Opening balanced hands commentary

The emphasis is on opener showing the different point ranges on balanced hands.
I prefer the 1NT rebid to show 15-17 in the modern style, but you might prefer to teach 15,16 to correspond to local practice.
Responder's only concern will be to search for a game if strong enough, and to stop otherwise.

Hand 1
North has 14 points in a balanced hand, so opens 1NT.
With 13 points South can see a total of 25 – 27, and so raises to 3NT for the game bonus.
East will lead ♠5 which declarer should run to the KJ.
Declarer should establish the clubs, at which point he can see 9 tricks. When the clubs split the 4th club will become the tenth trick.
On a different lead (say a heart or a diamond) there might be only 2 tricks in spade. The ♦A and repeated leads towards the ♦T will yield a tenth, but it might be safer just to take the 9.
Score – 3NT + 1 = 430

Hand 2
With 13 points I a balanced hand East opens 1NT.
West also has a balanced hand, but with a maximum combined holding of 23 point just passes. Contract 1NT by E.
South's obvious leads are ♠2 and ♥5.
Declarer can take 8 tricks off the top, and set up a tenth in hearts, but as long as South leads a club, or switches to a club after taking the ♥K the defence can always take 8 tricks first.
Score 1NT + 1 = 40 + 30 + 50 = 120.
(3♠ also makes for a score of 140, but it is not a great contract.)

Hand 3
South's hand is 5-3-3-2 – balanced even with a 5-card suit. With 13 points he opens 1NT.
North's hand is balanced. With a combined 20 – 22 points he passes.
West's most obvious lead is ♥5, though the ♠9 hoping to find partner with length in the suit could be inspired.
With diamonds providing 2 stops declarer can always take 3 spades, 2 clubs, and 2 diamonds before the defence establishes a club to go with 4 hearts, 1 spade and a diamond.
Score 1NT= scores 40 + 50 = 90.

Hand 4
West has 14 points in a balanced hand and opens 1NT.
With a combined total of 19 – 21 East passes.
North leads ♥2 (or ♦A to have a look).
If declarer can find the unlikely play of dropping the ♣Q and cashing the 9 he can come to 8 tricks.
More likely is a failing club finesse for a total of 7 tricks.
Score for 1NT= is 90.

Hand 5
20 points balanced – North opens 2NT, and South passes (it doesn't look good but he has nowhere to go – stop now while you still can).
I lead ♠A then switch to the 4 – others might start with the 4.
The defence can take 5 tricks off the top, but declarer will have little trouble in takin 1 heart, 3 diamonds and 4 clubs to make his contract.
2NT making scores 40 + 30 + 50 = 120 points.

Alternatively, EW can make 8 tricks in hearts (110 points), but it's difficult to get into the auction – that's one of the strengths of the weak no trump, and in any case they do better by defending provided they can get it right.

Hand 6

With 14 points in a balanced hand East opens 1NT. (Note that 5-3-3-2 is balanced, there is no 2nd suit available for the rebid.)
With 13 points West must force to game. There are clever ways of looking for a better fit in a major suit, but for the moment he will just raise to 3NT.
South probably leads a heart – Q or 2 depending on the partnership style.
Declarer can count 10 tricks in clubs, diamonds and hearts.
Potentially there is an 11th trick in hearts, but dare he risk it with the possibility of 4 spade losers.
Indeed, if South were to lead a small spade the defence could take 4 tricks off the top.
3NT = scores 100 + 500 = 600.

Hand 7

With 12 points in a balanced hand South opens 1NT.
North could raise to 2NT on 12 points, but with such trick-taking potential might well try 3NT.
West will lead ♠4, which turns out to be an immediate gift to declarer.
Assuming that East cannot set up his diamonds and then get to them declarer should be able to set up 4 spades, 5 hearts and a diamond. However, the defence will take 1 spade, 2 diamonds and a club first, holding the contract to 9 tricks.
Score 3NT making 9 = 100 + 500 = 600.
2NT making 9 scores 100 + 50 = 150.

Hand 8

With a balanced hand and 17 points West must open 1♦, planning to rebid in no trumps.
Facing one of a suit East is too good to pass but not good enough to change suit at the 2-level. He must make the dustbin bid of 1NT showing 6 to 9 points.
With 17 points West wants to be in game if partner has 8 or 9 – not if partner has 6 or 7. He bids 2NT, invitational, asking partner to go on if maximum. With 8 points East raises to 3NT.
North will probably lead ♣6 which declarer should run to the T.
With all the black honours lying right declarer should come to 10 tricks.
3NT making 10 scores 130 + 300 = 430.

Hand 9

With 13 points in a balanced hand North will open 1NT.
For the moments South will pass, as will West.
East will probably lead ♣2 though the ♠A works well.
On the spade lead the defence can take 7 tricks before declarer gets started.
Alternatively, declarer must attack hearts from the top, and if the defence fail to cash their tricks when in with the ♥Q then declarer will come to 4 hearts and 3 clubs for 7 tricks.
1NT making 7 scores 90.
1NT making 6 scores -50.

Hand 10

With 15 points in a balanced hand East must start with a suit bid planning to rebid in no trumps.
Start with the major – 1♠.
With 7 points in a balanced hand West will respond 1NT, and facing a maximum of 9 points East will pass.
North leads the ♥4 to South's King, and South should return the suit.
When the clubs split declarer can come to 3 clubs, 2 diamonds, 1 heart and 1 spade (2 if he manages to drop the ♠J), so 7 or 8 altogether.
Score 1NT = scores 90 - 1NT + 1 scores 120.

Hand 11
With 16 points in a balanced hand South must start with one of a suit planning to rebid in no trumps.
Start with the major – 1♠.
North is strong enough to change suit at the 2-level. He has not got the 5 hearts for a 2♥ response so starts with 2♦.
South will rebid either 2NT (game-forcing) or 3NT, and North will raise to game if necessary.
West leads ♥J (top of an interior sequence).
Declarer can always take 2 spades, 2 hearts, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs for 10 tricks provided that he sets up the clubs before taking the 2nd heart.
3NT + 1 scores 430.

Hand 12
West opens 1NT, and everyone else passes.
North probably leads ♥4, although the ♠A in search of partner's long suit is also quite tempting.
Declarer can always take 2 hearts, 1 diamond, and 2 clubs when the queen finesses.
A spade will always establish whenever the opponents attack the suit, and a 4th diamond will appear provided he can get to it.
1NT = scores 90.

Hand 13
North opens 1NT and South passes.
East leads a small spade.
Declarer can count 4 spades, 2 hearts (3 when the T drops), and 2 diamonds when the J finesses for 8 tricks.
And 1 more in either spades or diamonds will hold declarer to 7 tricks.
1NT making 7 tricks will score 90.

Hand 14
East opens 1♣ or 1♦ (it hardly matters which), planning to rebid in no trumps.
West responds 1♥ and East rebids 1NT.
West will raise to 3NT.
South will lead ♥Q (top of a broken sequence)
Declarer can count 2 hearts, 2 spades (with the help of a finesse, 1 diamond and 4 clubs.
In fact he should make a further heart finessing the Jack and the defence may well find themselves forced to concede an 11th trick.
3NT + 2 scores 160 + 300 = 460.

Hand 15
South opens 1♠, North responds 1NT, and all pass.
East's choice of lead is unenviable – ♠T is probably best (top of an interior sequence).
With The ♠KQJ and ♣K behind the aces and the diamond king lying right declarer should find his way to 7 tricks. East may well find himself forced to concede a further trick when he gets in with the ♠A.
1NT + 1 scores 120.

Hand 16
West opens 1♣ or 1♦, East responds 1♥ and West responds 1NT (15-17) or 2NT (17,18). 1NT (15-17) is by far the better method, but local preferences might dictate otherwise.
North might well lead ♦7 or a small club (whichever suit West didn't open) but ♠2 (the unbid major) is the inspired choice.
Declarer should come to 8 tricks leading low to the club honours and the ♥Q.
1NT + 1 scores 120.

Hand 17
North opens 1NT, South might invite with 2NT but North should refuse the invitation.
East probably leads ♦3 and declarer must play up in the South hand.
Declarer should have little trouble making 8 tricks, leading towards the diamond honours and the ♥Q and taking the club finesse.
Score 120.
3♥ also makes for 140 but it is a far less likely contract.

Hand 18
East opens 1NT, with 11 points and excellent intermediates West invites with 2NT, and East raises to 3NT.
South leads SK.
Declarer finesses the ♥K, sets up the diamonds, and comes to 1 spade, 2 hearts, 3 diamonds and 3 clubs – 9 tricks altogether and contract made.
3NT making scores 100 + 300 = 400.