Trial bids - Commentary

Hand 1

North opens 1♥, and South raises to 2♥.

Playing 'natural and shape-showing' trial bids North rebids 3♦ promising 17 points with usually a 4-card diamond suit and headed by a decent honour holding – in other words, a prospective source of tricks. For many partnerships it will also promise five hearts.

With 8 points facing 17 South raises to 4♥. The ♦K doesn't do any harm either.

NS can make 10 tricks in hearts.

EW can make 9 tricks in spades making 4♠ an excellent sacrifice, but they will be unlikely to get into the auction.

Hand 2

East opens 1♠ and West responds 2♠ (some would bid 3♠ based on losing trick count).

East rebids 2NT promising 17 or 18 points in a balanced hand, usually with just 4 spades.

With 9 points, 4 spades and a doubleton West raises to 4♠.

In practice EW make 12 tricks when the Kings lie right in both spades and diamonds, but 6S would not be a great contract.

Alternatively, no trumps make 11 tricks.

Board 3

South opens 1♣ and North raises to 2♣.

With 18 points South rebids 2♦, showing his strength and forcing, and in principle promising a no trump stop in the bid suit.

North could revert to clubs with his low point count, but his ♦Q has just improved and the clubs certainly suggest a source of tricks, and so a bid of 2♥ will show his stop without forcing the bidding past 2NT.

South might now take a punt at 3NT, but even if he opts for 2NT North should be tempted to raise.

Declarer can take 10 tricks off the top in no trumps, or 11 tricks in clubs.

Board 4

West opens 1♦ and East raises to 2♦.

It will be a brave South who finds a bid at this point, and West does not have enough to go again over a limited response.

EW can make 9 tricks.

In fact, NS can make 9 tricks in spades making 4♦ a good sacrifice, but not many NS pairs will find this contract.

Board 5

North opens 1♠, South raises to 2♠, and that may well end the auction.

NS make 9 tricks in spades.

If EW can find their way into the auctio0n they can make 8 tricks in hearts.

Trial bids - Commentary

Board 6

East opens 1♥, South does not quite have a take-out double, and West raises to 2♥.
North also does not quite have a suitable overcall.
If East now passes then South will come in with a take-out double and NS will find their spade fit.
Better is for East to make a pre-emptive raise to 3♥ based purely on the extra length.
It will be a brave NS pair who now come in to compete or to punish the contract.
In fact, NS can make 10 tricks in spades.
EW make only 7 in hearts, but two off if not doubled is an excellent sacrifice.

Board 7

South passes, West opens 1♥, and East responds 1♠.
West rebids 2♦ and East has a clear preference to 2♥.
EW make 9 tricks in hearts or 8 tricks in any other strain.

Board 8

West, North, and East each pass and South opens 1♥.
West might overcall 1♠, but for me the suit quality is inadequate. Alternatively, he might double or he might pass.
West will either bid, or show an invitational raise to, 3♥ (8 losing tricks or 11 points including shape).
If West spoke then East will bid 3♠, but in either case South will raise to 4♥.
NS make 10 tricks in hearts.
Rather surprisingly EW can be held to 7 tricks in spades.

Board 9

North opens 1♥, South responds 1NT and North forces to game with 3♣.
South bids either 3♥ or 4♥ and the final contract will be 4♥.
4♥ makes 10 tricks, as do 4♣ and 4♦.

Board 10

East opens 1♦ and West raises to 2♦.
With something in every suit East shows 17 or 18 points with 2NT which West raises to game.
No trumps make 10 tricks from the East hand or 9 tricks from the West hand.

Board 11

South opens 1♥ which North raises to 2♥.
With no future in sight South passes and 2♥ becomes the final contract.
NS can make 8 tricks in hearts or spades.
EW can make 8 tricks in clubs and so 3♣ is a good sacrifice.

Board 12

West opens 1♦, East responds 1♥ and West rebids 1♠ (note East prefers to bid a new suit rather than raise a minor).
East could now rebid 3♦ but 2NT feels like a better description of the hand. West will raise to 3NT.
EW can make 9 tricks in no trumps.
Diamonds make 10 tricks and spades make 9 tricks.

Trial bids - Commentary

Board 13

North opens 1♥ and South responds 2♥.

North should really pass now with only 16 points (including shape) or 6 losing tricks, but it would not be unreasonable to be tempted into a trial bid of 3♣. If he is tempted then South will raise to 4♥ with his maximum.

In fact NS make only 9 tricks in hearts when the hearts lie badly, but it is not an unreasonable contract.

Board 14

East opens 1♠ and West raises to 2♠.

East might be tempted to a trial bid of 3♣ but with only 7 points in a shapeless hand West should decline the invitation with 3♠.

With 3 immediate heart losers and both black honours lying wrong declarer will be held to 8 tricks, but 3♠ may well make on another day.

Board 15

South passes, West opens 1♣ and North passes (rather reluctantly).

East responds 1♠ and West rebids 3♣.

East will be tempted but pass is the wise choice.

EW make 9 tricks in clubs. Meanwhile NS can make 8 tricks in diamonds.

Board 16

West, North and East each pass.

South opens 1♠ and North raises to 2♠.

With only 4 spades in a balanced hand South rebids 2NT, and with 4 spades and 8 points north should jump to 4♠.

Spades make ten tricks and no trumps make 9 tricks.

Board 17

North opens 1♥ and South raises to 2♥.

With only four hearts in a balanced hand North jumps to 3NT and with four hearts South corrects to 4♥.

4♥ makes 10 tricks – 3NT makes 9 tricks.

Board 18

East opens 1♦ and West must choose between 2♦ and 1NT.

Over 2♦ East is a point short for a trial bid and should pass.

Over 1NT East should probably also pass – note that West has denied 4 hearts with his first response.

EW can make 3♦, but they cannot make a no trump contract.

Meanwhile NS can make 8 tricks in spades or 7 tricks in no trumps.