Matters Arising 119

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 20 - 24 Feb 2023

Part-Score

Finding a clear line for declarer in a part-score contract is often harder than in a game contract, for with more losers allowed there are more variations to consider. Sometimes though finding a clear plan is not overly difficult.

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

On this hand from Tuesday North opened 1NT, but East declared in 2S on the lead of 6H. North won with the A and switched to JD, covered by Q, K and A. Now what?

East-West have a combined 21 count and South has already shown the KD and probably has the KH from North's play at trick 1. That accounts for 27 points. For their weak NT North has pretty well evrery missing card of significance. The spade finesse should work, the club one is doomed to failure.

Assuming spades are 3–2 declarer can count 5 trump tricks and 2 minor suit Aces. Where can the extra trick come from? A heart ruff on table seems the obvious answer, which also means not drawing trumps.

Thus trick 3 sees a heart from table, which loses to North's Q as they cover table's honour with an honour. North cashes two diamond tricks and then leads a trump. This runs to the 10. AC, C ruff, H ruff, C ruff, H ruff hoping for an overtrick if North has 4 hearts. But North over-ruffs with the QS. Now declarer only has boss trumps left and overall has lost just 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and the heart overruff.

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

Where East made a conventional overcall West declared in 2S. The lure of 4th best was too strong for some Norths. Guess what happened when declarer called for

the 3 from table. Holding 2 touching honours a 4th best lead may turn out best against NT, but with three the highest is almost always right, even when the 3rd one is a 9 rather than a true honour.

West has an interesting choice if their partner elects to use Landy, bidding 2C to show at least 5-4 in the majors. The temptation is to bid 2S as that is the better suit, but will a 4–3 fit play better than a 5–2 one? Perhaps 2D is best, throwing the ball back to East. As it happens spades is East's 5 card suit so the best contract is found either way, but on another day ... .

NT Lead

```
10 9 4
7 5
10 7 2
A Q 9 8 2
```

The last board on Thursday saw West having to select a lead following the auction 2NT – 3NT. Majority opinion favoured the 8C. This will all but certainly cost a trick initially as South is very likely to hold KC for their opening bid. Consequently the only justification is the belief that partner will get in later and continue the suit, whereas if you don't lead a club partner may fail to find the switch when they get in.

The 8C is an example of active defence, looking for tricks from the off. The alternative approach is to be passive - making sure you give declarer no undeserved tricks. The 10S is a useful passive lead here, leaving declarer to do all the work themselves.

```
                J 6 5
                A K 3
                8 6 3
                10 5 4 3
10 9 4                      Q 8 7 3 2
7 5          24             Q J 9 6 2
10 7 2                      5 4
A Q 9 8 2                   7
                A K
                10 8 4
                A K Q J 9
                K J 6
```

On a club lead declarer has an easy run to 10 tricks as East can't get in until all the significant action is over. On the 10S lead though declarer has only 9 tricks provided the defence find the right discards on the diamonds. A one trick difference can translate to a lot of match points at pairs.

Around The Club

Monday (4½ tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris
Tuesday BBO (7 tables):
       Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris
Tuesday F2F (4½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson
Thursday (7 tables): Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 23 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