

# Matters Arising 110

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 19 -23 Dec 2022

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (5 tables): Ken Orford & Steve Douglas

Tuesday F2F (3½ tables): Lesley & John Sellar

Tuesday BBO (7 tables): Ray & Irene Gregory


Thursday (7½ tables): John & Wendy Ellwood

Total 23 tables for the week.

## Choices

K 9 4 3    The seven Easts on Tuesday evening found  
A J 6 5    themselves non-vulnerable looking at the  
A 10 5 3    hand left on the last deal of the night.  
7        Between them they found four different  
ways of commencing proceedings. How would you  
start?

There are plenty of theories as to which suit to open when holding a 4-4-4-1 hand. The dominant one in Kendal is to open the suit below a red singleton and the middle suit with a black singleton. One thing I am convinced of is that with a weak hand, at most 14 points in this context, you should not open the suit above the singleton as you will have no sensible rebid if partner responds in the singleton suit. Imagine here opening 1D and hearing 2C from partner. Time to squirm, as you are not strong enough to rebid no trumps.

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

On the night no-one opened 1S, which is probably just as well as the auction would then probably have been 1S - 1NT - P or 1S - 1NT - 2D - ?

1NT is not destined to be a great success, whilst on the second auction West should give false preference to 2S, another far from ideal contract.

1H was the majority choice, and it seems that if West is an aficionado of the losing trick count they will count 9

losers, raise to 2H and watch partner play there. For those who rely heavily on point count the West hand is close to a raise to 3H, a contract which gives less margin for error in the play.

We sometimes choose to pass unattractive flat 12 counts in preference to opening 1NT, and it is reasonable to consider the same with 4-4-4-1 12 counts. One East did indeed pass, and see the rest of the table do the same. With a makeable heart contract available they had to rely for matchpoints on others getting in a mess. On another day there would be no makeable contract that their side could stop in after an opening from East, so the (lack of) action would score well effortlessly.

One East opened 1D, which should have been OK on the actual deal as West can bid hearts to allow their side to find the fit that way. However West elected to neglect their major and make a points showing 1NT response This turned out to be a bottom.

Finally one East opened 1NT and somehow managed to scramble 7 tricks. Not as good as a heart contract with its ruffing possibilities, but a plus score nevertheless.

Is it legal to open 1NT with a singleton. Yes, but if you have an agreement with your partner to do so you must announce "12 - 14, may contain a singleton", or whatever point count you use for 1NT. If you don't have such an agreement, but open with a singleton anyway then there is nothing to announce other than the range and it is still legal.

However agreements need not be explicit whereby you have discussed a situation with partner and agreed how to handle it. Instead you may have an implicit agreement brought about by practice, and if you know that partner is prone to open 1NT with a singleton then you have to include that in your announcement as the opponents are entitled to know the same as you about your partners bids.

## Heart Failure

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

On Thursday only 2 out of 6 declarers made ten tricks in hearts on board 4, usually after North had opened 1D, despite 4 of them having the incentive of being in game.

Assuming trumps are 2-1 we can see an obvious loser in each minor, so the contract hinges on not losing 2 spade tricks.

Consider first East declaring on the lead of 9S. North rises with the Ace and returns the suit. Finesse or King? Playing the King is to play South for Q 9 or Q 9 x x, and in the latter case declarer is hoping that South has no way of getting to their winning spade. But leading the 9 in neither case looks a natural choice. Thus the finesse should be taken. Fortunately it works.

A common defence started with AD from South followed by a switch to a small club on sight of dummy. North wins and returns the suit. Declarer wins, plays AH crashing the Q, and can retain the lead by using the J to draw the last trump. Now the remaining club honour provides a resting place for a small spade after which dummy is reached via a third trump.

With South having already produced the AD the chances are strongly in favour of North holding AS. Hence a spade is led with intent to rise with the King if North plays small, after which it will be duck a spade and cross-ruff the rest.

Perhaps the most demanding defence starts with AD from South and a diamond continuation to North's King and declarer's ruff. The defence has set up a diamond on table, but declarer has no useful discard. Moreover declarer wishes to lead black suits from the table, so in order to maximise trump entries they should ruff the second diamond with the 10. Failing to preserve trump entries may result in having to tackle spades from hand.

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

## Jump

West was in the hot seat on Monday's first J 6 board after East opened 1D. Usually I A Q J 7 4 3 like to make a simple change of suit A J 5 response even on decent hands as 8 3 partner's rebid is likely to be much more descriptive of strength than if I start with a jump response.

Nevertheless it is important to check that you won't be making problems for yourself later in the auction. Here we know that we want to be in game as soon as partner opens. If the auction were to start 1D - 1H - 2D it would now be difficult to find a forcing bid. 3D is certainly not forcing at this point, nor is 3H even though it is strongly invitational and promises 6 hearts. Making any bid above 3NT misses the best contract should it indeed be 3NT.

To avoid that potential problem West should make a game-forcing jump to 2H as their first bid.

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


East is half-charmed. Pleased to hear that West has game-going values, but fearful that these may be wasted in hearts opposite their void. However there is no difficulty in finding a 2S rebid. Because of partner's jump this is no longer a reverse showing extra values, but East will be taking control of this auction, so West's ignorance of the extra strength that is indeed present doesn't matter.

Next comes 3D from West, giving preference. There is no need to repeat the hearts as East can still show modest support later if they wish. Equally if East's diamonds are of no great consequence they can still bid 3NT with clubs also stopped.

It would now take a very pessimistic East not to get excited. They can see that if West has say QS, JD and KC a slam in diamonds is a good prospect. And although getting precisely those cards seems unlikely West's initial force holds promise of enough values that most potential losers can be catered for somehow.

4NT brings the welcome news of 2 Aces, so East knows they can discard their JC on AH. The bidding suggests that the only possible loser seems to be in spades should West hold say xxx in that suit. Thus 7 is a little risky, but 6D is expected to make. In practice as long as declarer tackles spades before taking more than one round of trumps they make all 13 tricks.

The full deal is on the next page.

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

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