

Matters Arising 121

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 6 -10 Mar 2023

Blockage

An inability or reluctance to look ahead can result in the loss of tricks due to a blockage. Consider this rather pleasant hand from Tuesday on which West can make at least 12 tricks on any distribution barring those containing a 5-0 club break.

A K J 10 A 5 A 7 A K 6 5 3		7 5 K Q J J 10 9 4 3 Q J 2
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A heart lead from North was normal, and West can count 5 club tricks barring the aforementioned bad break, 3 hearts, a diamond and 3 or 4 spades depending on the finesse in that suit. That is 12 or 13. Yet the six declarers made 13, 13, 12, 12, 11 and 10 tricks.

You may need 3 entries to dummy - two to take the spade finesse if it works, and one for the long heart after the Ace has gone. Win trick one with Ace, cross to a club and take an apparently successful spade finesse. Back to JC, repeat spade finesse, cross to dummy's two boss hearts, discarding a diamond and the West hand is good.

Yet too often trick one was won on the table and QC played - after all clubs are declarer's strong suit. Now it is too late. A spade finesse appears to work, but declarer can't now cash AH, cross to a club, cash a third heart and repeat the spade finesse in case North is lurking with QS, as declarer has opened the heart suit for them.

A K J 10 A 5 A 7 A K 6 5 3		8 6 3 2 10 8 6 2 Q 8 10 8 4 7 5 K Q J J 10 9 4 3 Q J 2 Q 9 4 9 7 4 3 K 6 5 2 9 7
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Just because you have lots of tricks it doesn't absolve you from planning the play. There is a clear danger of a heart blockage, which declarer can avert at trick one. Admittedly winning T1 on the table works if you tackle spades immediately, but getting the Ace out of harms way makes life easy.

Another Trick

A K Q 10 4 3 2 A 7 3 7 A 8		9 5 4 2 A 10 9 8 5 2 K 7 6
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Thursday's session started with a bang for West, with four playing in 4S and one in 3NT. On a heart lead the 3NT declarer made the 11 obvious tricks when spades weren't 4-0 offside, as did 3 of the 4 in spades as they started by drawing trumps.

However a suit by suit plan of the play from declarer's side shows them to have 2 heart losers, which won't disappear on a minor suit but one might get ruffed. Consequently winning AH at trick one and returning the suit is asked for. Win the continuation, which may be a trump to try to stop ruffs, ruff the third heart and then worry about drawing trumps.

A K Q 10 4 3 2 A 7 3 7 A 8		7 Q J 10 9 8 Q 6 4 J 5 3 2 9 5 4 2 A 10 9 8 5 2 K 7 6 J 8 6 K 6 5 K J 3 Q 10 9 4
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If the defence can overruff the heart you are no worse off than if you drew trumps, but as the layout shows, both defenders will follow to the third round of hearts. An easy extra overtrick worth plenty of match points on the day.

There was a sixth table at which the contract was 6S, played by East because their system demands a 2S response to an opening 2C when holding 3 controls as here (A=2, K=1).

This attracted a trump lead from South. When declarer later played A and another heart, South overtook their partner's winner with the King so as to lead another trump, leaving declarer with an inescapable heart loser.

In fact it is possible to make 6S on the trump lead - you might like to treat it as a double dummy problem.

This Week's Winners

Monday (6½ tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris

Tuesday BBO (6 tables): Ray & Irene Gregory

Tuesday F2F (6 tables): Helen Finch & Moira Williams

Thursday (6½ tables): Ina Gray & Jacky Truelove

Total 25 tables for the week.

Double Dummy Solution.

Declarer wins T1 on the table, crosses to hand with one of their minor winners and leads a heart.

If South plays small so does dummy and North is forced to win.

Else if South plays the King, dummy covers and another heart is led, which North is forced to take.

Either way, because North started with a singleton spade they cannot lead another one, so declarer gets their heart ruff in due course.

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