



Cambs & Hunts Bridge



Newsletter Number 30

30 December 2001

Editors: **Chris Jagger**, 2 Wycliffe Road, Cambridge CB1 3JD, Tel: 01223-526586 and
Jonathan Mestel, 180 Queen's Gate, London SW7 2BZ, Tel: 01223-329671.

E-mail: ajm8@cam.ac.uk or christopher.jagger@deloitte.co.uk

Web page: <http://www.camsbridge.org.uk>

Items for the Web page should be sent to David Allen on david@djallen.org.uk

The next newsletter is scheduled to appear on **30th April**. Please try to get copy to us no later than **15th April**. All contributions welcome!



Congratulations to Giles Woodruff and Catherine Jagger on their recent promotions to Grandmaster. Both are under 30, and Catherine is the youngest woman ever to achieve this.

The County has once more qualified for the Tollemache finals, despite being weakened by last minute illnesses.

“For evil to triumph, it is only necessary for the Good to do nothing.” Why is this Newsletter a little short? Perhaps YOU did not contribute to it, and your club sent us no news. . .

This newsletter, and past issues also, can be found on the County Web page, whose URL is given above.



In this issue Peter Burrows reports on some minority trump fits, while one of our new Grandmaster stars offers advice from the stars. Chris Jagger presents some technical guidance on sequences such as 1NT-P-2♣*-X, and reports on the Tolle qualifier. Frances Hinden writes to Aunt Agony, while Jonathan Mestel visits the South coast. There is the usual round-up of News and Events.



Play Problem

♠ AK632		♠ QJ84						
♥ K73	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♥ 64
W		N	E					
	S							
♦ Q64	♦ AK72							
♣ KQ	♣ J84							

	West	North	East	South
1♠	X		2NT*	P
4♠	P		P	P
	Pairs Dealer W		Love all	

North leads ♠3 (2nd and 4th), and shows out on the first round of trumps. How do you play? (See page 7.)

A Qualified Success by Chris Jagger

As usual you can deduce from the presence of this article that the County qualified for the Tolle final – fortunately this happens more often than not, as otherwise the December newsletter would have died long ago from lack of material! This year had several novel features, the first being the withdrawal of Giles/Julian through illness.

We were also welcoming two new debutants, the Artful Roger, partnering Kends (an endearing partnership that refers to each other as ‘my cretin’), and Rodo, partnering Ace-jackem (already getting a reputation for bidding making slams off two aces). We also had a new Tolle team partnership in the form of Frisky and Cath ‘I’m a grandmother now.’ Our last pair – JY and I – that regular pair that play together about twice a year – and for those of you who think we waste the time we spend waiting to score up with the rest of the team, I can assure you this article was written during those waits!

First set and the Artful Roger had a tough problem:

<p>♠ 97 ♥ QJ762 ♦ J3 ♣ AJ72</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		<p>♠ Q10842 ♥ K9 ♦ 1064 ♣ Q96</p> <p>♠ K5 ♥ 1054 ♦ KQ9752 ♣ 103</p> <p>♠ AJ63 ♥ A83 ♦ A8 ♣ K854</p>
W	N	E						
	S							

Everybody played 4♠, making ten tricks, except the AR who was one down. ‘Basically

my cretin didn’t take a finesse.’ On the face of it, it would seem that most players would have made this one! However, the AR had a weak 2♦ opened against him. He ducked the ♦J lead, and correctly judged that East held a 2362 shape. Thus having cashed the second diamond, he played three rounds of hearts, before ace and another spade. If West had had the ♠K he would have been endplayed, leaving declarer to lose only one club trick. In fact East had it, and he was one down.

Good card reading for a game swing away. However, there was a better line. Cash the ace of spades first, then ruff out the hearts, and ruff the third diamond with the jack of spades. Now either hand can hold Kx of spades and be endplayed.

Next hand of interest was a lead problem against a grand slam:

<p>♠ KJ86 ♥ 76 ♦ J9432 ♣ 87</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		<p>♠ AQ732 ♥ 1084 ♦ – ♣ KQ932</p> <p>♠ 105 ♥ J2 ♦ KQ86 ♣ J10654</p> <p>♠ 94 ♥ AKQ953 ♦ A1075 ♣ A</p>
W	N	E						
	S							

Mostly uncontested, our auction was accurate but too revealing: 1♠-2♥-4♥-5♣-5♦-(X)-XX-5♠-7♥. Oppo led a diamond and thirteen tricks were wrapped up rapidly. Leading against slams is largely a matter of belief in the opponents, and I confess I might well lead a diamond here – the easiest way to defeat a

grand is to cash partner's ace. If you believe the auction, declarer has solid hearts (since no grand slam force), and aces in both minors, whilst dummy has short diamonds (think why you know this). A diamond lead won't cause a problem, whilst either a spade or a trump could. Try playing this hand on a spade lead! Or try xx AKQxxx Axx Ax opposite AQxxx xxx x KQxx on a trump lead.

Next was what looked like an easy slam:

♠ KQ43		♠ 1096
♥ KJ10	W N E	♥ AQ863
♦ KQ532	W S E	♦ A107
♣ 9		♣ AK

Both Cambridge pairs made heavy weather of it, starting 1♥-2♦-2NT-3♠-3NT-4♥. This beautiful auction, completely describing responder's shape, was perhaps misguided. Bidding 3♥ over 2NT would have simplified things (and the spade fit could still have been found later if partner was 4-4 in the majors), and since all you are interested in is the four aces and queen of hearts, this patterning out is far less necessary than at other times. Cath bid 5♣ over this and they progressed to slam. Rodo thought they were playin' Blackwood, and was left to play in Blackwood.

The team view was that 4NT clearly ought to show a 3433 shape and want to play there. I agree with the view but also have sympathy for Rodo. Sequences such as 1♠-2♦-2♥-3♣-3♠-4NT clearly ought to be invitational too (else how do you bid a big hand without a fit, and if you want to Blackwood you could easily cue 4♣ first). Yet I know that some of the team would play this latter sequence as Blackwood. I think that Rodo and I are at least consistent – he plays them both as Blackwood, whilst I play them both as natural. If you don't have an agreement to the contrary I don't see why the first is clearly natural whilst the second is Blackwood.

One hand that was too tough for our opponents, Chris Dixon and Pat Davies:

♠ 86		♠ K973
♥ AQ4	W N E	♥ K86
♦ A86	W S E	♦ J7
♣ AKJ52		♣ 8643

At unfavourable the auction proceeded 1♣-(2♦)-P-(P), X-(P)-2♠-(P), 3♣. For me the culprit is West. There was little point reopening with a double, as partner was unlikely to be passing, whilst 2NT would have shown the hand nicely.

Scoring up with Kends is an experience in the language department, amongst others. He talks of 'monkeys' and 'sticks and stones' – that is, 500 and 1100 respectively. The term for 1700 is 'you won't like this one!' His aggressive style means that most nine counts are being opened. However, Acejackem was not to be outdone, making strong jump shifts on nine counts! To be fair, it was ♠ – ♥AK10642 ♦76 ♣Q8753 opposite a 1♣ opening. My advice for many different situations is that if you describe distributional hands with low point count via strong bids, your partner will drive you too high. This time 6♣, missing two aces. Still, +1370 was a fine score as the rest of the pairs were going off in 4♥!

Going into the last set everything was finely balanced, and it was far from clear we were going to qualify. We decided to rotate partnerships to avoid anybody having to play with their cretin, and stormed through the last twelve boards notching up a couple of hundred imps (on the cross imp), and a convincing first place in our group.

As usual, the real reason we won was our captain, The Impeccable Scorer, who never gets frustrated when JY and I ask for the sixteenth time where we should be sitting.

Bridge Horoscope by Mystic Giles

ARIES

As Mercury moves into Capricorn, no trump contracts should be avoided. Consider cashing your aces. Beware of grandmasters playing a complicated forcing pass system.

TAURUS

A pre-empt on a singleton could cause a swing. Lucky card: ace of trumps.

GEMINI

With Pluto retrograde, check your bank balance before redoubling. Heart bids may not be what they seem.

CANCER

He who hesitates is lost: beware of tall dark strangers carrying books. Lucky defence to 1NT: Cansino.

LEO

A surprise on Thursday when your partner gives up the game and sues you for somewhat more than a year's table money. Try something other than Reverse Polish Club with the next one.

VIRGO

Have you considered underleading a king? I know it's not recommended by the best authorities, but if you never try it you'll never know.

LIBRA

Sit West on Tuesday and pass throughout on Board 17 for a joint top with all other Librans who follow this advice. Lucky lead against 2♠: eight of clubs.

SCORPIO

Prepare for a momentous decision around the 14th. Your destiny is in your own hands, but if it's any help, LHO is 4243 and has falsecarded.

SAGITTARIUS

Confusion on Wednesday when a misunderstanding about a call for the next round leaves you £50 out of pocket. On the bright side, a tip-off to the local constabulary towards the end of the evening should increase the vacancies in (and your chances of selection for) the club A team.

CAPRICORN

Leads are fraught with danger. Best to bid again if you think it may be cheaper than letting through a no-play game. Lucky half-time snack in the NICKO: Mr Kipling's Apple Pies (but make sure your opponents aren't fellow Capricorns before offering them any).

AQUARIUS

Humiliation on Friday afternoon when, after debating a costly revoke with partner against 4♠ redoubled, you forget to cut your losses by claiming 150 honours. But don't worry, there is a pretty guard squeeze for an overtrick on the next hand to cheer you up. Lucky book on guard squeezes: "Squeeze Play Made Easy" by Reese and Jourdain.

PISCES

Don't let coming bottom for the second week running bother you. Matters will improve towards the end of the month provided you hire a professional to partner you. Lucky professional: John Young.



Results Round Up:

Apologies for the incorrect result last newsletter - Zakrzewski in fact beat Greig in the final of last year's **County Knockout**.

The County came first in the Tollemache qualifying heat (see page 2).

In the **Eastern Counties League**, against Beds the results for respectively the A, B and C teams were 17-3, 12-8 and 2-18; against University 8-12, 3-17, 20-0.

Larlham, Warren, Woodruff and Kendrick won the **Newmarket Swiss Teams**, with Burrows, Burrows, Probst and Handley-Pritchard losing on a split tie.

In the **County Knockout**, MAY bt PATTEN, ELSTEIN bt HUGGINS, MESTEL bt JONES, MAN bt COPPING, JAGGER bt RILEY, JACOBSBERG bt PINTO and CARMICHAEL bt SHAW. In the second round WRAIGHT bt ELSTEIN (by default), JACOBSBERG bt MAN, MESTEL bt HOWARD, WOODRUFF bt MAY, BRODIE bt CARMICHAEL, GODDARD bt LARLHAM, JAGGER bt BURROWS, LAST bt KENNEY.

On the wider scene Woodruff/Shaw were 3rd in the Great Northern Pairs. JAGGER went out in the last 16 of the **Hubert Phillips**.

Masterpoints update: Catherine Jagger became the youngest ever female Grandmaster, whilst shortly afterwards Giles Woodruff became another under 30s Grandmaster.



Dates for your diary

6th January 2002	ECL v Northants (A)
22nd January 2002	County Pairs Heat, Cambridge Club (open to all county members)
27th January 2002	County Individual Final
10th February 2002	ECL v Norfolk (A)
10th March 2002	Swiss Teams Club Challenge
23th March 2002	New Players Tournament
9th June 2002	Jubilee Swiss Pairs



From the horse's mouth

A reader has suggested that we introduce a column of simple 'Tips'. Have you little snippets of advice which you think would benefit our other readers? If so, send them to us. Here are a few to start you off:

Leads: Against a 2NT opener lead a five card suit if you have one, but otherwise go passive.

Bidding: If partner opens one of a major, try raising with three card support and a doubleton, even if the major could be four cards.

Play: As declarer, with several touching honours, win with the highest one – it will generally make it harder for the defence to realise what your holding is.

Defence: When partner leads AK against a suit contract and you expect to ruff the third round, don't let the exhilaration distract you from watching the spots carefully. You may miss partner's suit preference signal.



Defence to Stayman/Transfers by Chris Jagger

When opponents open 1NT and their partner responds with Stayman or Transfers, how do you play a double?

The conventional view when I was learning the game was that double showed a hand that would have doubled 1NT, as otherwise these hands were difficult to bid. Having said this, even amongst the top players, there are many who play the double as natural, showing the suit bid. Some combine the two, saying that double is either natural, or the first move on a strong hand.

The last option, whilst sounding to be a good compromise, is actually fairly unplayable, though I play it myself with some partners! However, if you add some methods in, it becomes a good compromise, allowing you to compete in diamonds, take penalties when they are due, and bid game as appropriate. The following is rather technical, so if you are not called Wightwick this could be a good point to skip to the next article!

The key is that double by responder is the normal action with 3 card support for partner's possible suit, and 7+ points. We illustrate over the two diamond transfer.

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-X = 3+ diamonds, 7+ points (but not long hearts).

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-2♠/3♠ = Fit jumps (5 spades, 3 diamonds); note no overcall of 1NT.

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-2NT = 12-14, natural (taking a view that partner has the weak hand).

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-3♣ = Constructive.

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-3♦ = To play opposite the strong hand (taking the view partner has not got a weak hand with diamonds).

(1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(P)-2♥ = UCB, about 12-14 (other bids as before).

The important part of the system is how to continue after (1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-X-(P)-? Basically 'rebidding' your suit is weak, and all others are strong:

P = For penalties.

3♦ = Weak with diamonds (may have other suits as well, but too bad!).

2♠ = Natural, 4 or 5 spades usually.

2NT = Scramble, 16+ points (any hand with four card suits, or minimum with diamonds)

3♣ = 16+, natural, but minimum.

3♥ = Game forcing with a minor.

3♠ = Game forcing with six spades.

4m = 5-5 with spades and the bid minor (ie Roman Jump).

If the auction commences (1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-P-(P), now all bids are strong, doubling being for take out (with Lebensohl), 2NT being used as a minimum strong hand with a minor, 3m is stronger but not forcing, the cue asks for a stop (ie based on a big minor suit hand else you would double), and 4m is a Roman jump as above.

A final sequence worthy of comment: (1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(P)-P-(2♥)-P = Weak with diamonds or strong wanting a penalty from 2♥ (partner can now double without 3 diamonds, eg 4225 shape).

You will note that the above does not cater for every hand. In particular you don't always take a penalty when the weaker hand has shortage in both red suits. Also. it is perhaps better to play (1NT)-P-(2♦)-X,-(2♥)-P-(P)-2NT as natural, about a 20 count, taking the view partner is not likely to be passing a take out double.

I should thank Ian Pagan for the basic idea of this system – the continuations are a joint effort.

Mouth-borne in Bornemouth by Jonathan Mestel

This somewhat contorted title refers to a hand from the ‘Two Star Pairs’ final of the EBU Autumn Congress at Bournemouth. It illustrates the truism that every time the defenders open their mouths information about the hand is borne to declarer. Passing is usually less revealing, but many players (like myself) are ‘born Mouths.’

There are two qualifying rounds in this event, in each of which half the field is eliminated, with no carry over. Thus the important thing is to save enough of your good boards for later. Rod Oakford and I erred by doing too well in the first session, while others saved up too many of them...

leads to some timing problems. At trick 3 I led a club to the king and ace. Winning the second diamond in hand, I cashed ♠K, ♣Q, ♠J and ♣J, throwing a heart. Coming back to hand with ♠A, the position was

Love all	♠ –	Dealer W						
	♥ A1082							
	♦ J953							
	♣ A10762							
♠ AK632		♠ QJ84						
♥ K73	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S		♥ 64
W	N	E						
	S							
♦ Q64		♦ AK72						
♣ KQ		♣ J84						
	♠ 10975							
	♥ QJ95							
	♦ 108							
	♣ 953							

♠ –									
♥ A10									
♦ J9									
♣ –									
♠ 6			♠ –						
♥ K7	<table border="1" style="display: inline-table; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E		S			♥ 64
W	N	E							
	S								
♦ 6			♦ A7						
♣ –			♣ –						
♠ –									
♥ QJ95									
♦ –									
♣ –									

At our table the bidding was

West	North	East	South
1♠	X	2NT*	P
4♠	P	P	P

North led a 4th highest ♦3, which I won on table and led ♠Q. When he now threw a club, he was practically marked as 0-4-4-5 with both missing aces. As he has to guard diamonds, he can be strip squeezed, but the club blockage

When the last trump is led, North must bare his heart ace. One must now throw a diamond from dummy, being prepared to look very silly if North was originally 0-5-3-5, but that’s an unlikely take-out double, and all the carding suggested the actual lay-out. I now led ♥7 “with a sadistic flourish” according to opponents Lee & Rowlands, who were otherwise very complimentary considering that they were then in the running for first place. In fact, as there was barometer scoring, we soon found out that +450 was only 75% of the matchpoints. Whether this was because the event was high standard, or because ♥A was often led, history does not relate.

To return to the tenuous theme of the article, not everyone would make a take-out double as North, and the winning line would be far from apparent without it. Another case of careless talk costing lives? Maybe, but there are great dangers in passing with this hand also.

Super-Moysians. by Peter Burrows

I was intrigued by the following deal which came up in the C&H vs. Beds. match:

Dealer N	♠ 93	E/W Vul						
	♥ KJ							
	♦ 97532							
	♣ KQ83							
♠ K5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			♠ AQ7642
W	N	E						
S								
♥ 853		♥ 7642						
♦ J64		♦ A10						
♣ J10654		♣ 9						
	♠ J108							
	♥ AQ109							
	♦ KQ8							
	♣ A72							

At the table at which I was kibitzing North passed, East opened 1♠, and our South had a difficult choice of bid. She opted for 1NT, raised to 3NT by her partner

On the ♣J lead, the contract was somehow brought home. It's always pleasing to bring off a bare-faced swindle of this sort, but if North-South had been able to see each other's cards, I think that they would have opted to play in 4♥ on the 4-2 fit instead. This sort of super-Moysian fit is always very difficult to identify during the auction.

Either minor suit lead can defeat 4♥, but the most likely defence is for West to lead ♠K, and switch to a trump. If so, declarer wins in dummy and plays a diamond to the king and ducks out the Ace while dummy's second trump protects her against the run of the spades.

It is tempting to win the diamond in hand, cross to dummy in clubs, and play a second diamond. However, after winning ♦A, East can cash ♠A and force dummy to ruff the

third spade. Now, when declarer leads a minor suit (dummy being exhausted of the majors) East can ruff to defeat the contract.

That, however, would be poor play by South. The point is that one of the defenders must have a doubleton at most in diamonds. Since declarer can not afford to draw trumps at an early stage, it is evident that the hand short in diamonds is likely to get a ruff when declarer next loses the lead. (If it is West who is short that outcome is virtually certain.) Accordingly, after winning the first diamond, South should play a small diamond from hand, hoping for Ace doubleton specifically.

So, on balance, I would prefer to be in 4♥ rather than 3NT. But don't run away with the idea that only 4-2 fits provide the opportunity for a Super-Moysian. Look at this beauty which appeared in the "Bridge World" bidding challenge in August 1990:

♠ AKQJ		♠ 10						
♥ 9654	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td><td style="padding: 2px;"></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S			♥ KQ32
W	N	E						
S								
♦ 765		♦ Q4						
♣ A5		♣ KQJ432						

South opens a weak NT, and you are given the additional information that North will bid 2♦ (natural) if that is sufficient. Not surprisingly nobody found 4♠. But it is solid provided that trumps are 4-4, clubs are not 5-0, and that there is no heart ruff, all of which is actually quite likely on the information provided.

Some Super-Moysians, by contrast, are not so very hard to bid provided you have the imagination to keep the possibility in mind. Here are Marcello Branco (East) and Gabino Cintra of Brazil bidding in the Bridge World's "Challenge of the Decade" (August 1991)

which they eventually won, partly as a result of their triumph on this deal:

♠ J7		♠ AKQ10
♥ 86	W N E	♥ 104
♦ A8762	S	♦ KQ93
♣ Q964		♣ A102

East dealt, and the uncontested auction was 1♦-3♦;3♠-4♦;4♠-P.

3♦ showed a weakish raise, and Branco reckoned that he would have a good chance of ten tricks in spades if only he could draw trumps, and possibly even if he could not; (if they broke 4-3 and West was missing ♠J but had ♣K instead of ♣Q for example). Cintra's ♠J was a welcome sight.

The next one got away, but I think it's rather more difficult.

♠ J4		♠ AKQ7
♥ AJ73	W N E	♥ 64
♦ AK1095	S	♦ Q863
♣ 74		♣ J52

With East the dealer, a top American pair bid: 1♠-2♦; 2♠-3♠; P



Dear Editors,

What is the lowest % score you have ever encountered in an evening's duplicate?

In the SWBC heat of the David Boston Simultaneous Pairs last Wednesday, one of the 10 pairs present recorded just 11.99%; it would be unkind to name them, but they have won a C&H competition this year. I suppose such a low score is statistically more likely in a small field; it will be interesting in due course to note their score over the whole field.

Chris Larlham.

[Addendum: The result over the whole field was much higher: 21.62%, but comfortably last out of 1213 pairs. The next lowest score was 30.42%.]



At least they finished in the right suit for game, but if one is going to play in a part score one would clearly prefer to be in diamonds. East's actions look off-beat to me.

[As are West's; perhaps he meant to bid 3♥ or thought 2♦ was game-forcing. (ed.)]

Finally, here is a very special Super-Moysian (yet again courtesy of the "Bridge World", April 1989):

♠ AKQ		♠ J102
♥ AKQ54	W N E	♥ -
♦ AK4	S	♦ 1093
♣ 105		♣ 9876432

Admittedly 5♣ might make, or even 3NT if hearts are 4-4. But 4♠ is laydown unless a defender can ruff one of the top hearts or an early round of diamonds. I can't see how that can be bid scientifically!

[And don't forget the hand on the cover of Newsletter 27... or for that matter, the 'Worst Trumps' competition of Newsletter 16! (ed.)]

Agony Column

Dear Aunt Agony,

I would like to ask your advice on the following hand, where I let slip a vulnerable game.

♠ Kxx		♠ Jxx
♥ AKx	W N E	♥ Qxxx
♦ Kxx	S	♦ Qx
♣ Axxx		♣ K8xx

Playing a 15-17 No Trump, the uncontested auction went 1NT-2♣*; 2♦*-2NT; 3NT.

North led ♣Q, to my ace on which South dropped ♣9. How should I have continued?

Yours sincerely, Frances Hinden

♣♦♠♥♣♦♠♥

Dear Niece,

How nice to hear from you again. Of course, 3NT is a poor contract, but inevitable once your partner chose 2♣. Non-vulnerable, there would have been a case for passing. Many people push much harder for games at IMPs than at pairs, but this only really applies when vulnerable. Changing +170 to +420 (+6 IMPs) is comparable to changing +140 to -50, (-5 IMPs) but the odds are much better when vulnerable.

However, the play's the thing. You expect three club tricks, one diamond, at most one spade, and so you need hearts 3-3. Your problem is to establish all your tricks without letting the opponents set up extra spades or diamonds. Clubs appear to be 4-1, so South will probably be 4-3-5-1 or 5-3-4-1. Suppose you lead a club at trick 2, and duck when North splits his honours. South will signal for a spade or diamond and that may be that. A diamond switch will be catastrophic whenever South holds ♦A, while if South has ♠A10xx a spade switch establishes three spade tricks.

The correct play is not at all obvious – we should attack diamonds at trick 2! If South has the ace we are done for, but we have little chance then anyway. If North holds ♦A, he will of course duck. Now we come back to hand with ♥A and lead a club up, ducking when North inserts an honour. North will probably exit passively, when we can cash all our clubs and hearts, to reach this position:

E on lead	♠ ??[?]		
	♥ –		
	♦ A[?]		
	♣ –		
♠ Kx		♠ Jxx	
♥ –	W N E	♥ –	
♦ Kx	S	♦ x	
♣ –		♣ –	
	♠ [????]		
	♥ –		
	♦ [????]		
	♣ –		

It's now a question of card-reading, but you should have a reasonable chance of getting it right at the table. If North has ♦A bare, you just duck it out, and even make an overtrick! If he has ♠AQ you can endplay him in spades, while if he has any other spade holding you duck a diamond and do the right thing if South wins and puts a spade through. If you can't read it, it's probably best to duck a diamond and play for ♠A outside if put to the test.

Note that if North holds ♦Axxx and South ♠A they could set you with a spade to the ace and a diamond back after you duck the club. But this may be hard to find.

In conclusion, this is a difficult hand to play. Why, I'm not certain even I would have found the correct line at the table.

Yours, ever,

Auntie