

## Matters Arising 106

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 21 - 25 Nov 2022

### Which Major?


Tuesday board 5 say a classic example of a choice between a 5-3 and 4-4 fit in a major. As is often the case, particularly in higher level contracts, the 4-4 fit produced an extra trick.

10 7 5 3 Q 4 2 A Q 2 A 10 9		K Q J 2 A K J 9 7 J 8 3 2
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Played in spades by West declarer wins the club lead and knocks out the AS. The defence can cash one club, but declarer can now ignore the diamond finesse, discarding the Q and 2 on the long hearts after completing the drawing of trumps. Declarer's third club and dummy's second diamond both get ruffed so that effectively 4 trump tricks are made, two natural ones and two ruffs.

Played in hearts, presumably by East, there are only ever three spade tricks, so a favourable lie of the KD or a friendly defence is needed to equal the trick haul in the spade contract.

A 5-3 fit may prove more robust in the face of a bad trump split, but at pairs the greater likelihood of a 3-2 split means that the 4-4 fit is to be preferred whilst at teams the potential extra trick will be crucial if it is the difference between making or failing the contract.

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

With the KD offside, and South having a natural club lead against 4H, this contract should be restricted to 10 tricks.

### Timing

A 9 A J 7 5 4 A K 8 4 3 4		Q J 7 K 10 Q J 6 A 9 8 3 2
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Imagine that you are West playing in 5D on this board from Thursday. A spade lead immediately relieves you of any worries about a loser there. When and how do you tackle the heart suit?

When as here we can envisage at least some others playing in NT, overtricks can be vital. One overtrick (420) will beat those achieving 3NT=, whilst two overtricks (440) will beat those recording 3NT+1.


There is a 2-way finesse in hearts against the Q, so if the suit is 3-3 and you correctly guess the location of the Q you have no heart loser and will make the lot. However the enemy were silent throughout the auction and give no hints in the play as to the QH's hiding place, so the question is "How good is your guessing?"

Ignore guessing, there is a good chance of 13 tricks if hearts 3-3 regardless of the location of the Queen.

Try this:

Win trick one with whatever spade you are allowed to.


Now play off the Q and K of trumps. Switch to hearts, playing to the K, back to the A and ruffing the 5. If hearts are 3-3, or indeed 4-2 with a doubleton Q, your suit will now run after returning to hand with a club ruff and drawing the last trump with the A.

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

A good guess in hearts together with the friendly lie of KS allows 7NT to make, but this is not a recommended contract. In practice those in NT were limited to ten tricks, so the 13th trick in diamonds would score well.

## Mixed Fortunes

On Monday West found themselves in a variety of spade contracts on hand 8 after East had opened 1H.


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

A common lead was the QH, which has a horrible singleton feel about it. Still, there can be no prizes for ducking, so up goes the K, covered by the A, with a small heart returned. Declarer is pleasantly surprised when North follows suit.

Now what?

Tackle trumps is the obvious answer. Ideally you don't want North on lead as a diamond switch from them could be uncomfortable. Hence trumps are played from the top. If North has at least Qxx there is nothing you can do to stop them winning a trick, but otherwise playing the trumps from the top will keep North off lead and limit your possible losers to the AH, QS and AD since South cannot successfully attack diamonds to gain 2 tricks there. Hence playing this way allows you to throw one or even both diamonds on the long hearts whenever North lacks Qxx or more trumps, and is thus a route to 10+ tricks.

Elsewhere North started with 5D giving declarer the unwelcome choice of rising with the K hoping the A is North, or playing small hoping that South will rise unnecessarily with the A when something smaller would hold. The King seems the better bet, but this loses to the Ace and North wins the diamond continuation. Now comes a club, won on table by the Ace. With at least one inescapable loser in hearts declarer cannot afford to lose a trump. Missing five the Q is more likely to be in the long hand, so a finesse is the preferred play.

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

Those facing the QH lead and taking the suggested line find that the QS drops doubleton from North. Now both

of declarer's diamonds disappear on hearts and all 13 tricks are made - 7 spades, 5 hearts and AC.

Those facing a diamond lead naturally finessed in trumps, and when this lost had to guess the hearts correctly in order to escape just one down. What a difference a lead makes!

There is a small hint that QS is offside in the second line in that it seems natural for North to switch to a trump to prevent a diamond ruff on table rather than to a club. Whether that is a strong enough hint to persuade declarer to play for the drop in trumps is debatable as some defenders abhor leading trumps.

Lastly it is worth pointing out that on th lead of 5D if dummy plays small South should not play the Ace. The 5D is clearly fourth best, so North can have at most five in the suit as there is only one lower card (the 2) that South cannot see. Thus declarer must have at least two diamonds so that rising with the A cannot gain.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7½ tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris

Tuesday F2F (3½ tables):

Sheila Wilson & Chris Needham

Tuesday BBO (7½ tables):

Babs Matthews & Felicity Kay

Thursday (8½ tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 27 tables for the week.

I welcome any comments or queries sent me at [martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk](mailto: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