

Matters Arising 109

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 12 - 16 Dec 2022

Reading The Defence

10 9 3	14	K Q 7 6
J 6		Q 9 7
9 5 3		A K Q 2
Q 9 7 6 2		A J

East happily opened 2NT on Thursday's board 14, but the hoped for excitement never materialised as everyone else passed. Dummy was hardly a thing of great beauty, but at least the opening lead of the 4S was welcome. Table's 9 was covered by the Ace from North, who switched to the 3H. South won with the King, cashed the Ace on which North contributed the 2, and led a third round inevitably won by declarer, with North following. Now what?

Declarer has one trick so far and can count at least 2 more in spades, 3 in diamonds plus AC. If either spades or diamonds break 3-3 that will be the eighth trick. It is of course possible to set up another trick in clubs by playing off the A and J, but there should be no way of getting to the Q later to enjoy it. Time to start testing for favourable breaks.

South plays a black card on the third diamond, so no luck there, and North shows out on the first spade honour. In truth North discarding is no surprise, for even the weakest players realise that defence is a partnership game, and reading partner's low spade lead as interest in the suit would surely have returned one at trick two had they possessed another spade.

Declarer now has 5 tricks under their belt, and is looking at

10	14	Q 7
--		--
--		2
Q 9 7 6		A J

North is known to have the boss diamond and South the protected JS. How does declarer set about securing 3 more tricks?

Earlier North led 3H, then played the 2, and followed to the third round of the suit. This play is consistent with North starting with 5 hearts, so South is out of the suit. Consequently declarer can continue with Q and another spade, deliberately losing the lead to South. Even if South has retained their 5th spade and cash it declarer simply discards their losing 2D. Having run out of other suits South must now lead clubs around to declarer's AJ,

which with the help of dummy's Q ensures 2 tricks in the suit. This is an example of an endplay - forcing the enemy to lead a card to your advantage.

This endplay allows the contract to make through 2 spades, a heart, three diamonds and two clubs.

	A	
	10 8 5 3 2	
	10 8 6 4	
	K 8 5	
10 9 3	14	K Q 7 6
J 6		Q 9 7
9 5 3		A K Q 2
Q 9 7 6 2		A J
	J 8 5 4 2	
	A K 4	
	J 7	
	10 4 3	


Normal Auction

	A J 8 3	
	A 10 9 5 2	
	J 9 8 4	
	--	
Q 10 4 2	1	K 9 7
K J 8		Q 6 4
6 5 2		K 10 3
A 10 4		K J 5 2
	6 5	
	7 3	
	A Q 7	
	Q 9 8 7 6 3	

Thursday started with a hand demanding the bread and butter North-South auction of 1H - 1NT - 2D - 2H, the final 2H being the so-called false preference.

Those playing in 2H secured a 75% score, with other contracts being reached partly through a reluctance of some Norths to open, partly through South not giving false preference, partly through North rebidding 2S rather than 2D and so pushing the bidding to the 3 level, and partly through East not spotting the pass card - the North-South top coming when East stuck their oar in.


Echo?

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

Eight pairs at Monday's party found themselves in 3NT on a heart lead from North. Ideas?

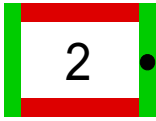
There are 4 tricks in clubs and 2 in hearts, so spades and diamonds need to produce 3 between them. Meanwhile heart continuations every time the lead is lost will rapidly result in the loss of several heart tricks. Ideally declarer needs to set up enough tricks whilst losing the lead just once, and for that we need one of the defenders to have started with Ax in diamonds.

Taking the lead as a hint that North is long in hearts and so perhaps short in diamonds, lead a diamond towards the K, and if this holds duck a diamond on the next trick, hoping to force North to use their Ace on small cards. The hint may of course be wrong since apart from anything else both defenders could hold at least 4 hearts, but what else is there to go on?

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

It's our lucky day. When North wins the second diamond with their Ace the Queen comes to the top and will clear the suit, allowing declarer to score 4 diamonds for a total of 10 tricks.

K 10 8 2
10
Q 10 7
A K Q J 6



Fast forward to Tuesday and it is South playing in NT on a heart lead. Indeed at two tables West had opened 1H third in hand, whilst at two of the other three tables West joined in the auction later. This time the trick count goes 2 in hearts and probably 5 in clubs.

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

Given time it is easy to set up one in diamonds and with rather more effort one in spades as the enemy only have 2 cards bigger than the K, J, 10

available to declarer in that suit. Again we are fearful of continued heart attacks.

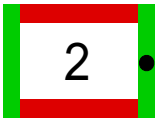
West's activity in the auction suggests the AD is more likely there than East, whilst dummy's 10D creates a finesse opportunity should we wish to play West for the J. Nevertheless there does seem to more than a hint of echo of Monday's board 2.

The 10H has to be played at trick one, and we are somewhat surprised when East produces the King, unless playing at the one table where West was silent. At the other tables though declarer should now be expecting West to hold all the other missing cards of note. Does JD fit into that category?

There is little point in ducking the KH since if West has the long hearts and the missing high cards. East won't be getting in later anyway. Running the clubs first would be nice, if only to induce some discards from the defence. Unfortunately we would then be in the wrong hand to lead through West's supposed AD.

Thus AH at trick one is followed by a small diamond. Declining the opportunity to finesse sees the 9 drop from East under the Q. Interesting. We can now afford to lead the 10D. East produces the J, covered by the K. If West produces the A we can get back to hand by overtaking the 7D even if West refuses to continue hearts. Notice that if the 10D was still on table this would block the suit, though on a heart continuation we could discard it to get out of the way of our 8. Suddenly declarer has 4 diamond, 5 club and 2 heart tricks.


If West can and does hold off the AD, declarer simply puts them in with a third round. If West now continues hearts declarer is back on course for 11 tricks, if they restrict play to black suits declarer will eventually pick up at least one spade trick to add to their heart, 2 diamond and 5 club tricks.

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

On the night most declarers made only 8 tricks, and this wasn't due to their playing West for the 10D.


Good Intermediates

Nine tables on Monday saw East declare in 2NT on board 18, probably after interference from South, but only 4 saw an overtrick after a small heart lead.

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


The hands are jam-packed with 10s 9s and even 8s, the so called good intermediates that make it difficult for the defence to make progress.

The heart lead runs to the 10, and declarer immediately returns the J. South produces an honour and declarer calls for the A. Next comes a diamond to the 7. South wins and switches to a club, but declarer is in control, being able to knock out the remaining heart honour to secure 3 hearts to go with three diamonds and three top winners in the black suits. An overtrick without breaking sweat.

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

South can try to be awkward by holding off with the AD, but as long as declarer takes care to win the third diamond on the table they can still knock out the heart honour and retain the KC as entry to the established heart winner.


A Little Helps

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

Thursday's board 4 featured a disappointing dummy as West went in search of tricks in a heart contract. A diamond was led to South's A, with declarer ruffing the return. It would be nice to pick up 5 spade tricks, with a successful finesse being a better bet than dropping the Q

through leading spades from the top. Is there any prospect of reaching dummy to try the finesse?

We certainly don't want to risk a spade ruff, so getting rid of trumps comes first. Missing 4 there is a chance that they are 2-2, in which case we can enter dummy on a third round by overtaking the 6H, provided of course we looked ahead and didn't use up the 6 at trick 2.

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

With trumps 2-2 and QS outside declarer need only lose 3 aces. The little that helped on this hand was 7H, aided by the slightly smaller 6.

Around The Club

In a week of sub-zero evening temperatures the Christmas party went ahead but Tuesdays f2f was cancelled, whilst the f2f teams and Ellis cup finals that were due to be played on Thursday were postponed until the teams night in January. An extra BBO pairs session was played on Thursday for the benefit of the addicts.

This weeks winners were

Monday (Christmas party, 17 tables):

Andrew Smith & Robert Boyd

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday (9 tables, Mitchell):

Dave Harrison & Gillian Whyte

Hilary Storey & Jackie Truelove

Total: 31½ tables for the week.

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)