Opening unbalanced hands - commentary

Hand 1

North dealt and opens the bidding.
North has 6-4 shape and 12 points.
Open 1♣, planning to rebid in hearts.
South has 7 points and responds in his longest suit - bid 1♥.
Responder's change of suit is forcing - opener likes hearts - bid 2♥.
Final contract is 2♥ – South bid hearts first and so is declarer – West will make the opening lead and North will table his hand.
Probable lead - ♠K.
Declarer will plan to take out trumps leading out A and K hoping to drop the Queen - 9-card fit – then set up 2 diamond tricks while ruffing 2 spades. Note that there are not enough entries to set up the clubs.
He should come to 5 hearts, 2 diamonds, 1 spade, and 2 spade ruffs - 10 tricks altogether - score 120 trick points.

Hand 2

East dealt and opens the bidding.
East has 5-4 shape and 11 points.
Open 1♣, planning to rebid 1♠.
With 7 points West responds 1♥, his cheaper 4-card suit – forcing, and East rebids 1♠ as planned.
With excellent spade support West will raise to 2♠.
Final contract is 2♠ – East bid the suit first and so will be declarer -
South will make the opening lead – and West will table his hand.
Probable lead – ♣3 – singleton in a trump contract.
Declarer will plan to clear trumps and then set up his clubs, but North will take the first spade and give his partner a club ruff.
Defence can take 1 spade, 1 ruff, 2 hearts and a diamond to hold declarer to 8 tricks – contract made for 60 trick points.

Hand 3

South dealt and opens the bidding.
South has 5-4 shape and 13 points.
Open 1♦, planning to rebid 1♠.
North has 11 points and bids 1♥ - his longest suit.
South rebids 1♠ as planned.
North bids 1NT or 2NT (no fit identified and a good holding in the fourth suit- not going into the various strengths required today).
Final contract is 1NT (say) – North bid NT first and so will be declarer.
East will make the opening lead and South will table his hand.
East leads ♥8 – trying to set up a long suit and suggesting a weak holding.
North's plan will be to set up the diamonds and a couple of club tricks while a heart entry is still in place, so take the opening heart and lead a small club (East will do well to duck) then lead towards the diamonds.
Potentially there are 3 diamond tricks, 2 in clubs, 4 in hearts and 1 in spades (10 tricks) if declarer can negotiate the entries, but in practice the defence will take 2 diamonds, 1 club and 2 spades first to hold declarer to 8 tricks.

Hand 4
West dealt and opens the bidding.
West has 5-4 shape and 19 points.
Open 1♣ planning to rebid in diamonds or spades.
East will respond 1♥ and West will rebid 1♠. (We shall discuss extra strength next time).
East will certainly rebid his hearts.
For the sake of argument, the final contract is 2♥, although 3♥ or 4♥ by East and 3NT by West are all reasonable.
Playing in hearts East is declarer, South is on lead, and West will table his hand.
South will lead one of ♣4 (singleton), ♠T (top of 2-card honours sequence), or ♦5 (the unbid suit).
Declarer will plan to clear trumps (from the top), set up 2 spades, and finesse in both minors.
As the cards lie, he will come to just 9 tricks (90 trick points) - although 4♥ is a reasonable contract - everything lies wrong.
3NT will make the same 9 tricks for 100 trick points.

Hand 5
North dealt and starts the auction.
With only 9 points and no 5-4 shape or 6-card suit North will pass.
East now becomes the opening bidder and has 5-4 shape, but with only 9 points he will also pass.
South has a 6-card suit and 13 points - open 1♥ planning to rebid 2♥.
West will pass, and with 9 points North will bid 1♠ - his longest suit and
South will rebid 2♥ as planned.
Final contract is 2♥ – South bid the suit first and will be declarer, West will
make the opening lead, and North will table his hand.
hearts and West is on lead.
Probable lead - ♣6 or ♣5 – a nothing suit not bid by the opponents.
Declarer will plan to ruff the club return high, clear trumps, try the finesse in diamond and then lead towards the ♠K.
However, with the ♦K lying wrong he cannot avoid losing 2 clubs, 1 diamond and 1 spade for 9 tricks - contract made +1 – 90 trick points.

Hand 6
East dealt and starts the auction.
East has a 6-card suit and 11 points.
Open 1♣, planning to rebid 2♣.
West bids 1♠ - don't get excited yet by your strong hand - your change of suit is forcing while you wait to learn more.
East rebids 2♣. West bids again to show his extra strength - the obvious bid is in no trumps.
Bid 3NT - the reason (game bonus) will become clear in the next session - bidding slams can wait for the moment. West is declarer in 3NT and North is on lead.
North leads ♥6.
Declarer can take 12 tricks off the top (190 trick points) when the ♣Q drops.

Hand 7
South dealt and starts the auction.
South has a 7-card suit and 17 points.
Open 1♥, planning to rebid in hearts.
North will respond 1♠ - South will rebid 2♥ (or 3♥) - and North will pass.
South is declarer in 3♥ and West is on lead. West leads ♦A.

South plans to clear trumps and then attack spades. With the spades splitting there are 7 heart tricks and 5 spade tricks available - total 12. Unfortunately, EW can take 4 tricks in the minors before you start and so 9 tricks are all you can make (90 trick points).

Hand 8

West deals and starts the auction.
West has 5-4 shape and 15 points.
Open 1♦ planning to rebid in clubs.
East responds 1♥, West rebids 2♣ and East rebids in either no trumps or diamonds.
Playing the contract in 3NT by East - South is on lead.
South leads ♠5.
Declarer can count 12 tricks when the hearts run for just 1 loser, but with 3 clubs to lose after the third heart he is better taking the 10 top tricks first (130 trick points).
Playing the contract in 3(say)♦ North will probably also lead a spade (the unbid suit). Declarer can take this, clear trumps in 2 rounds, and then ruff out hearts for 12 tricks (180 trick points), providing that he can retain enough entries to dummy.

Hand 9

North deals and starts the auction.
North has 5-4 shape and 14 points.
Open 1♥, planning to rebid in Clubs.
South will respond 1♠, North will rebid 2♣, and South will rebid either 2♠ or 3♠.
The contract is 3♠ by South, with West on lead.
West has a difficult choice - I would probably lead ♠7 as a relatively safe option.
South will plan to play 2 rounds of trumps and then use club ruffs for extra entries to hand to make repeated finesses in the red suits, making 9 tricks in all (90 trick points).

Hand 10

East deals and starts the auction.
East passes, as does South (at this point in the course).
With 5-4 shape and 20 points West opens 1♥, East responds 1♠, and West rebids some number of spades.
The contract (for the sake of argument) is 2♠ by East.
South is stuck for a lead – perhaps ♦6, perhaps ♣A.
Declarer's initial plan will be to clear trumps and take the hearts while leading towards the minor suit honours.
However, when the ♠J falls on the first round of trumps he might look towards a ruffing approach.
If he makes every correct choice he can take 11 tricks for 150 trick points.

Hand 11

South dealt and starts the auction.
South has 11 points and 5-4 shape.
Open 1♦, planning to rebid in Hearts.
North responds 1♥ (the cheaper of 2 4-card suits), and South rebids 2♥.
The contract is 2♥ by North.
East will probably lead ♣A.
Declarer will plan to clear trumps then set up the diamonds, taking a spade finesse along the way, although he may change tack when trumps show a 4-1 split.
10 tricks are possible for 120 trick points.

Hand 12
West dealt and starts the auction.
West has 5-4 shape and 12 points.
West opens 1♣ planning to rebid in hearts.
East responds 1♥, and West raises to 2♥.
For the sake of argument, the contract is 2♥ by East.
I lead ♠3, though ♦A would be reasonable.
Declarer's plan is to clear trumps and then cash his black suit winners, though he may change this when the 4-1 trump split manifests itself.
He should take 10 tricks in hearts (120 trick points). He can actually make 11 in clubs (doesn't need to lose a heart), but for only 100 trick points.

Hand 13
North dealt and starts the auction.
North passes.
East has 12 points in a 5-5 shape. He opens 1♦ – the higher-ranking of 2 5-card suits – planning to rebid in clubs.
West responds 1♥ and East rebids 2♣.
West must choose between repeating his hearts and raising the clubs.
For the sake of argument, the contract is 3♣ by East.
South will lead a small spade (the unbid suit).
Declarer's plan will be to clear trumps and then set up the red suits, cross-ruffing as necessary.
He should come to 12 tricks for 120 trick points.

Hand 14
East dealt and starts the auction.
East passes.
With 13 points and 6-4 shape South opens planning to rebid in hearts.
North bids 1♦ and South rebids 1♥.
North rebids 2♦ which will probably end the auction.
East leads ♠Q and West encourages with the 7.
Declarer will clear the trumps, and a finesse of the ♥J will take him to a total of 9 for a trick score of 60.

Hand 15
South dealt and starts the auction.
West has 13 points and 5-4 shape so opens 1♣ planning to rebid in spades.
East responds 1♥, West rebids 1♠, and East rebids some number of hearts.
Play the contract in 3♥ by East.
South should lead ♦5 (the unbid suit).
Declarer can count 10 tricks, but he will lose 2 hearts and 2 diamonds first for a total of 9 and a trick score of 90.

Hand 16
West dealt and starts the auction.
West passes. North, with 5-4 shape and 15 points, opens 1♥ planning to rebid in clubs.
South responds 1♠, North rebids 2♣, and South bids some number of no trumps.
Play the contract in 2NT by South.
West leads ♥4.
Declarer will probably try to set up the spades first, playing to finesse the heart when the opportunity arises.
He should make 10 tricks losing just 2 spades and a heart for a trick-score of 130.

Hand 17
North dealt and will start the auction.
With 17 points and a 6-card suit he will open 1♥ planning to rebid in hearts.
South will respond 1♠ and North will rebid some number of hearts.
Play the contract in 2♥ by North on the lead of the ♠5.
Declarer will aim to clear trumps and take AK in both black suits.
Provided that he takes the first trick in hand he can also set up an 11th trick in clubs for a trick-score of 150.

Hand 18
East dealt and will start the auction.
With 11 points and 5-4 shape he will open 1♦ planning to rebid in clubs.
West will respond 1♥ and East will rebid 2♣.
With points to spare West will raise to 3♣.
Play the contract in 3♣ by East.
♦3 looks a promising lead - ♠A works better.
10 tricks are there for a trick-score of 80, but the defence can make life very difficult in the diamond suit.

Hand 19
South deals and starts the auction.
With 12 points and 5-4 shape South opens 1♦, North bids 1♥, South rebids 1♠.
and North bids some number of hearts or diamonds.
Play the contract in 2♥ by South.
West does not have a tempting lead - ♠5 or ♠8 looks best.
Declarer should clear trumps and then take his winners for the loss of just 1 diamond and 1 club.
Both diamonds and hearts make 11 tricks for trick-scores of 100 or 150 respectively.

Hand 20
West dealt and starts the auction.
With 13 points and a 6-card suit West opens 1♥ planning to rebid in hearts.
East bids 1♠ and West rebids 2♥.
East may or may not raise hearts (looks like a 6-2 fit). Play the contract in 2♥ by West.
♣5 is the likely lead although ♦A is also possible.
Declarer might try for a club ruff – over-ruffing with the ♥A, but might find himself without an entry to ♠K.
Better is to lead towards ♠K at the earliest opportunity, then clear trumps (taking the ♠K when on table) and set up the diamonds.
He should come to 10 tricks for a trick-score of 120.