EAST
♠ A3
♡ A
◇ AT865
♣ QJ952

HCP: 7
15
10

SOUTH
♠ K8
♡ T3
◇ KJ942
♣ K743

HCP: 15
7
10

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

Available Tricks:

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

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3♣e	T♡	-3	300	
	3♣e	T♡	-2	200	
	3Ne	T♡	-1	100	
	3Ne	T♡	-1	100	
	2◇e	T♡	=		90

North should pass to begin this auction: a weak two in first or second seat should be QJTxxx or better, and no side four-card major. East opens 1◇ and South passes. West responds 1♠ and now North can get into the auction, with 2♡ or even 3♡! Either bid stymies East, since 2◇ is as high as the E-W hands can go, but that's hard to see when you have a shapely 15 and partner has responded. East will likely bid 3♣ over a 2♡ call by North (down two), or gamble it out in 3NT if North jumps to 3♡ (also down two). Sometimes nothing works!

Board # 14

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

NORTH
♠ A72
♡ Q96
◇ J873
♣ AQ7

WEST
♠ 9853
♡ T7543
◇ K54
♣ T

HCP: 3
11
13

EAST
♠ KJ6
♡ KJ
◇ QT962
♣ J95

HCP: 11
3
13

SOUTH
♠ QT4
♡ A82
◇ A
♣ K86432

HCP: 3
11
13

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

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	10	10	3	3
♠	7	7	6	6
♡	8	7	5	5
◇	7	7	6	6
♣	11	11	2	2

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Nn	6◇	+1	430	
	3Nn	J◇	+1	430	
	3Nn	J◇	+1	430	
	3Ns	4♡	=	400	
	2Nn	6◇	+1	150	

We all want to be the one to open the bidding, and East might stretch a bit to do so, but along with the plus factors (a doubleton, a five-card suit) there are also minus factors (aceless, that KJ♡ isn't really worth four points), and pass is best. If East passes, South will open 1♣ and North will ensure the partnership gets to 3NT. If East opens 1◇, South overcalls 2♣ and North knows this bid cannot be made on just the KJ♣, so 3NT is the obvious bid. A diamond lead knocks out the ace and it looks like trouble for declarer, but six club tricks follow and East has to come down to six cards, pitching diamond winners or unguarding one of his major suit kings. The likely result of all this is ten tricks for declarer.

Board # 15

Dealer: South

Vulnerable: N-S

NORTH
♠ QJT9
♡ QJ964
◇ A
♣ T97

WEST
♠ 75
♡ T753
◇ K963
♣ K63

HCP: 10
6 19
5

EAST
♠ A43
♡ AK
◇ QT42
♣ AQ54

HCP: 6
19
5

SOUTH
♠ K862
♡ 82
◇ J875
♣ J82

HCP: 19
6
5

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

Available Tricks:

	N	S	E	W
NT	3	3	9	9
♠	7	7	6	6
♡	5	5	8	8
◇	2	2	10	10
♣	2	2	10	10

Players	Contract	Lead	Result	NS	EW
	3Ne	8♡	-1	50	
	1Ne	8♡	=		90
	2Ne	2♠	=		120
	1Ne	2♠	+1		120
	3Ne	8♡	+1		430

South and West pass and North opens what some may consider a crazy 2♡ with only five, and at unfavourbale vulnerability too! East, as North suspects, does have a big hand, and doubles, then bids 3NT over West's 3◇ response. East wins the heart lead and runs four rounds of clubs when they split 3-3, pitching a spade from dummy. North seems to have three clubs and six hearts (maybe five), while South also has three clubs and considerably fewer hearts. No spade bids from the opponents seems to indicate that spades are breaking as well, leaving North with very few diamonds, and making South the odds-on favourite to have the J◇. So, the Q◇ to North's ace, a heart back and a second diamond, finessing West's nine.....holds! Making 3!