

Matters Arising 107

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 28 Nov - 2 Dec 2022

Easy or Hard

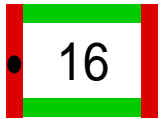
10
K J 10 7 6
A K J 10 8
A J



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

Tuesday's board 16 gave North-South slam opportunities. Imagine playing the hand in 6C on a spade lead. East wins with the A and switches to a trump to cut down on ruffing chances. West follows as you let this run to table. Now cash the other club honour in dummy, play a heart to A and complete the drawing of trumps. QH next, then diamond to table and you would be the proud possessor of 6 club tricks, 5 heart ones and 2 in diamonds were it not for the fact that the defence took the first trick. Still 12 tricks will do. The play was so straightforward that the hand seems of no interest in the play.

Appearances can be deceptive. Here is the full deal.


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

Suppose that instead of switching at trick 2 East continues with KS, forcing table to ruff with the idea of promoting their 10C into a trick. Now make the contract double dummy ie with sight of all four hands.

Obviously as declarer you ruff on the table. Trying to emulate the easy line above you cash the other honour on the table and play a heart to A and lay down KC. West shows out, and now provided East declines to ruff any lead from the table the contract is doomed for declarer will eventually be forced to lead trumps, allowing East to score their ten.

The key to success is making East ruff in front of us, which we can only do if we have the same number of trumps as them. Amazing though it may sound we have too many trumps, so we set about a play known as a *trump reduction* to shorten ours to the same length as East's.

After ruffing the spade, play A and ruff a diamond. Back via a trump to table to ruff another diamond. Now KC, discarding a heart say, gives us the bad news about the trump break, with the position reduced to

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

Now comes AH and then QH overtaken on table, followed by further red suit winners. East can resist ruffing until trick 12 if they wish, but when eventually they do ruff declarer over-ruffs and can claim. The trump reduction has in effect enabled declarer to take a finesse in trumps by leading a side-suit from the table.

Many players are very reluctant to lead cards they know the opponents can ruff, but here by continuing with a top spade at trick rather than switching two East transforms the contract from trivial to distinctly difficult.

Those wanting more out of the hand can also amuse themselves by considering the double dummy play of 6H by North on the lead of a top spade followed by a trump switch.

Weak and Flat

We all know that a weak no trump opening shows a balanced hand with 12 to 14 points, but that doesn't mean that all balanced 12 to 14 counts have to be opened 1NT.



6 4 3
A Q 8 7
7 2
A Q 7 4

could be a very unpleasant experience, being red and wide open in two suits on 5, and having little to help generate tricks beyond the three Aces on 6.

Thursday saw consecutive boards on which South held unattractive 12 counts. On both boards five Souths elected to open 1NT and one to pass, though it wasn't the same South who passed both hands.

The problem with both hands is that 1NT passed out




A 9 3 2
4 3
A 5 4
A 9 6 5

I confess to being the 7th South, and opened both hands 1C. As with any opening bid it pays to look ahead rather than simply choosing a bid that seems to fit the hand and leave worrying about the future until it arrives. The key question is always *can partner's response embarrass me?*

On 5 I can rebid 1H over 1D, raise 1H to 2, and pass 1S since partner is a passed hand. Were partner not passed then in order to open 1C I would need to be prepared to raise 1S to 2S.

On 6 a red suit response draws a 1S rebid, and a 1S response is raised. As with hand 5 NT responses, raises and jump responses don't cause problems.


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

At our table with the auction starting 1C – 1D – 3C East-West had a choice between defending 3C, which makes, or bidding on and going down. They chose the latter.

At the tables where 1NT was selected as the opening bid those left in the contract did well, making more than the 7 tricks nominally available, but where East-West

competed to reach 2S North-South scored badly.

The one initial pass was rewarded when the East-West bidding naturally started 1D – 1H – 1S – 3S, which turns out to be too high.

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


On the night West overcalled my 1C with 1H and my partner's negative double uncovered the spade for us. Not that we were the only ones in spades, for several Norths used Stayman in response to a 1NT opening, with intent to pass any response. Yes partner may be 3–3–2–5 in which case playing in 2D will be a disappointment, but the chance of finding a major fit or at least having a playable diamond contract makes the action sensible. Playing in 1NT proved to be a struggle with the two pairs doing so getting the bottom two scores on the boards.

Where South passed West opened 1H and repeated the suit when partner replied 1NT. Whilst we may have to repeat a 5 card suit when partner responds in a new suit, over a 1NT response it is best to reserve this rebid for hands with a 6 card suit. 1NT by East would surely have made for a top, 2H didn't.

The overall message of the two hands is that there is no right way of dealing with bad 12 counts, but as long as you can cope with whatever partner replies 1C is an option as well as 1NT and Pass, and gets you in the auction without the risk of being left in an unpleasant NT contract.

Simple Signals

Tuesday's board 7 was played in 4H by North at every table. Five tables saw the lead of the singleton diamond, four declarers finessed and of these four three still made the contract.

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

After winning trick one with KD, what should West do next? The big hope is that the 7D lead was indeed singleton, so return a diamond. If partner can ruff they will want to know how to get back to West's hand for another ruff. Lead 10D - a high card asking partner to lead a high suit back which in this case must mean spades. Returning the 4D, being a low card, would ask for a low suit back. Clubs.

East wins and dutifully returns a spade to West's Ace. Some defences won the first three tricks but still allowed the contract to make by continuing spades rather than leading a third diamond to trick 4.

Perhaps they are fearful that North had 5 hearts, so East has no trumps left.

Suppose North does indeed have 5 hearts together with the 3 diamonds we know for certain they started with. Then they have 5 black cards. Working through the possibilities you will discover there is no division of the black cards in North's hand which would enable East's spade winner should they have one to disappear. The spade can wait, the diamond ruff if available cannot.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (6½ tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris

Tuesday F2F (4½ tables):

Helen Finch & Moira Williams

Tuesday BBO (6½ tables): Roger & Catherine Preston

Thursday (7½ tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 25 tables for the week.

Piling up the master points in November were

Mondays:	Mike Howse & Martyn Harris	63
	Tim Harrison & Richard Brazier	55
	Russell White & Jeremy Harris	49
Tuesdays F2F:	Debbie & Roger Wilkinson	60
	Helen Finch & Moira Williams	36
	Bob Boyd & Dorothy Bayliss	24
	Sheila Wilson & Chris Needham	24
Tuesdays BBO:	Hilary Parker & Gay Turner	69
	Janet & David Owen	60
	Pat Davies & Ina Gray	60
	Babs Matthews & Felicity Kay	54
	Amanda Etherington	54
	& Martyn Harris	
Thursdays:	Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell	70
	Martyn Harris	70
	Alan Wearmouth	60
	Ray & Irene Gregory	54
	Bob Stow & Philip Hoyle	42

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