


Matters Arising 103

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal Online 31 Oct - 4 Nov

Forced Bravery


One of the simple facts of bridge play is that if you are missing an odd number of cards in a suit, any particular missing card in that suit is more like to be in the long hand.

Tuesday's board 16 presented East with potentially two problems. Firstly what if anything should they bid after partner's 3D pre-empt, and if they do bid how should they play the resulting contract.

| | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|
| 9 4 |  | K Q 7 5 3 2 |
| 10 9 7 | | K 2 |
| A K J 8 7 6 2 | | 3 |
| 6 | | A Q J 4 |

On the bidding front I'd be choosing between pass and 3S, with the former favourite. 5D is surely optimistic even though as a red hand partner's pre-empt shouldn't be the world's worst. As for 3NT, are we really expecting partner to be AKQxxxx in diamonds, and if not how are we expecting to make 9 tricks?

Two Easts were braver than I and tried 3NT, which leads us back to where we came in. Missing 5 diamonds the Q is more likely to be in the long hand, so a finesse is called for. Yes, if it fails you make no diamond tricks, but after the heart lead it is fairly obvious that unless the diamonds run the contract is doomed anyway. Given that you aren't expecting everyone else to have bid 3NT going down will be bad, no matter how close you get. You should feel yourself forced to be brave and take the finesse.

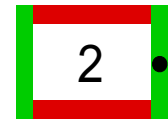
| | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|
| | J 10 6 | |
| | A Q 8 | |
| | 9 4 | |
| | 10 9 7 5 2 | |
| 9 4 |  | K Q 7 5 3 2 |
| 10 9 7 | | K 2 |
| A K J 8 7 6 2 | | 3 |
| 6 | | A Q J 4 |
| | | A 8 |
| | J 6 5 4 3 | |
| | Q 10 5 | |
| | K 8 3 | |

On the night with Qxx outside the finesse brings home the bacon for a good score.

Under Attack

On Thursday South was confronted by the lead of 6S, assumed 4th best, to their 3NT contract. Plan the play.


Assuming clubs split 3-2 declarer has an easy run to 9 tricks, but being pairs they would like to take the diamond finesse for a possible overtrick. The obvious danger is that if this fails the defence may run several spade tricks. This is classic hold up play territory. Retain AS until the third round of the suit. Now if the diamond finesse fails East will only be able to lead spades if the suit was originally 4-4, in which case declarer will lose a total of 3 spades and AD, so will still make their 9 tricks.



9 8
K 8
A Q 4 3
Q 9 8 7 5
A J 5
A 9 4 2
8 6 2
A K 6

Note that had AQ diamonds been in the South hand then it would be acceptable to take the AS at trick one as Jx would be enough protection in the spade suit should a failed diamond finesse put West on lead. Indeed it would be right to do so as ducking would allow a spade return from East at trick 2 thereby removing the protection against further spades from West.

Thus ducking is not a matter of reflex habit but of considering who might get on lead and how to neutralise the danger if they should do so. With AQ D on table it is East who might get on lead with a failed finesse, so we duck to run them out of spades should there not be an even break. With AQ D in hand we rise at trick one so that the retained Jx are proof against a spade continuation from West should they gain the lead.

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------|
| | 9 8 | |
| | K 8 | |
| | A Q 4 3 | |
| | Q 9 8 7 5 | |
| Q 10 7 6 4 2 |  | K 3 |
| J 3 | | Q 10 7 6 5 |
| 10 7 | | K J 9 5 |
| J 10 2 | | 4 3 |
| | | A J 5 |
| | A 9 4 2 | |
| | 8 6 2 | |
| | A K 6 | |

In practice grabbing the AS at trick 1 and trying the diamond finesse cost the contract.

Improvements

7 5
A J 9 8 4
9 3
A K J 5



A K Q J 9 8 4 3
Q 2
6
10 3

With 8 spades plus AK C and AH South's 4S contract on Tuesday was never going to be a problem. The defence started with 2 rounds of diamonds, the second of which declarer naturally ruffed, so the aim became making 12 tricks.

The only possible second loser is in hearts, leading half the field to draw trumps in 2 rounds and take the heart finesse. Success or failure for them in the hunt for a second overtrick depended on the location of KH.

My readers will have noticed that there is also a finesse position in the club suit - they're like that - and a successful finesse there could also provide a resting place for the losing heart. Taking the club finesse appears as good as but no better than taking the heart one. Perhaps we can hunt for a clue as to which to take. We will lose the lead at most once, so only need to retain 1 trump in order to regain the lead should that happen. Thus before deciding which finesse to take we run all bar one of the trumps reaching a position of

-- A J -- A K J
opposite
4 Q 2 -- 10 3

Watching the opposition discards may well hint as to which finesse to try at this point.

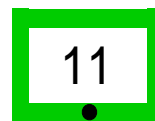
There is though another possibility. Missing seven clubs if the Queen is in the shorter hand it will fall if we play AC, KC and ruff the 5 so that the J becomes a resting place for the 2H. Further we can try this first, and if it fails fall back on the heart finesse thereby giving ourselves two chances. That must be an improvement.

On this line we need two trumps, one to ruff the third club and one in case of need to regain the lead after a failed heart finesse. Playing off the other trumps first leads to

-- A J -- A K J 5
opposite
8 4 Q 2 -- 10 3

Now we play off the top club honours and ruff a third, and if the Q refuses to tumble resort to the heart finesse. Playing off the superfluous trumps first forces discards. Although the defence have plenty of useless diamonds it is amazing how often they like to retain one or two of these, and East may throw a club from Qxxx in the mistaken believe that they still have the clubs stopped.

7 5
A J 9 8 4
9 3
A K J 5
2
7 6 5 3
K Q 10 8 5 2
Q 8
10 6
K 10
A J 7 4
9 7 6 4 2
A K Q J 9 8 4 3
Q 2
6
10 3



In practice the KH was wrong and the QC doubleton onside so both a club finesse and the last line I have given above worked.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (6½ tables): Chris Banks & Mike Ollerton

Tuesday F2F (4½ tables): Debbie & Roger Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (8½ tables, Mitchell):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Dudley Hargreaves & Andrew Smith

Thursday (6½ tables): Philip Hoyle & Bob Stow

Total 26 tables for the week.

Piling up the master points in October were

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|----|
| Mondays: | Chris Banks | 40 |
| | Charlotte Casson | 25 |
| | Steve Douglas & Ken Orford | 24 |
| Tuesdays F2F: | Margaret & Dennis Pook | 36 |
| | Debbie & Roger Wilkinson | 36 |
| | David Harris | 24 |
| Tuesdays BBO: | Amanda Etherington | 87 |
| | & Martyn Harris | |
| | Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell | 85 |
| | Ray & Irene Gregory | 44 |
| | Janet & David Owen | 36 |
| | Sue Chapman | 33 |
| | & Vanessa Cordwell | |
| Thursdays: | Ray & Irene Gregory | 90 |
| | Martyn Harris | 89 |
| | Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell | 62 |
| | Alan Wearmouth | 54 |
| | Andrew Smith | 39 |
| | & Dudley Hargreaves | |

I welcome any comments or queries sent me at martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk though they may be used in future issues should I choose to produce such. Or they may not. You have been warned.

NB, I do try replying to mails raising a specific point, so if I seem to ignore you do check your spam folder after a day or three.

Martyn Harris
spadeilike on BBO