

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 diamonds, 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♥ 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 a forcing enquiry. Any hand with 17+ HCP would use this response, and some weaker hands (for example, with support for both majors) would also use this response.

3♣ is a sign-off, responder has 6+ clubs.

3♦ is a pre-emptive diamond raise, responder has 4/5 diamonds.

3♥ is a pre-emptive bid, responder has a 7/8-card heart suit.

3♠ is a pre-emptive bid, responder has a 7/8-card spade suit.

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

If opener has 3+ diamonds and less than 16 HCP, he will often choose to pass 2♦. With no game interest in hearts and support for both majors (at least 4-3), he will generally respond 2♥. With game interest in spades, and tolerance for hearts but no game interest in that suit, responder can also bid 2♥, planning to bid on if partner converts to spades.

With 5-3-3-2 and 3-5-3-2 hands, responder has a choice between passing and bidding 2♥ (pass or correct). The decision should depend on responder's strength, and the quality of his suits.

If responder holds hearts and diamond support, or hearts and long clubs, he may bid 2♥, and if opener continues with 2♠, responder can convert to the minor.

The 2NT enquiry has responses:

3♣ lower end of range, with 4 hearts.

3♦ lower end of range, with 4 spades.

3♥ upper end of range, with 4 hearts.

3♠ upper end of range, with 4 spades.

If opener bids either 3♥ or 3♠ in response to the 2NT enquiry, the auction is game-forcing.

I know that some people prefer to invert the meanings of 3♥ and 3♠, so that the strong hand declares the final contract more often.

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 the same as as a weak 2 in diamonds. Having said that, 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♠ natural overcalls, good values with a good suit.

2NT natural overcall, balanced 16-18 HCP.

3♣ natural overcall, good values with a good club suit.

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

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

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♦ openings for South. I included the restrictions that South should be 4332, 5422 or 5431 shape, with 4-9HCP, and without two aces.

```
sRough2d = shape(south, 4x5x + x45x - any 0xxx
+ 4243 + 4342 + 2443 + 3442)
and hcp(south) >= 4 and hcp(south) <= 9
and control(south) <= 3

condition sRough2d
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	♠ 94 ♥ 9 ♦ AQ963 ♣ KQT84	Dir S				
♠ T87652	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ AKQ
N						
W	E					
S						
♥ KJ75		♥ AQ86				
♦ J8		♦ T2				
♣ 9		♣ J763				
	♠ J3 ♥ T432 ♦ K754 ♣ A52					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Takeout (‘optional’ at this level).

East should pass 4♠, although some may be tempted to continue. Eleven tricks are available in spades. 5♦ would be a good sacrifice, but North will probably be content to raise to 4♦, and South won’t bid again.

At other tables, North will probably open 1♦ in third seat, East will make a takeout double, and East-West should end in 4♠.

5.2 Deal 2

Love All	♠ AQT87	Dlr S										
	♥ K8											
	♦ 74											
	♣ KJ52											
♠ 9	<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></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		♠ J32	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AQ9652		♥ JT73										
♦ AT5		♦ J82										
♣ AQ4		♣ T93										
	♠ K654											
	♥ 4											
	♦ KQ963											
	♣ 876											

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) General force.
- (3) RKCB 03/14.
- (4) Two of the five key-cards (4 aces and ♥K), but not the ♥Q.

Perhaps East-West will reach the slam, although it needs East to be pushy with an apparent misfit. There isn't a lot of room for East-West, after the 2♦ opening. Even with the 4-1 heart break, there is play for the slam – winning the expected diamond lead in hand, and starting on trumps, he should take three rounds, and then risk the a spade to the ♠Q – he can

discard one diamond on the ♠A, and another on the fourth club, whether or not North ruffs in.

At other tables, the uncontested East-West auction might start 1♠–2♥; 3♣–3♥; 4♥... ending in 6♥.

5.3 Deal 3

Love All	♠ T7	Dir S										
	♥ QT92											
	♦ AJ3											
	♣ K843											
♠ KJ8653	<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		♠ Q	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J4		♥ A863										
♦ T4		♦ KQ62										
♣ JT6		♣ A752										
	♠ A942											
	♥ K75											
	♦ 9875											
	♣ Q9											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	No	No	Dbl (2)
No	2♠	No	2NT
End			

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

(2) 12-19HCP balanced.

Even with a singleton ♠, East may prefer 2NT to a double, or alternatively East may choose to pass 2♦, and collect 50 or 100. South has a difficult choice of lead against 3NT, since a diamond is likely to play into declarer's tenaces, perhaps giving him a finesse that he wouldn't otherwise take. North is likely to have 4 hearts on this auction, so I think South should lead the

♥5. Declarer can't recover from this and should go at least 2-off, particularly with the lack of entries to dummy. Perhaps West should have removed to 3♠, although this is also off.

At other tables, West may open a weak 2, or otherwise East will open at the 1-level. Either way, East-West should end in 2♠, making 8 tricks.

5.4 Deal 4

Love All	♠ AT76	Dir S	
	♥ 7		
	♦ AQJT		
	♣ A975		
♠ Q54	N W E S	♠ K2	
♥ K95		♥ AQJT43	
♦ 432		♦ 95	
♣ T632		♣ KJ8	
	♠ J983		
	♥ 862		
	♦ K876		
	♣ Q4		

Suggested auction:

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

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

North isn't really strong enough for the 2NT enquiry – he will be in trouble opposite a maximum with hearts. North shouldn't compete further over 3♥, to play in an 8-card spade fit or a 9-card diamond fit, especially with the possibility that his partner has 4 hearts. Note that since North raised to 3♦ originally, a bid such as 3♠ by North on the second round should be pass/correct, with something like a 5-1-5-2 shape. 3♥ looks to be 1-off for +100 to North-South.

At other tables, North will open 1♣ or 1♦ in 3rd position, East may introduce a simple 1♥ overcall, North will reopen with a double, and North-South may play in 2♠, or East-West in 3♥. It is unlikely that North-South will reach the lucky 4♠.

5.5 Deal 5

Love All	♠ Q7 ♥ Q54 ♦ KT62 ♣ T832	Dlr S									
♠ J865 ♥ 73 ♦ A ♣ AKJ965	<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></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		♠ AT94 ♥ AK96 ♦ Q97 ♣ Q4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K32 ♥ JT82 ♦ J8543 ♣ 7										

Suggested auction:

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

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

I think North should stretch to compete with a 3♦ bid, partly because of the possibility of a 9-card ♦ fit, and partly because it prevents East from cue-bidding 3♦. East will probably take the plunge in 3NT. South may prefer to lead the ♥J rather than a low diamond, but either way declarer can easily take 10 tricks. East might prefer 4♦ (looking for 4♥/ 4♠) rather than 3NT, but this would work out badly if West hasn't got a 4-card major.

At other tables, East-West are likely to reach 4♠, and some should reach 6♠.

5.6 Deal 6

Love All	♠ T	Dir S			
	♥ K42				
	♦ JT763				
	♣ QJ92				
♠ AQ9853 ♥ AT ♦ Q ♣ T874	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; 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	♠ 762 ♥ J973 ♦ A9 ♣ AK53
N					
W E					
S					
	♠ KJ4				
	♥ Q865				
	♦ K8542				
	♣ 6				

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	2♠	4♦	4♠
End			

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

North's 4♦ bid is competitive, but also suggests to South that he could consider a sacrifice if opponents compete to 4♠. In this case, even with 5 diamonds, South may consider that he has too many defensive values to risk a sacrifice. East may have preferred to cue-bid 4♦, but didn't have this bid available. West should be able to manufacture a heart winner to discard one of his club losers, although 10 tricks are easier if North leads the ♣Q.

At other tables, East-West are likely to reach 4♠.

5.7 Deal 7

Love All	♠ T982	Dlr S										
	♥ 52											
	♦ 876											
	♣ KJ32											
♠ 76	<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		♠ AK4	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AJ873		♥ KT96										
♦ AK		♦ Q532										
♣ 9754		♣ A6										
	♠ QJ53											
	♥ Q4											
	♦ JT94											
	♣ QT8											

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) General force.

West's 3NT reply to the cue-bid shows a non-minimum overcall and a stop in diamonds. This is enough to justify East's jump to 6♥, which shouldn't be worse than a finesse of the ♥Q. Here West has stretched to bid 3NT, and so the slam isn't great, I'm not sure how the 2♦ opening affects the location of the ♥Q or chances of different breaks of the heart suit.

At other tables, East may still look for the slam, but I don't think every pair would bid it.

5.8 Deal 8

Love All	♠ AQJ4	Dlr S										
	♥ AJ76											
	♦ 93											
	♣ Q98											
♠ T75	<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		♠ 98632	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ KT9		♥ 82										
♦ AJ87		♦ Q5										
♣ 654		♣ AKJ3										
	♠ K											
	♥ Q543											
	♦ KT642											
	♣ T72											

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

North will make 8 tricks unless the defence take their minor-suit tricks immediately. The best defence would be for East to start with a high club and switch to the ♦Q, but this is difficult.

At other tables, North may play in 1NT, but this could prove more difficult than 2♥. East could start with a high club, and switch to a spade, then when West is in with a heart, he can play a club through dummy, and eventually signal for a diamond return, for 1-off.

5.9 Deal 9

Love All	♠ A965	Dlr S										
	♥ 7											
	♦ AKJ											
	♣ QJ832											
♠ QT4	<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		♠ KJ72	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AKT62		♥ 853										
♦ Q5		♦ T43										
♣ T76		♣ K94										
	♠ 83											
	♥ QJ94											
	♦ 98762											
	♣ A5											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	2♥	End	

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

(2) Pass or correct.

Some West's may prefer not to overcall on this minimum hand, and instead South will be allowed to play 2♦. West will struggle to make 8 tricks in hearts, and may even go 2-off. 2♦ would have made comfortably.

At other tables, if West doesn't open light, North may open 1♣, and South will play in 1NT, making 8 or 9 tricks. If West opens 1♥ or 1NT, then there are a number of possible final contracts – 1NT by East-West, 2♥ by East-West, or 3♦ by North-South.

5.10 Deal 10

Love All	♠ A87432	Dir S				
	♥ AQJ853					
	♦ –					
	♣ T					
♠ K65	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ JT
N						
W	E					
S						
♥ 7		♥ T2				
♦ AKT4		♦ J9853				
♣ AQ943		♣ KJ85				
	♠ Q9					
	♥ K964					
	♦ Q762					
	♣ 762					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) General force.

North may be tempted to raise to 6♥, but it would require one of a fairly improbable set of South hands to have a good chance. East may be tempted to bid 5♣, although North would probably compete to 5♥.

At other tables, West may open 1♣, and North will either use Michaels (planning to jump to game in either major), or simply overcall 1♠. I'd probably follow the former course. East-West may compete to 5♣, which only fails on a diamond lead.

5.11 Deal 11

NS Vul	♠ K76	Dir S				
	♥ 876					
	♦ A2					
	♣ KQJT9					
♠ AQ543	<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	♠ 8	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ J5		♥ AQT43				
♦ Q6		♦ KJT74				
♣ 8643		♣ 75				
	♠ JT92					
	♥ K92					
	♦ 9853					
	♣ A2					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

West has a difficult choice of lead, but may start with the ♥J rather than trumps. South may win the second round of hearts, then play on clubs, and overruff East's ♠8 on the third round. Going back to dummy with the ♦A, he can play a fourth club, and discard his heart loser. He expects to make two further trump tricks, for +110. Perhaps other lines would lead to the contract being defeated.

At other tables, North may open a weak 1NT, and East will overcall either in hearts, or using a conventional bid to allow him to show his second suit. 2♥ should make – if the defence start on clubs they can promote a second trump trick, to hold the contract to 8 tricks. If East-West end at a higher level, say 3♦, they are unlikely to score worse than 1 or 2-off, non-vulnerable.

5.12 Deal 12

NS Vul	♠ AT2	Dir S									
	♥ A										
	♦ AQT863										
	♣ T64										
♠ QJ8	<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		♠ K965
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q7643		♥ JT9									
♦ 9		♦ J2									
♣ AQ82		♣ K953									
	♠ 743										
	♥ K852										
	♦ K754										
	♣ J7										

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Forcing enquiry.

(3) 7-9HCP with 4 hearts.

North may be tempted to jump directly to 5♦, but on reflection it may be more sensible to ask for range first, and opposite a minimum, settle for 3♦. Here, South unfortunately has a poor ‘maximum’, and 5♦ is going to be pretty impossible. As it happens, 3NT is cold, but I don’t think North can risk it.

At other tables, North will open 1♦, South will reply 1♥, North may rebid 2♦ and play there, unless East-West compete to 3♣, in which case North-South should out-compete in diamonds.

5.13 Deal 13

NS Vul	♠ KQJ84	Dlr S	
	♥ 765		
	♦ K3		
	♣ AKQ		
♠ T6	N W E S	♠ A32	
♥ A842		♥ K9	
♦ 8		♦ AT9654	
♣ JT9743		♣ 86	
	♠ 975		
	♥ QJT3		
	♦ QJ72		
	♣ 52		

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) Forcing enquiry.
- (3) 4-6HCP with 4 hearts.
- (4) Forcing with 5(+) spades and 19+HCP.

South would bid 3NT rather than 4♠, holding only a doubleton in spades. With 4 top losers, and a defensive cross-ruff, 4♠ shouldn't make. North is in an unfortunate position with 18HCP opposite the 2♦ opening – forcing to game will be unlucky opposite some minimums like this. As it happens, 3NT would probably make.

At other tables, North will open 1♠, East may make a simple overcall in diamonds (he shouldn't pre-empt with 2 aces!), and South will compete with

2♠. A sensible North may be able to stop short of game, but is unlikely to find 3NT.

NS Vul	♠ A9643		Dir S
	♥ 762		
	♦ K9		
	♣ QJ2		
♠ 2	<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>	♠ QT7	
♥ AQ954		♥ KJ	
♦ 8765		♦ QJ2	
♣ A75		♣ KT963	
	♠ KJ85		
	♥ T83		
	♦ AT43		
	♣ 84		

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

Perhaps some West players would be more aggressive and overcall 2♥, but I don't like that idea – with the lack of spade tolerance, where would you go if East continues with 2♠?

The outcome of 2♠ is likely to depend on the way South plays the trump suit, unless the defence are kind enough to set up a club winner in dummy before taking their three heart tricks. If West's 10HCP and 5 hearts are revealed early on, then this may tempt declarer to finesse East's ♠Q rather than playing for the drop.

At other tables, the board may be passed out, or East will open in fourth seat and East-West will play 2♥, or perhaps North-South will find their spade fit.

5.14 Deal 15

NS Vul	♠ 5		Dir S								
	♥ T86532										
	♦ 98										
	♣ J874										
♠ QT864	<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		♠ AK7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J4		♥ AK									
♦ 65		♦ AKJ43									
♣ T653		♣ AQ2									
	♠ J932										
	♥ Q97										
	♦ QT72										
	♣ K9										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	No	2♥ (2)	Dbl
2♠	No	3♥	Dbl
No	3♠	No	6♠?
End			

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

(2) Pass or correct.

This is a very difficult hand for East-West. East may prefer to cue-bid on the first round, with such a strong hand, although at this vulnerability, penalties could be very lucrative. 3♥ doubled would probably cost –500.

After this auction, East is forewarned of the bad distribution, but still imagines that there will be good odds for 12 tricks if partner has two cards out of: ♠QJ, ♦Q, ♣KJ. So I think a jump to 6♠ is more likely than any other action. West can make 12 tricks on a low club lead (*if* he doesn't play the ♣Q from dummy), but is unlikely to find his way home on other leads.

At other tables East may be able to show his balanced 28HCP in a systematic way, and East-West might then stop in 4♠ rather than 6♠.

5.15 Deal 16

NS Vul	♠ KT432	Dlr S									
	♥ T3										
	♦ AJT75										
	♣ 4										
♠ AQJ	<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		♠ 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A52		♥ KJ864									
♦ 843		♦ Q									
♣ K982		♣ AQJT73									
	♠ 9876										
	♥ Q97										
	♦ K962										
	♣ 65										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	Dbl (2)	4♦	4♥
End			

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.

The 2♦ opening shouldn't stop East-West from ending in 4♥. 6♣ and 6♥ are approximately 50-50, so best avoided non-vulnerable. If doubled, 4♦ would cost –500.

At other tables, West may open a weak 1NT, and East-West should end in 4♥.

5.16 Deal 17

NS Vul	♠ 86	Dir S										
	♥ AT											
	♦ KQ94											
	♣ J8753											
♠ KJ9742	<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		♠ T3	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 763		♥ KQ42										
♦ A3		♦ T86										
♣ AT		♣ KQ96										
	♠ AQ5											
	♥ J985											
	♦ J752											
	♣ 42											

Suggested auction:

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

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

Here, the 2♦ opening causes problems for East-West. Double by East should really be penalty, whereas the hand is better suited to a takeout double. East may not be brave enough to double, but this seems like the most sensible action. If West removes to 3♠, East probably won't raise to game, although 10 tricks are easy on this layout. 3♦ doubled is likely to cost –500, for a bad result for North-South.

At other tables West will open 1♠, and probably end in 4♠.

5.17 Deal 18

NS Vul	♠ KQ43	Dir S										
	♥ KT4											
	♦ A9											
	♣ KT76											
♠ J87	<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		♠ AT65	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AQ93		♥ 52										
♦ T4		♦ Q875										
♣ AQ83		♣ J54										
	♠ 92											
	♥ J876											
	♦ KJ632											
	♣ 92											

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.
- (3) Asking South to bid his 4-card major.
- (4) Happy to look for penalties (otherwise he should bid!).

Notice that without agreement (4), West shouldn't double 2♥ on the second round, and so North-South would not always end in 2♥ doubled on this deal. It will be difficult for declarer to make 8 tricks, although it is possible. A score of –200 is more likely.

At other tables, West may open a weak 1NT, a lot of Norths would double, and whatever East then does, South will probably remove to 2♦ and play there, possibly doubled by East-West. If North doesn't double 1NT, then West will play there.

So although the Rough 2♦ could cost –200 or –500, this result may be replicated at other tables, and if East-West don't find a double of the final contract, the Rough 2♦ could even score above average.

5.18 Deal 19

NS Vul	♠ AQ8	Dlr S										
	♥ T75											
	♦ 763											
	♣ QJ76											
♠ T97	<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		♠ K64	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AKJ92		♥ 843										
♦ AQ8		♦ 92										
♣ K3		♣ AT952										
	♠ J532											
	♥ Q6											
	♦ KJT54											
	♣ 84											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	2♥	End	

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

West may prefer an initial double to a 2♥ bid, but with such a nice 5-card suit, it would seem more sensible to bid them. West's hand isn't quite good enough to take stronger action. If West did double, North should pass, and East will probably remove to 3♣ (through Lebensohl if available). It is hard for East-West to reach game, although they can make at least 10 tricks in hearts, with the ♦K, ♥Q and ♠A all onside.

At other tables, East-West might bid to game in an uncontested auction such as 1♥–1NT; 2NT–3♥;4♥.

5.19 Deal 20

NS Vul	♠ AJ753	Dlr S										
	♥ AT											
	♦ QJ9											
	♣ AT6											
♠ KT9	<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		♠ Q84	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K986		♥ 752										
♦ AK62		♦ 4										
♣ 84		♣ QJ9732										
	♠ 62											
	♥ QJ43											
	♦ T8753											
	♣ K5											

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.
- (3) Lebensohl (either weak with clubs, or strong balanced types with little help in diamonds). If East wants to invite in either major, he should jump to 3M.

North should prefer to pass 2♦ rather than bid 2♠, although another option would be to redouble (asking for South's major) planning to convert 2♥ to 2♠. I think a first-round pass puts more pressure on East, who shouldn't have the values or diamond length to pass the double anyway. Note that on the second round, it would be reasonable for North to place his partner with 4 hearts, since otherwise East-West would be sure to have at least an 8-card heart fit, and East should have been bidding those rather than (probably) clubs. North might choose to double 3♣, although this is risky at IMPs, with only three defensive tricks opposite a weak hand.

North should lead the ♥A, followed by the ♥T even if South discourages – East may play two top diamonds discarding a heart, but will probably still be 1-off with the lack of entries to dummy, and may be 2-off.

At other tables, West may open a weak 1NT, North should double, and East should be able to run to the safety of 2♣ (perhaps with South competing to 2♦). Both these contracts should make.

5.20 Deal 21

EW Vul	♠ A7		Dir S									
	♥ KJ532											
	♦ AQ											
	♣ KJ92											
♠ K965	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; 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		♠ J842	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 98		♥ Q4										
♦ K732		♦ J84										
♣ AT4		♣ Q863										
	♠ QT3											
	♥ AT76											
	♦ T965											
	♣ 75											

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Forcing enquiry.

(3) 4-6HCP with 4 hearts.

South shouldn't have too much trouble making this contract, with the hearts 2-2. Even if using a different response scheme to the 2NT enquiry, and North were declarer in 4♥, the result should be the same.

At other tables, North will open 1♥, South will raise, and North should push to game.

5.21 Deal 22

EW Vul	♠ AT43	Dlr S									
	♥ 85										
	♦ 9874										
	♣ Q92										
♠ J972	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 0 5px;">W</td><td></td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="padding: 0 5px;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K86
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J3		♥ AKT97									
♦ A3		♦ KQJ									
♣ AKJ73		♣ 65									
	♠ Q5										
	♥ Q642										
	♦ T652										
	♣ T84										

Suggested auction:

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

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

Perhaps this South hand would be too light for some players. If doubled, 3♦ would cost –800, but North's bid is good in principle because it takes away the cue-bid. East will probably subside in 3NT, with an apparent misfit (unless West converts to 4♥, of course). The 2♦ opening warns of bad breaks, and the ♦J is wasted; however some Easts may get more excited. 3NT will make at least 9 tricks when declarer plays on hearts.

At other tables, East-West should reach the same spot, perhaps played by West.

5.22 Deal 23

EW Vul	♠ 52		Dir S								
	♥ AQ85										
	♦ 72										
	♣ AT952										
♠ A643	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 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		♠ QT8
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ T62		♥ K973									
♦ A6		♦ KQJ43									
♣ K863		♣ Q									
	♠ KJ97										
	♥ J4										
	♦ T985										
	♣ J74										

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

There are a number of possible outcomes of 3♣, but –100 seems quite likely.

At other tables, the deal may be passed out, or East may open 1♦, and pass West's 1♠ response.

5.23 Deal 24

EW Vul	♠ T4	Dlr S				
	♥ J8					
	♦ QJT9642					
	♣ K7					
♠ K98	<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	♠ A732	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ A7		♥ KQT9542				
♦ K8		♦ –				
♣ AJ8532		♣ 64				
	♠ QJ65					
	♥ 63					
	♦ A753					
	♣ QT9					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

It's not a good idea to have agreements on psychic bids, but on this particular North hand I would be very tempted to throw a curve ball (e.g. 3♥) on the first round. If bidding naturally, 5♦ would seem to be the optimum bid – the ♣K seems to be onside, and partner probably has something useful, so an East-West slam is unlikely to make.

On this occasion, East considers his hand too distributional to pass 5♦, and unsuitable for a penalty double, so 5♥ is the only remaining choice. Not all East-West pairs would reach this slam. The contract can be made by establishing the clubs.

At other tables, West will open 1♣, North may make a pre-emptive overcall, and East should make a free heart bid, although a takeout double is another

option. If South supports diamonds, it may actually become easier for East-West to find the slam.

5.24 Deal 25

EW Vul	♠ J8		Dir S									
	♥ J9843											
	♦ AK3											
	♣ KQ3											
♠ T976	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; 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		♠ AQ2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K5		♥ AT76										
♦ JT6		♦ 85										
♣ A952		♣ T764										
	♠ K543											
	♥ Q2											
	♦ Q9742											
	♣ J8											

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	End		

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

North may be tempted to bid 2♥, since there is approximately a 30% chance that South has hearts (see Section 6) but on the other 70% of deals, South will have to play 3♦, perhaps going off by an extra trick. On this occasion, South has spades, and 2♦ is safer than 3♦. South can set up a spade ruff, but West may then get a trump promotion on a third round of hearts, to hold the contract to 8 tricks and +90.

At other tables, North may open a weak 1NT in preference to opening (and having to rebid) the poor heart suit. 1NT should make, perhaps with overtricks, on a club or heart lead.

5.25 Deal 26

EW Vul	♠ AT532	Dlr S									
	♥ 842										
	♦ JT984										
	♣ –										
♠ 987	<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		♠ QJ6
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ KQT6		♥ A3									
♦ Q		♦ K65									
♣ QJT86		♣ AK932									
	♠ K4										
	♥ J975										
	♦ A732										
	♣ 754										

Suggested auction:

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

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

North shouldn't use the 2NT enquiry here, as he doesn't want to play in game in spades or in diamonds, but would be forcing to game if South had a maximum. If East can't double (if double is for takeout) then he has a very difficult decision. Against 4♦ doubled, the defence will probably take 4 or 5 tricks, for –100 or –300.

At other tables, North may open this distributional hand in third position, but East-West will generally find 3NT, which will make at least 9 tricks.

5.26 Deal 27

EW Vul	♠ T9876	Dlr S									
	♥ Q5										
	♦ 543										
	♣ AJ6										
♠ AQ	<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		♠ KJ4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ KJT		♥ A964									
♦ A976		♦ J8									
♣ QT32		♣ 9874									
	♠ 532										
	♥ 8732										
	♦ KQT2										
	♣ K5										

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) 12-19HCP balanced.

North could run to 2♠ on the first round, but the suit isn't great, and passing will put more pressure on 4th hand. In this case, with only ♦Jx, East is unlikely to pass, and may prefer an invitational 3♥ to a 2♥ bid, which could be made on a very weak hand.

Against 3NT, North will probably lead a spade. Declarer needs to set up a club trick and guess the hearts correctly, and so the defence should have plenty of opportunities find the diamond switch before it is too late, for +100 or +200.

At other tables, West will open in a minor (probably 1♦) and many East-West pairs will drive to 3NT. The result should be similar.

5.27 Deal 28

EW Vul	♠ Q85	Dir S				
	♥ AQT63					
	♦ K53					
	♣ A3					
♠ 963	<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	♠ KT2	
N						
W E						
S						
♥ 85		♥ KJ92				
♦ 762		♦ A8				
♣ KT972		♣ Q864				
	♠ AJ74					
	♥ 74					
	♦ QJT94					
	♣ J5					

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.
- (3) Lebensohl (either weak with clubs, or strong balanced types with little help in diamonds).

North could bid 2♥ (pass or correct), but passing will put more pressure on 4th hand. Bidding 2♥ would probably have resulted in South playing 2♠ on a 4-3 fit, although this contract has good chances with the spades behaving. 3♣ should go 1-off for +100.

At other tables, North will probably play in 1NT, making either +90 or +120.

5.28 Deal 29

EW Vul	♠ KT954	Dlr S										
	♥ 94											
	♦ 942											
	♣ A93											
♠ J	<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		♠ A83	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ AJ6532		♥ QT7										
♦ AK3		♦ QT7										
♣ QJ5		♣ K872										
	♠ Q762											
	♥ K8											
	♦ J865											
	♣ T64											

Suggested auction:

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

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

Twelve tricks are available with the ♥K onside, but I don't think East-West will find this slam. The result will probably be similar at other tables.

5.29 Deal 30

EW Vul	♠ 3		Dir S
	♥ QT7		
	♦ 742		
	♣ AQ7654		
♠ AK76	<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>	♠ Q954	
♥ 853		♥ AJ962	
♦ AKJ5		♦ 6	
♣ 98		♣ K32	
	♠ JT82		
	♥ K4		
	♦ QT983		
	♣ JT		

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.
- (3) General force – primarily Stayman, otherwise asking for ♦ stop for 3NT.

East-West have landed in their 4-4 fit rather than their 5-3 fit, but the 4-1 trump break makes it a more difficult contract. However, East-West should have enough firepower to make the game.

At other tables, the final contract, and the result, should be similar.

5.30 Deal 31

Game All	♠ JT6532	Dir S									
	♥ AJ										
	♦ J63										
	♣ J7										
♠ A9	<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		♠ K
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q9865		♥ KT42									
♦ AQ2		♦ K54									
♣ 986		♣ KQT54									
	♠ Q874										
	♥ 73										
	♦ T987										
	♣ A32										

Suggested auction:

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

- (1) The Rough 2♦ – 4/5 diamonds, a 4-card major, and 4-9HCP.
- (2) 12-19HCP balanced.
- (3) General force – primarily Stayman, otherwise asking for ♦ stop for 3NT.

West may prefer to overcall 2♥ rather than double, although the heart suit is very poor so I have suggested a double here. North should remove to 2♠ with a 6-card suit. South could compete to 3♠ on the second round with a maximum, or with a more shapely hand than this. East-West should make at least 10 tricks in hearts.

At other tables, the final contract, and the result, should be similar whether West opens 1♥ or a weak 1NT.

5.31 Deal 32

Game All	♠ QJ76	Dlr S									
	♥ AK										
	♦ J74										
	♣ K943										
♠ KT43 ♥ QJT87 ♦ – ♣ A862	<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></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		♠ A8 ♥ 92 ♦ A98653 ♣ QJ5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 952										
	♥ 6543										
	♦ KQT2										
	♣ T7										

Suggested auction:

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

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

Perhaps West won't overcall on this hand, although the problem is that it may be difficult to come in on the second round, if North has diamond support. North might venture a double (risky) since opponents seem to be in a misfit. Against 3♣, if North leads a heart and switches to diamonds, West should be able to come to 8 tricks by a cross-ruff, for 1-off. If West decides not to overcall 2♥, South might play in 2♦ undoubled, conceding –200.

At other tables, a variety of results are possible depending on whether West opens 1♥.

5.32 Deal 33

Game All	♠ AQT876	Dlr S				
	♥ A84					
	♦ 52					
	♣ 74					
♠ 43 ♥ K63 ♦ KQT3 ♣ AK65	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; 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	♠ 952 ♥ QJT ♦ AJ7 ♣ QJT9	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ KJ					
	♥ 9752					
	♦ 9864					
	♣ 832					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) 12-19HCP balanced.

(3) Penalty.

Perhaps some wouldn't open 2♦ on this hand. East's double is slightly tight with nothing in spades, and only one defensive trick, but it is hard to see what else East can do. Perhaps some Wests would bid 3NT on the second round, based on the vulnerability, but this won't be a success if South leads a spade. North has 7 easy tricks in 2♠ doubled, for –200. This should be well above average for East-West.

At other tables, West may open 1♦, North will overcall in spades, and East-West will either subside in 2NT or 3♣, or try the failing 5♣. If North risks a jump overcall of 2♠ (not sure that I would, with 2 aces) then –200 is possible.

5.33 Deal 34

Game All	♠ J96	Dlr S										
	♥ 76											
	♦ Q54											
	♣ QJ654											
♠ KT3	<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		♠ A87542	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J95		♥ AKQ2										
♦ T2		♦ AJ7										
♣ AKT92		♣ –										
	♠ Q											
	♥ T843											
	♦ K9863											
	♣ 873											

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) General game force.

A protective double by East is risky because West is quite likely to jump in clubs. The 3♦ game force is a bit risky, but works well here when West is strong enough to jump to the making slam. If West tries a first-round double, or worse, a direct jump to 4♠, the slam is harder to reach.

At other tables East-West should be able to find 6♠ fairly easily.

5.34 Deal 35

Game All	♠ QT7	Dlr S										
	♥ K9											
	♦ AJ983											
	♣ 843											
♠ K854	<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		♠ 632	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ A742		♥ J86										
♦ K		♦ T54										
♣ KJ75		♣ AQT6										
	♠ AJ9											
	♥ QT53											
	♦ Q762											
	♣ 92											

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) 12-19HCP balanced.

West's diamond holding is far from ideal for the double, but it is hard to see any other option. With better suit quality and a 4-4-1-4 hand, a 2♥ or 2♠ overall might work better. North conservatively raises to 3♦ with poor shape. I don't think it would be unreasonable for East to double here, and this will sometimes happen. On this deal 3♦ should make for +110.

At other tables, West will usually open, and then either East will play the hand in 1NT, probably going 1-off for +100, or North will play in 2♦ or 3♦ for +110.

5.35 Deal 36

Game All	♠ KJ84	Dir S				
	♥ 94					
	♦ 643					
	♣ AJ63					
♠ A72 ♥ A2 ♦ QJ5 ♣ KQT92	<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	♠ QT65 ♥ KJ853 ♦ 872 ♣ 7	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ 93					
	♥ QT76					
	♦ AKT9					
	♣ 854					

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) 12-19HCP balanced.

West could try a 2NT overcall rather than a double, with no interest in the majors, but then East-West would play in 3♥ rather than 2♥. Declarer will probably scrape 7 tricks in 2♥, for +100 to North-South.

At other tables, East-West should be able to stop in 1NT, which is easier to make.

5.36 Deal 37

Game All	♠ 9542	Dir S					
	♥ AK						
	♦ J943						
	♣ QT7						
♠ QJT83	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 10px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ K	
N							
W	E						
S							
♥ 2		♥ QJT853					
♦ AK7		♦ T6					
♣ AJ94		♣ 6532					
	♠ A76						
	♥ 9764						
	♦ Q852						
	♣ K8						

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	2♠	End	

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

West may have time to develop the fourth club as the eighth trick in 2♠, for –110 although there are a few ways for the defence to make life difficult for declarer and score +100.

At other tables, East-West will often find their club fit, perhaps through 1♠–1NT; 2♣. It shouldn't be too difficult to come to at least 8 tricks in clubs.

5.37 Deal 38

Game All	♠ A74	Dir S									
	♥ KJT97										
	♦ A83										
	♣ 87										
♠ Q985 ♥ A43 ♦ K4 ♣ 9642	<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></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		♠ 32 ♥ Q8 ♦ 652 ♣ AKJT53
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ KJT6										
	♥ 652										
	♦ QJT97										
	♣ Q										

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Pass or correct.

The defence can take 5 tricks against 3♣, for +100. North-South could make 9 or 10 tricks in diamonds or hearts, depending on the spade guess. 2♠ would have been a more difficult contract, but would probably have made.

At other tables, North will open 1♥ or 1NT, and East-West will probably compete to 3♣. South may protect with 3♦ or 3♥.

5.38 Deal 39

Game All	♠ T97	Dir S									
	♥ 9852										
	♦ Q8										
	♣ AKT8										
♠ K8	<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></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		♠ AQ64
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ AQT76		♥ J4									
♦ K96		♦ JT74									
♣ Q93		♣ J64									
	♠ J532										
	♥ K3										
	♦ A532										
	♣ 752										

Suggested auction:

South	West	North	East
2♦ (1)	2♥	End	

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

2♥ should make at least 8 or 9 tricks.

At other tables, East-West will play in 1NT or 2♥ for a similar score.

5.39 Deal 40

Game All	♠ AJ7		Dlr S								
	♥ AKT4										
	♦ 532										
	♣ KQT										
♠ Q4	<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		♠ 9862
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q9862		♥ J7									
♦ Q9		♦ AJ87									
♣ A963		♣ 852									
	♠ KT53										
	♥ 53										
	♦ KT64										
	♣ J74										

Suggested auction:

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

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

(2) Forcing enquiry.

(3) 7-9HCP with 4 spades.

With everything lying nicely (particularly if East leads a spade), 3NT will probably make for +600.

At other tables, North-South will often reach 3NT, although some North players might downgrade their holding to a 15-16HCP balanced hand, which could affect their bidding.

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 (7, 12, 13, 17, 33). I can count 8 boards where the 2♦ is likely to give North-South an advantage (3, 5, 11, 15, 19, 26, 36, 37), but the Rough 2♦ also puts North-South at a potential advantage on many of the other boards. Board 11 is a good example of the Rough 2♦ helping our side to win the partscore battle, while board 26 shows how it can be useful when North has a fit for diamonds. Of particular note are the lack of situations where the Rough 2♦ opening results in our side conceding a large penalty (board 17).

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♦.