

The Rough 2♣

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1 Introduction

The Rough 2♣ opening is a Scandinavian style 'assumed-fit' pre-empt. It shows a weak hand, with 4/5 clubs, and a 4-card major. The exact range is up to the partnership, I generally use 4-9 HCP.

If you hold two four card suits then simulations indicate the chance of an eight card fit in one of them is around 60%, and rises to a healthy 78% if you are 5-4 or better. Total Trick theory predicts that your opponents will rarely get rich doubling you in a such a fit at the two level. Indeed you are virtually always safe if non-vulnerable. Even if the fit isn't there, the bid is quite slippery and it may be too tricky for the opponents to be able to extract a penalty.

For a 2♣ opening, opener shouldn't have a void, or three 4-card suits, or two aces (the latter is a general rule for all pre-empts). In 2nd position, one may choose not to open some of the 4/4 hands within the range.

2 Responding to the 2♣ Opening

It is recommended to keep simple agreements after the 2♣ opening, with most bids being non-forcing. A recommended structure is:

2♦ asks opener to bid *the major he doesn't hold*. Responder can have a variety of weak or strong types. This bid is explained further below.

2♥ is 'pass or correct', opener should pass this response if he holds 4 hearts, otherwise he should bid 2♠. A variety of hands with 3 or more hearts would use this response.

2♠ is non-forcing, responder has 5+ spades. Opener can (and should) raise when holding 4 spades and a non-minimum hand. Otherwise he should pass.

2NT is natural, with 16-18HCP balanced. Opener should pass with a balanced minimum, bid 3♣ with a distributional minimum, and raise to 3NT with a maximum.

3♣ is a pre-emptive raise with 4/5 clubs (distributional hand if only 4-card suit VUL).

3♦ is a pre-emptive bid, responder has a 6/7-card diamond suit.

3♥/3♠ are pre-emptive bids, with 7/8-card suits.

3NT+ are all to play, except 4NT and 5NT, which would be RKCB, or a grand slam try, respectively.

A direct 4NT bid would be RKCB for clubs, while a 2♦ bid (enquiry) followed by 4NT would be RKCB for opener's major suit.

If opener has 3+ clubs and less than 16HCP, he will often choose to pass 2♣. With no game interest and support for both majors (4-3 or better), he will generally respond 2♥. With game interest and a fairly balanced hand with a 4-card major, he can bid 2♦, and then continue with 2NT or a 'raise' of opener's major to show an invitational 16-18HCP hand.

If responder holds hearts and club support, he may bid 2♥, and if opener continues with 2♠, responder can revert back to clubs. If responder alternatively holds long hearts but is short in spades, he may bid 2♦, and pass the expected 2♥ response (if opener holds hearts as well, and bids 2♠, responder can happily raise to 3♥ or 4♥).

If responder holds 6+ spades and club support, he will probably prefer to bid 2♠ rather than raise clubs. With a slightly stronger hand and spades, he may bid 2♦, and pass opener's expected 2♠ response, or raise if partner shows spades. With 16-18 and length in spades, responder may bid 2♦ first, and continue with 2NT over the expected 2♠ rebid.

3 Competitive Auctions

If opponents double our 2♣ opening, we switch to natural responses, and 'redouble' asks opener to bid his major. The exact meaning of the opponent's double doesn't make any difference.

If the opponents overcall our 2♣ opening, we play all bids as natural, except that a cue-bid is forcing, asking opener to bid his major suit. All of our doubles are for penalty after a 2♣ opening.

4 Suggested Defence to the 2♣ Opening

The suggested defence shown here has been devised with simplicity in mind, and basically treats the opening as as a weak 2 in clubs. It is the defence I would play if I met the Rough 2♣ at the table.

Dbl takeout-oriented, 12-19ish fairly balanced, or perhaps some strong types, with Lebensohl 2NT available in response, for a very weak hand.

2♦/2♥/2♠ natural overcalls, good values with a good suit.

2NT natural overcall, balanced 16-18 HCP.

3♣ game force, 19+ HCP any shape, or very good playing strength (at least $8\frac{1}{2}$ playing tricks) and a distributional hand.

3♦/3♥/3♠ natural and strong, with a good long suit and 7-8 playing tricks.

3NT to play, 'gambling' style rather than a strong balanced hand.

In addition, takeout doubles of opponents natural suit bids or raises apply until our side finds a fit. In particular, after (2 \clubsuit) - Db1 - (2x) - ?, double is takeout.

5 Example IMP Hands

I used the following code in Hans von Staveren's `mdealer.exe` program to generate 40 deals with 4-9HCP Rough 2 \clubsuit openings for South. I included the restrictions that South should be 4332, 5422 or 5431 shape, with 4-9HCP, and without two aces.

```
sRough2c = shape(south, 4xx5 + x4x5 - any 0xxx
               + 4234 + 4324 + 2434 + 3424)
           and hcp(south) >= 4 and hcp(south) <= 9
           and control(south) <= 3
```

```
condition sRough2c
produce 40
action printall
```

The 40 deals are described below. South is always dealer, and the vulnerability rotates, so that it is Love All for hands 1-10, NS vul for hands 11-20, EW vul for hands 21-30, and Game All for hands 31-40.

For the sake of argument, it is assumed that these boards are being played in a Butler IMP pairs competition in a good standard local competition in the UK.

5.1 Deal 1

Love All	♠ 962		Dlr S			
	♥ AK542					
	♦ 987					
	♣ K6					
♠ KJ5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ AQ4	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ QT976		♥ –				
♦ QT		♦ AK6532				
♣ T82		♣ AJ93				
	♠ T873					
	♥ J83					
	♦ J4					
	♣ Q754					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	Dbl (3)
2♠ (4)	No?	No	3♦ (5)
No	3NT	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Pass or correct.

(3) Takeout of hearts (the 2♥ response is essentially natural).

(4) Passing here would imply 4 hearts. Rdbl is undiscussed.

(5) Having doubled first implies that this is strong hand.

I think a second-round double by West would be takeout of spades, but even if it were penalty, not sure if West would do it. It is difficult for East-West to penalise 2♠, and they would have to defend well to get more than 500. West's 3NT on the third round is a slight underbid, assuming 3♦ is forcing,

but what else can West do with no aces and only one king? The three small clubs are not promising either, given North's failure to raise clubs. East could consider an initial 3♣ cue-bid, but is not really strong enough this time.

However, East/West would like to be in 6♦, even after the 2♣ opening. Not sure if many other tables will bid it, a likely auction would be uncontested 1♦-1♥;3♦-3NT. Even if EW have a way to show 8-9 playing tricks in diamonds, they may still end in 3NT.

Would the 2♣ opening affect the defence? Probably not – in 3NT, declarer should cash out for 10 tricks on most leads, but will get 11 on a low heart (possible), or a club lead (unlikely from Kx after EW have bid to 3NT over the 2♣ opening).

5.2 Deal 2

Love All	♠ A7	Dir South				
	♥ 732					
	♦ T8764					
	♣ JT8					
♠ J9865	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ QT4	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 85		♥ AKT6				
♦ K32		♦ AJ5				
♣ AQ6		♣ K53				
	♠ K32					
	♥ QJ94					
	♦ Q9					
	♣ 9742					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	No	2NT (2)
No	3♥ (3)	No	3♠ (3)
No	3NT	No	4♠
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) 16-18HCP balanced, same as 2NT in direct seat.

(3) Transfer.

4♠ is an easy make, and the defence shouldn't be affected by the 2♣ opening. West might suppress his spade suit at matchpoints, which would work in this case, making the same 10 or 11 tricks depending on the lead.

At other tables, East-West should reach 4♠.

5.3 Deal 3

Love All	♠ KQT8	Dlr South										
	♥ AQ											
	♦ Q7											
	♣ T9762											
♠ AJ97432	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ 6	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J8		♥ KT754										
♦ KJT		♦ A9632										
♣ 3		♣ K5										
	♠ 5											
	♥ 9632											
	♦ 854											
	♣ AQJ84											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♠	3♣	Dbl (2)
No	4♠	No	5♦?
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Takeout double – length in hearts and diamonds (ideally should also have tolerance for spades).

Perhaps East will pass the 4♠ bid. Neither game is good, although 5♦ will probably make 10 tricks whereas 4♠ will be 2-off. A brave North could jump to 4♣ rather than only competing with 3♣ on the first round – this makes it harder for East to bid, and 4♣ may well be the final contract. However, the likely –50 isn't as nice as +50 or +100.

At other tables, the auction might be uncontested 1♠-2♥;2♠-3♦;4♦-5♦.

5.4 Deal 4

Love All	♠ K	Dlr South				
	♥ K3					
	♦ K753					
	♣ AQJT72					
♠ AQT83	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J9542	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ AT98		♥ 542				
♦ 86		♦ QT94				
♣ K9		♣ 8				
	♠ 76					
	♥ QJ76					
	♦ AJ2					
	♣ 6543					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♠	5♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

5♣ is a lucky make, with the ♣K and ♦Q onside. North could think about bidding the more conservative 4♣, on the basis that he has some defensive tricks against either major game. However, he can't hope for 4 tricks unless partner also has useful values, and in that case 5♣ may also have chances. Another reason for jumping directly to 5♣ is to pressurise East – in this case, East may be tempted to compete with 5♠ over 5♣, although it would be the wrong decision on this deal, going for 500 or 800. East would certainly bid 4♠ over 4♣.

At other tables, the auction may simply go No-1♠-2♣-4♠, and North will find it difficult to double or compete without any help from South.

5.5 Deal 5

Love All	♠ KJT3	Dlr South				
	♥ AKJ4					
	♦ A6					
	♣ AQ6					
♠ Q54	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ A2	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ Q732		♥ 986				
♦ QT54		♦ J932				
♣ K3		♣ T985				
	♠ 9876					
	♥ T5					
	♦ K87					
	♣ J742					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♥ (3)	No	4♠	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades.

With the favourable layout, as many as 12 tricks are possible in spades. The 2♣ opening gives away some information about declarer's hand, but it shouldn't affect the defence.

At other tables, North will show his balanced 22HCP and NS will be able to find 4♠, probably by North.

5.6 Deal 6

Love All	♠ A98		Dlr South									
	♥ T72											
	♦ A98											
	♣ KJT6											
♠ KT63	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ J5	
	N											
W	E											
	S											
♥ AK63		♥ QJ85										
♦ Q7432		♦ KJ6										
♣ –		♣ 9743										
	♠ Q742											
	♥ 94											
	♦ T5											
	♣ AQ852											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	Dbl	3♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

I would imagine that West passes 3♣ rather than doubling again, because he can sense the bad club break. As the cards lie, 3♣ is likely to be 1-off. If West does bravely re-open with a second double, EW should reach 4♥.

At other tables it is hard to foresee what will happen – NS may end up in 3♣ if North makes a t/o double, or if South comes into the auction. Otherwise East/West are likely to end in 3♥ or even 4♥ (e.g. 1♦-1♥;3♥-4♥). With the diamonds running, and hearts breaking 3-2, there are at least 10 tricks in hearts.

A good one for the Rough 2♣ – pre-empting the opponents out of their game?

5.7 Deal 7

Love All	♠ 874	Dlr South				
	♥ Q7					
	♦ T72					
	♣ AT974					
♠ J9632	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ AKQ	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 63		♥ AT942				
♦ AJ65		♦ KQ4				
♣ J5		♣ K3				
	♠ T5					
	♥ KJ85					
	♦ 983					
	♣ Q862					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	3♣	Dbl
No	4♠	No	6♠
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

Perhaps East will check on aces on his way to 6♠. NS have caused problems for EW by quickly raising the auction to the 3-level – East has more than his takeout double promised, but unfortunately not enough for 6♠ on this layout. Perhaps some Easts will be content in 4♠ since West was not strong enough to overcall 2♠ initially.

At other tables, East will show a strong balanced hand (perhaps opening 2NT), and East-West should then declare 4♠.

5.8 Deal 8

Love All	♠ AKQT8	Dlr South									
	♥ J4										
	♦ K93										
	♣ KT9										
♠ 3		♠ J64									
♥ K8732	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♥ Q95
	N										
W	E										
	S										
♦ A742		♦ T865									
♣ QJ6		♣ A52									
	♠ 9752										
	♥ AT6										
	♦ QJ										
	♣ 8743										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♥ (3)	Dbl(?)	3♠	No
No	End		

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades.

North was expecting to rebid 2NT (16-18) if his partner showed 4 hearts rather than 4 spades. The 3♠ 'raise' is invitational, but South will probably dislike the balanced shape and ♦QJ doubleton.

At other tables, whether West opens light or passes, North will show his spades and South will raise – then it is a case of whether they will be able to stop below the poor game. Actually 3NT has better chances, but is difficult to bid.

5.9 Deal 9

Love All	♠ A4	Dlr South										
	♥ 83											
	♦ KQJT64											
	♣ KJ9											
♠ QJ95	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ 763	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ JT52		♥ AQ92										
♦ A73		♦ 92										
♣ AQ		♣ T832										
	♠ KT82											
	♥ K74											
	♦ 83											
	♣ 7654											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	Dbl	3♦ (2)	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Natural (2♦ would also have been natural after the double).

(3) Showing 4 spades.

North's jump to 3♦ makes it very difficult for EW – East is hardly strong enough to take action, and West has already bid his hand with the initial double. 3♦ makes with an overtrick, and nothing is on for EW anyway.

At other tables, West may open a weak NT if available, and North may be unable to bid 2♦ naturally, and have to bid 3♦. Perhaps some tables will play 1NT by West, and some will play 2♦ or 3♦ by North. On a diamond lead, 1NT will struggle to make more than 5 tricks, for –100. A heart contract by East-West wouldn't play particularly well either.

5.10 Deal 10

Love All	♠ KT82	Dir South										
	♥ A72											
	♦ K64											
	♣ J62											
♠ AQJ93	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ 54	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ T8		♥ 6543										
♦ QJ75		♦ AT8										
♣ T3		♣ AQ84										
	♠ 76											
	♥ KQJ9											
	♦ 932											
	♣ K975											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	No
No	2♠	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Pass or correct.

With good holdings in both majors, North will probably prefer to play in a major rather than 2♣ (the chance of South holding 4 spades is actually not a lot less than 50%). If West didn't overcall 2♠ on the first round, he should probably protect on the second round, and win the contract. 2♠ may make 8 tricks, with the ♦K onside, although declarer will struggle on a forcing defence. 2♥ by North would make.

At other tables the hand is likely to be passed out.

5.11 Deal 11

NS Vul.	♠ AKJ92	Dlr South										
	♥ 63											
	♦ J86											
	♣ QJ5											
♠ 73	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ 65	
	N											
W	E											
	S											
♥ Q74		♥ AKT95										
♦ T97532		♦ AK										
♣ T8		♣ K632										
	♠ QT84											
	♥ J82											
	♦ Q4											
	♣ A974											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♠ (2)	Dbl (3)
3♠	No	No	Dbl (3)
No	4♦	End	

- (1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) Not constructive (expecting South to pass with anything but a maximum and 4 spades).
- (3) Takeout.

North-South reach 3♠ very quickly, and it would be hard for East-West to judge correctly. East may overcall 3♥ on the first round, but West is unlikely to raise with only 2HCP, and so East would have to bid again over 3♠. After doubling twice already, East shouldn't bid again on the third round, although some may be tempted to convert to 4♥.

At other tables, North will open 1♠ third in hand, and East will probably make a takeout double (being too strong for a direct overcall). South should raise to 3♠, leaving East with the same problem of whether to pass, double, or bid 4♥, with double being the most likely action.

5.12 Deal 12

NS Vul.	♠ K		Dir South								
	♥ AT95										
	♦ AQT8										
	♣ JT52										
♠ AQJ	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ 85432
	N										
W	E										
	S										
♥ QJ8764		♥ K2									
♦ J5		♦ K732									
♣ K4		♣ 96									
	♠ T976										
	♥ 3										
	♦ 964										
	♣ AQ873										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♥	3♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

3♣ should make comfortably. This time the Rough 2♣ gives North-South a headstart in the partscore battle.

At other tables, West will open 1♥, and North will probably remain silent. East will respond 1♠, and West should probably rebid 2♥. East-West should make that contract, although anything higher would be difficult. North-South probably wouldn't enter the auction at all.

5.13 Deal 13

NS Vul.	♠ J4		Dlr South									
	♥ KT92											
	♦ A83											
	♣ AQJ6											
♠ A2	<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		♠ T8763	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J8765		♥ A										
♦ J642		♦ KT75										
♣ T9		♣ K53										
	♠ KQ95											
	♥ Q43											
	♦ Q9											
	♣ 8742											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♥ (3)	No	3♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades.

North is planning to invite if partner shows hearts, but doesn't consider his hand strong enough to continue with 2NT over 2♥ (which would show 16-18 balanced, invitational to 3NT). The defence probably get one trick in each suit against 3♣.

At other tables, North will often play 1NT, getting plenty of tricks on a spade lead, and outscoring those in 3♣.

5.14 Deal 14

NS Vul.	♠ AK632		Dlr South									
	♥ AJ8											
	♦ 5											
	♣ QT97											
♠ QJT8		<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		♠ 97
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ Q753			♥ 62									
♦ AT86			♦ KQ974									
♣ 3			♣ AJ85									
	♠ 54											
	♥ KT94											
	♦ J32											
	♣ K642											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♠ (3)	No	3♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 hearts.

West will probably start with the ♠Q, and declarer will lose at least a heart, a diamond, two clubs, and possibly a heart or a third club.

At other tables, North will open 1♠, and bid 2♣ over South's 1NT response, and play there unless East comes in with 2♦ on the first or second round. East-West would make 8 or 9 tricks in diamonds.

5.15 Deal 15

NS Vul.	♠ K9	Dir South										
	♥ JT62											
	♦ A963											
	♣ 765											
♠ A8432	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ Q6	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 4		♥ KQ973										
♦ K8754		♦ QT2										
♣ K2		♣ A43										
	♠ JT75											
	♥ A85											
	♦ J											
	♣ QJT98											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	No	2♥
No	2♠	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) General force – asking for 3-card heart support, or a club stop.

West's 2♠ bid is constructive but not forcing. East shouldn't be tempted to bid again, since West couldn't overcall immediately, and may be bidding on a misfit. North may lead a passive club, and 2♠ will probably make.

At other tables, East-West pairs might play in 1♠ or 2♥ and score better.

5.16 Deal 16

NS Vul.	♠ A4		Dlr South								
	♥ KQ										
	♦ KT876										
	♣ KQJ9										
♠ 96	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ JT875
	N										
W	E										
	S										
♥ AT976		♥ J852									
♦ A543		♦ J2									
♣ 52		♣ A6									
	♠ KQ32										
	♥ 43										
	♦ Q9										
	♣ T8743										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2NT (2)	No
3NT	End		

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Balanced 16-18 HCP.

A good rule of pre-empting is not to do it with 2 aces. This inference allows North to ignore the possibility of 6♣, and even 3NT or 5♣ might be difficult if South has a minimum. In this case, 3NT should be ok if East leads his longer major.

At other tables, North-South would expect to reach 3NT, although they may be more likely to receive a heart lead, if South bids spades on the way.

5.17 Deal 17

NS Vul.	♠ Q2	Dir South										
	♥ AK9											
	♦ QJ863											
	♣ A84											
♠ J43	<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		♠ A985	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 7652		♥ QJ84										
♦ K752		♦ 9										
♣ 63		♣ KJ97										
	♠ KT76											
	♥ T3											
	♦ AT4											
	♣ QT52											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2NT (2)	No
3NT	End		

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Balanced 16-18 HCP.

I think East would usually prefer to lead a low heart, rather than a low spade, after this auction. Unfortunately, this gives declarer an extra trick, and an easy ride after setting up the diamonds. 3NT would also make on a spade lead.

Depending on system, some North-South pairs may not reach 3NT. If playing a wide-ranging 1NT rebid, South may prefer to pass 1NT rather than make a game try opposite a possibly poor hand.

5.18 Deal 18

NS Vul.	♠ –		Dlr South			
	♥ A94					
	♦ AKQT53					
	♣ A762					
♠ 742	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ KQJT96	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ J853		♥ KT7				
♦ 9872		♦ J4				
♣ KQ		♣ 43				
	♠ A853					
	♥ Q62					
	♦ 6					
	♣ JT985					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	6♣	End
3NT	End		

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

This one is pretty difficult for North after the Rough 2♣. North expects to be dummy in a club contract, so isn't particularly keen to find out more about South's shape, or allow the opponents into the auction (whether competing in a major, or making a lead-directing double). RKCB isn't much good with a void, so North has to hope for no club losers, or a favourable heart position if hearts are led. In this case, even if West finds a low heart lead (by no means certain), there is still play for the contract if South tries to discard his hearts on dummy's diamonds. The likelihood of South holding ♣KQ is not great.

At other tables, if North can show 8 tricks in a minor, he may do that, although East may compete. Possible contracts include 3NT, 5♣ or 5♦ by

North-South, 3♠ or 4♠ (doubled) by East-West. It is difficult for North-South to find 6♣.

5.19 Deal 19

NS Vul.	♠ AJ92		Dir South
	♥ 976		
	♦ QT5		
	♣ A93		
♠ T65		N W E S	♠ K874
♥ Q8			♥ KJ52
♦ KJ72			♦ A96
♣ T865			♣ QJ
	♠ Q3		
	♥ AT43		
	♦ 843		
	♣ K742		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Pass or correct.

North may be able to escape for 1-off, but 2♥ is unlikely to make, and may even drift 2-off for -200.

At other tables, East may open 1NT in 4th seat, and play there, making 7 or 8 tricks with the helpful layout.

5.20 Deal 20

NS Vul.	♠ KQ6	Dir South
	♥ AT64	
	♦ Q62	
	♣ Q42	
♠ AJ3	N W E S	♠ T52
♥ K87		♥ J932
♦ T843		♦ AJ5
♣ AT3		♣ 875
	♠ 9874	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ K97	
	♣ KJ96	

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	No
2♠	End		

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) pass or correct.

South may find it difficult to make 2♠ if the defence are on their toes. But with the suits all breaking, South can develop the fourth club, and lose only one trump trick, so I think 2♠ should make.

At other tables, North will probably declare 1NT, making at least 7 tricks.

5.21 Deal 21

EW Vul.	♠ KJ4	Dlr South									
	♥ AQ53										
	♦ KQT9										
	♣ A8										
♠ T9732		♠ A									
♥ 8	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♥ KJT764
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♦ A853		♦ J7									
♣ KT4		♣ 7632									
	♠ Q865										
	♥ 92										
	♦ 642										
	♣ QJ95										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♥ (3)	No	3NT	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades.

Note that if East had overcalled 2♥ on the first round, South would double to show 4 hearts (as a penalty double), while passing would imply 4 spades. I recommend using penalty doubles after our side makes any pre-emptive bid. On this deal, 3NT is not straightforward, but is helped by the minor suit layout. East may be warned off a heart lead by the auction, although he has a difficult choice. A club would set up three tricks in the suit for declarer, and the ♦J would also help. It's hard to see 3NT going down.

At other tables, North-South may not reach game, for instance if East overcalls a 1♦ opening with 2♥, it is difficult for North-South.

5.22 Deal 22

EW Vul.	♠ KJ		Dlr South								
	♥ AT2										
	♦ A85										
	♣ KJT95										
♠ AT962	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ Q53
	N										
W	E										
	S										
♥ J75		♥ Q86									
♦ 9643		♦ KJT2									
♣ Q		♣ A43									
	♠ 874										
	♥ K943										
	♦ Q7										
	♣ 8762										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	3♣	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

I don't like North's hand in this auction – South's hand isn't going to provide a lot more tricks, and 3NT is unlikely to make opposite a maximum (e.g. Axxx xx Kxx Qxxx is a perfect maximum but still struggles on a heart lead), and we would much rather be in clubs if South has a minimum. On balance, I think North should simply raise clubs on this hand. 3♣ is fairly likely to make, with the hearts 3-3 and the ♣Q singleton.

At other tables, North will open 1♣, and East may make a takeout double, and East-West will play a spade partscore (South will not be keen to compete). 2♠ making at the other table (lose 1♠, 2♥s and 2♦s) would be a nice swing for the 2♣ opening.

5.23 Deal 23

EW Vul.	♠ 976		Dir South		
	♥ Q93				
	♦ AQJ3				
	♣ T64				
♠ Q43	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ AK8
N					
W E					
S					
♥ K52		♥ AT764			
♦ 542		♦ KT7			
♣ QJ75		♣ K8			
	♠ JT52				
	♥ J8				
	♦ 986				
	♣ A932				

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	No	Dbl
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

I think East will prefer a takeout double to a 2♥ bid, in protective position, and a natural 2NT may be unavailable to West (many would play Lebensohl). Not strong enough for 3NT, and with no other attractive bid, West may choose to defend. West should start with a low club, to the ♣K and ♣A, and South try the diamond finesse. If East plays a second club, West will win and cash a third round, before switching to the majors. The defence then take 3♠s, 2♥s, a ♦, and 2♣s, for -500. This won't score as well as the vulnerable heart game, which all the other East-West pairs should reach without too much difficulty.

5.24 Deal 24

EW Vul.	♠ QJ742	Dlr South				
	♥ AK43					
	♦ 53					
	♣ Q2					
♠ AK5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ T986	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ Q95		♥ J8				
♦ QJ2		♦ AT974				
♣ A985		♣ 64				
	♠ 3					
	♥ T762					
	♦ K86					
	♣ KJT73					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2NT	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

North may lead from one of his majors, giving declarer an 8th trick (3♠, 4♦ and 1♣). North may not be keen to lead the ♣Q, although it works this time, West will often have a tenace in clubs on this auction.

At other tables, West will open 1♣, North will overcall in spades, East and South will pass, and West may re-open with a takeout double rather than passing. East can then bid 2♦ and play there, making 8 or 9 tricks.

5.25 Deal 25

EW Vul.	♠ 9652	Dlr South	
	♥ QJ64		
	♦ AQJ6		
	♣ Q		
♠ T3	N W E S	♠ AKJ7	
♥ A2		♥ T85	
♦ 9543		♦ K72	
♣ AKT54		♣ 832	
	♠ Q84		
	♥ K973		
	♦ T8		
	♣ J976		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Pass or correct.

East may start with top spades, West ruffing the third round and playing a diamond through. Then the defence will score 2♠s, a ♠ ruff, the ♥A, a ♦ and a ♣, for 1-off and –50.

At other tables, a pass-out is fairly likely. East may choose to open 1♠ in 4th position, planning to pass whatever partner responds (2♣ by West is making). Or North could open 1♥ slightly light in third position, attractive because of the vulnerability.

5.26 Deal 26

EW Vul.	♠ 8		Dir South			
	♥ T94					
	♦ 765432					
	♣ Q93					
♠ AKQ7 ♥ AQJ875 ♦ KT ♣ 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J654 ♥ 63 ♦ Q8 ♣ AK754	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ T932					
	♥ K2					
	♦ AJ9					
	♣ JT86					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	Dbl	2♦	3♣ (2)
No	3♥	No	3♠
No	4NT (3)	No	5♦ (4)
No	6♠	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) General force.

(3) RKCB.

(4) 1 or 4 of the 5 key cards (the four aces and ♠K).

West may prefer to start with a takeout double, planning to rebid hearts if East bids 2NT (lebensohl) or 3♦. However, this time North has the diamonds, and is happy to bid 2♦ (natural after the double). East can't afford to jump to 4♠ because West didn't guarantee 4 spades, so has to temporise with 3♣, allowing fairly straightforward progress to the small

slam. 6♠ makes with the ♥K onside. This time the rough 2♣ hasn't done much to hinder the East-West auction.

At other tables, West may have an artificial strong opening available, and East-West should hope to reach either 6♥ or 6♠.

5.27 Deal 27

EW Vul.	♠ K	Dir South										
	♥ QJ873											
	♦ KQ865											
	♣ K9											
♠ QT98632	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ A54	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 6		♥ K95										
♦ –		♦ AJT72										
♣ AQ742		♣ J6										
	♠ J7											
	♥ AT42											
	♦ 943											
	♣ T853											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	Dbl (3)
2♠ (4)	4♠	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) General values in a fairly balanced hand.

(4) Showing 4 hearts.

Perhaps West will choose to bid on the first round, although there is a rule that says you shouldn't pre-empt a pre-empt – and West expects that North will not leave 2♣ in. North probably won't choose to compete over 4♠ even at favourable vulnerability – 5♥ could be a pseudo-sac.

At other tables, North will probably be allowed to open 1♥, East may make a takeout double, South will raise hearts, and West will jump to 4♠. If East

chooses to overcall with 2♦ rather than doubling, it is harder for West to jump to 4♠.

5.28 Deal 28

EW Vul.	♠ A62	Dlr South	
	♥ 95		
	♦ KQT8		
	♣ AJ32		
♠ KT5	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; padding: 2px;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; padding: 2px;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; padding: 2px;"> S </div>	♠ Q73	
♥ AQJT3		♥ 8762	
♦ 43		♦ AJ75	
♣ Q76		♣ K4	
	♠ J984		
	♥ K4		
	♦ 962		
	♣ T985		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♥	3♣	3♥
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

West's ♣Q doesn't look valuable, and 5332s generally play poorly, so I don't think West would stretch to 4♥. Perhaps some East's would jump directly to game, although a 3♥ raise should be enough with this balanced hand and 8 losers. However, some Wests will use the vulnerability as an excuse to bid 4. In this case, 4♥ should make, with the ♥K and ♠J onside, although the latter is probably irrelevant if North leads the ♦K.

At other tables, West may open 1♥ or 1NT, but it is hard to see the game being reached by many pairs.

5.29 Deal 29

EW Vul.	♠ AT754		Dir South									
	♥ AT5											
	♦ Q87											
	♣ T4											
♠ Q98		<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		♠ K632
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ KQJ8			♥ 92									
♦ 6			♦ AJT952									
♣ KQ876			♣ J									
	♠ J											
	♥ 7643											
	♦ K43											
	♣ A9532											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Pass or correct.

East may begin with his singleton club, which North should win, and perhaps take ♠A and a spade ruff. Then a low club won by West's ♣Q, West switches to the ♥K taken by North, who ruffs another spade and plays another club? If he ruffs with the ♥T, he can probably expect one more trick at the end, either a club or a diamond, for –50. He would be unhappy to concede than –100.

At other tables, West will open 1♣, North may overcall 1♠, East will bid 1NT (or 2♦ if non-forcing), and play there.

5.30 Deal 30

EW Vul.	♠ KT2	Dlr South										
	♥ 32											
	♦ J96											
	♣ KT942											
♠ Q96	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ J75	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AKJ97		♥ QT54										
♦ K752		♦ AQ4										
♣ A		♣ J65										
	♠ A843											
	♥ 86											
	♦ T83											
	♣ Q873											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♥	3♣	3♥
No	4♥	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

The 2♣ opening shouldn't deter East-West from finding 4♥. At other tables, East-West will probably have an uncontested auction to the same contract.

5.31 Deal 31

Game All	♠ K654	Dlr South				
	♥ 64					
	♦ Q9					
	♣ QT954					
♠ 72	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ JT9	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ AQT752		♥ KJ9				
♦ AK42		♦ J653				
♣ J		♣ A76				
	♠ AQ83					
	♥ 83					
	♦ T87					
	♣ K832					

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♥	3♣	3♥
No	4♥	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

As in (30), the 2♣ opening shouldn't deter East-West from finding 4♥. North shouldn't let his expected double fit encourage him to sacrifice, although he might be more tempted if he was 1-3 in the red suits.

At other tables, East-West will probably have an uncontested auction to the same contract.

5.32 Deal 32

Game All	♠ QT984	Dir South									
	♥ 4										
	♦ J53										
	♣ AQ96										
♠ 72	<table style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ AK
		N									
W			E								
		S									
♥ K73	♥ AQT862										
♦ Q972	♦ AKT82										
♣ JT82	♣ –										
	♠ J653										
	♥ J95										
	♦ 4										
	♣ K7543										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	3♣	Dbl (2)
No	3♦	No	3♥
No	4♥	No	6♥
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Takeout.

North will probably prefer a 3♣ raise to a 2♦ enquiry, it is fairly unlikely that South will hold spades, and 3♣ puts more pressure on East. East could jump to 4♥ directly, but may prefer an initial double. West could choose to pass this, with no particular support for the majors. 3♣* would do well on a spade lead, perhaps even making, although –200 is more likely. However this is no compensation for East-West's virtually cold grand slam.

At other tables, if North is allowed to open 2♠, then East should have the conventional jump to 4♦ available (showing a very strong hand with 5+♥

and 5+♦, forcing to game. It may still be difficult for East-West to find a slam after that start. If North passes, East-West will have a much better chance to reach 7.

5.33 Deal 33

Game All	♠ J83	Dlr South	
	♥ AJ2		
	♦ Q86		
	♣ KJ97		
♠ T76	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> N </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> W E </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; align-items: center;"> S </div>	♠ AKQ2	
♥ 84		♥ QT75	
♦ AKT742		♦ 95	
♣ 32		♣ AQT	
	♠ 954		
	♥ K963		
	♦ J3		
	♣ 8654		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	No	2NT (2)
No	3NT	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Balanced 15-18 HCP.

With 3-3-3-4 shape, a 3♣ raise is not recommended, especially vulnerable. East-West should use the same range for a 2NT overcall whether in protective or direct position. West raises to 3NT expecting the diamonds to be very useful. South should probably choose a low heart lead, but in any case East shouldn't find it difficult to make 9 or 10 tricks.

At other tables, North may open a weak 1NT in third position, doubled by East. If North-South have a good escape mechanism, they should be able to find 2♣, although East will probably double this as well – East-West can take 3♠s, 1♥, 2♦s and 3♣s for a massive –1100.

If not playing a weak NT, or if North doesn't open at all, East-West would hope to find 3NT.

5.34 Deal 34

Game All	♠ 853		Dir South								
	♥ AJ9										
	♦ AKT96										
	♣ A4										
♠ AKJ7	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ QT6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K5		♥ T862									
♦ J753		♦ 82									
♣ K75		♣ Q863									
	♠ 942										
	♥ Q743										
	♦ Q4										
	♣ JT92										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	Dbl	2♦ (2)	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Natural.

West isn't really strong enough for a 2NT overcall here, although a double is risky if East replies in hearts. 2♦ by North is natural after the double, and redouble would be asking South for his major.

At other tables, West may open 1♦, North overcall 1NT, and play there. If West prefers to open 1♠, North may overcall 2♦, and play there.

5.35 Deal 35

Game All	♠ AQ	Dir South										
	♥ KJ63											
	♦ AQ7654											
	♣ 5											
♠ T842	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ J93	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ T752		♥ AQ84										
♦ K3		♦ T9										
♣ T43		♣ AQ86										
	♠ K765											
	♥ 9											
	♦ J82											
	♣ KJ972											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	No
2♥ (3)	No	2NT (4)	No
3NT			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades.

(4) 16-18 balanced.

If South had a minimum hand with 5♣s, he would be expected to bid 3♣ (which North could then convert to 3♦). With a maximum here, he bids

3NT. East may decide not to lead a heart into North's expected holding, although the ♥8 is a crucial card – a low heart to the ♥T and ♥J, declarer probably gives up on the diamond finesse and plays ♦A followed by a low one to the ♦J and ♦K. West plays the ♥7 through, but East has to win with the ♥8, and West will never get in again. Declarer should be able to scrape home, with the ♣AQ onside.

At other tables, North will open 1♦, East will make a takeout double, South may bid 1♠, and North, worried about the double, may prefer 2♦ to 1NT or 3♦. South would be scared to convert 3♦ to 3NT without a heart guard, and might pass rather than raising to 5♦.

5.36 Deal 36

Game All	♠ AT87432	Dlr South									
	♥ A53										
	♦ T73										
	♣ –										
♠ QJ9	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W	E			S		♠ K5
	N										
W	E										
	S										
♥ KT97		♥ J4									
♦ A4		♦ KQJ92									
♣ AQ95		♣ JT82									
	♠ 6										
	♥ Q862										
	♦ 865										
	♣ K7643										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2NT	No	3NT
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

North may lead a low spade, and with the club finesse marked, declarer shouldn't have too much trouble making at least 10 tricks. North shouldn't consider a 3♠ bid over 2NT – it is too risky with the apparent misfit and lack of values. If West chose to double 2♣, North could redouble (asking for South's major) rather than just bidding 2♠ – in the rare situation that South has spades, North would want to be in 4♠, and can otherwise convert 2♥ to 2♠.

At other tables, West may open a suit, and North will jump to 3♠ or 4♠ pre-emptively – over 3♠, East can bid 3NT, but over 4♠ East may prefer to double and take 800.

5.37 Deal 37

Game All	♠ QT3	Dlr South									
	♥ Q743										
	♦ JT9										
	♣ T75										
♠ 9874	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ AK52
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ KT6		♥ AJ									
♦ KQ		♦ A8654									
♣ Q984		♣ KJ									
	♠ J6										
	♥ 9852										
	♦ 732										
	♣ A632										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	Dbl
No	3♣ (3)	No	3♦
No	3♠	No	4♠
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP. hearts.

(2) Pass or correct.

(2) General game force.

If North prefers to pass, East could double, although West may prefer to bid on rather than pass. It would be a mistake for West to pass 2♥*. East may be tempted to bid on, after West makes the strong 3♣ bid, although should reflect that West passed initially, so can't be stronger than 10-12HCP, and the spade fit is only likely to be 4-4. East's hand is more like 18HCP than 20HCP.

At other tables, East is likely to open 2NT in 4th position, and East-West will end in 3NT or 4♠, making.

5.38 Deal 38

Game All	♠ T3		Dir South
	♥ AJ5432		
	♦ KJ7		
	♣ K6		
♠ K742		N W E S	♠ A96
♥ KT76			♥ Q
♦ A			♦ QT86432
♣ AQ92			♣ 75
	♠ QJ85		
	♥ 98		
	♦ 95		
	♣ JT843		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2NT	No	3NT/5♦
End			

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

West will probably prefer 2NT to a takeout double, because it is quite likely that East will hold length in diamonds (and West would be stuck for a rebid if he doubles and East bids 2♦ or 3♦). North should know to pass, South is much more likely to hold spades rather than hearts, and North's hand should be worth more in defence than in a heart contract. East may prefer 5♦ to 3NT, particularly at IMPs. Unfortunately, the cards aren't lying well, and East rates to lose a club, two diamonds and a heart for +200.

At other tables, West will open 1♣, North will overcall 1♥ or 2♥, and perhaps be allowed to play there. East may venture a takeout double over 1♥, which West would convert to 1NT, a rather difficult contract.

5.39 Deal 39

Game All	♠ AKJ92	Dlr South	
	♥ J7		
	♦ AJ32		
	♣ A2		
♠ –	N W E S	♠ QT53	
♥ 9843		♥ KQ652	
♦ QT854		♦ K7	
♣ JT74		♣ Q5	
	♠ 8764		
	♥ AT		
	♦ 96		
	♣ K9863		

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	No	2♦ (2)	2♥
No (3)	3♥	4♠	End

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

(2) Asking South to bid *the major he doesn't hold*.

(3) Showing 4 spades (a penalty double would show 4 hearts).

Perhaps West wouldn't venture 3♥, and perhaps East would double 4♠ (although he may prefer to surprise North-South with the spade position!). Unfortunately with the 2 trump losers, 4♠ doesn't have much chance, and will probably drift 1-off after South has tried ruffing diamonds in hand.

At other tables, North will open 1♠, and East may pass rather than overcalling 2♥ vulnerable. Either way, North-South should reach 4♠.

5.40 Deal 40

Game All	♠ 6		Dir South									
	♥ AT72											
	♦ QT43											
	♣ A876											
♠ T9853	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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		♠ AK42	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ KQ8		♥ J5										
♦ AK752		♦ J96										
♣ –		♣ 9543										
	♠ QJ7											
	♥ 9643											
	♦ 8											
	♣ KQJT2											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♣ (1)	2♠	3♣	3♠
No	4♠	End	

(1) The Rough 2♣ – 4/5 clubs, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.

West has a difficult decision over 2♣ – a 2♠ overcall should have a better suit, but West has the values to bid, and may not get a second chance if North is able to raise clubs pre-emptively. I'm sure that some Wests would pass or overcall 2♦ here, and in that case East-West will have more trouble finding 4♠.

At other tables, West can open 1♠, and East-West should easily reach 4♠.

6 Rough 2♣ Statistics

The frequency of dealer holding a 4-9HCP Rough 2♣ opening, as defined in section 5, is around 4.5%. The frequency in other positions is harder to assess, but may be around 2.5% in second position and 1% in fourth position. This gives an overall frequency of around 4%, corresponding to an expectation of one Rough 2♣ opening every 25 boards.

A priori, a Rough 2♣ opening is twice as likely to contain 4 clubs as 5 clubs. After a Rough 2♣ opening by South, the chance of North-South having at least one 8-card fit somewhere is over 80%, although obviously North-South won't always be able to play in their best fit. After South's Rough 2♣ opening, the chance of North-South hitting an 8-card fit at the 2-level is perhaps around 60%. On other occasions, there may be an 8-card fit available at the 3-level (3♦), or East-West may not be able to penalise North-South in a 4-3 fit at the 2-level.

A priori, after a Rough 2♣ opening by South, North-South will have the balance of HCP less than 27% of the time. North-South will have 25+HCP between them less than 5% of the time.

Table 1 shows the probability of South holding 4 hearts, having opened a Rough 2♣, conditional on North's holding in the major suits. Obviously when North has equal length in the majors, the probability of South holding 4♥ is 50%. Table 1 shows that when North has 4♠+3♥, the probability of South holding 4 hearts is only slightly more than 50%.

Table 1: Probability of South holding 4 hearts

North's holding in the majors			
4♠+3♥	4♠+2♥	4♠+1♥	4♠+0♥
56%	61%	65%	65%
5♠+3♥	5♠+2♥	5♠+1♥	5♠+0♥
64%	68%	71%	71%

7 Discussion

Hopefully the 40 example hands in Section 5 have given an insight into the use of the Rough 2♣. The commentary is subjective, but should demonstrate the effectiveness of the Rough 2♣ as a pre-emptive opening.

Looking back, I can only count 5 of the 40 deals where the Rough 2♣ is likely to put North-South in a worse position (10, 13, 14, 19, 20). I can count 16 boards where the 2♣ is likely to give North-South an advantage (1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, 35, 38). Board 12 is a good example of the Rough 2♣ helping our side to win the partscore battle, while board 32 shows how it can cause difficulties for opponents when they should be in the slam zone. Of particular note are the lack of situations where the Rough 2♣ opening results in our side conceding a large penalty.

The potential benefits of using the Rough 2♣ must be weighed against the losses from not being able to use 2♣ for some other purpose, perhaps as an artificial game-force. In my opinion, the game-forcing 2♣ opening does not always benefit our side (sometimes it uses up too much space), and the frequency is too low (less than 0.5%). My expected gain over a session, say, from using the Rough 2♣ is far greater than my expected gain of using a game-forcing 2♣ opening. And I like to bid and play aggressively. So I choose to play the Rough 2♣.