

Matters Arising 123


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

Easy 3NT

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

3NT by East made an unsurprising appearance on board 24's traveller on Tuesday, though some players preferred 4S by West on the basis that if AH is North West might only contribute 3 tricks in NT.

Three Souths opened with the 3D, with North rising with the A and returning the suit. Surprisingly more often than not declarer now went down by rising with the KD at T2. Inserting one of the minor honours assures two diamond tricks, to go with AK C, 2 tricks in hearts by force and 3 in spades by overtaking the J.

	8	
	9 6 5 3	
	A 7 5	
	Q J 8 7 5	
A K Q 6 4 2		J
K 7 4		Q J 2
9		K J 10 8
9 3 2		A K 10 6 4
	10 9 7 5 3	
	A 10 8	
	Q 6 4 3 2	
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Yes the QD is South as expected, but it is more important to set up an extra trick in the suit than to deny South a quick win with their Q.

With the AH South a brave/foolhardy declarer can make 10 tricks by cashing the JS before tackling hearts, but this is not recommended.

Take Advantage

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


On Tues 2 out of 3 declarers lost more tricks than necessary on a red suit lead against their heart contract. How would you have fared? Try the diamond lead first.

Those spades look nice, and on a 2-2 trump break we can see an easy 13 tricks – 6 hearts, 5 spades and 2 diamonds on the lead, with a diamond ruff in reserve should the 5th spade not win.

However after winning the first trick cheaply and tackling hearts South shows out on the second round. Leave North with their boss trump and start on spades. Provided this suit is no worse than 4-2 you will be able to discard your club on the third round, and then start throwing diamonds on further spades. If North ruffs in you quickly regain the lead, probably with a club ruff, ruff a diamond on table and play any remaining spades. In all a club and two diamonds disappear on spades, so with the help of the diamond lead you lose just one trick to the QH.

Those who can't bear to leave enemy trumps outstanding would play a third round of trumps after the 3-1 split is revealed, and promptly lose a club trick.

It is a common ploy to leave opponents with a master trump whilst you attempt to discard losers elsewhere.

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

On a heart lead the same idea still brings home 12 tricks since North can't prevent a diamond ruff after the spades have been played, no matter whether or how early they ruff in, so although there are only 2 diamond discards on spades there is still no loser in the suit.

Control

A 9 6
4
A K 3 2
A K Q 9 8

24

10 8 7 3 2
Q J 2
Q J 6
7 2

Back to Monday, and give yourself the task of making 10 tricks as South on a diamond lead in spades. Clearly you cannot afford to lose a heart and three trumps, so assume the trumps are 3-2.

As with hand 21 above we would love to shove winners, this time in the minors, down enemy throats. That way we can ditch our hearts.

Win in hand and play a trump at trick two, ducking from table. Win the diamond continuation in hand, play a trump to the Ace so that the enemy have just one trump left (the master one), and play clubs from the top. On the third one discard a heart. Even if the enemy can ruff you still have a trump on table to guard against heart leads, and with no enemy trumps now left you get a second heart discard on the fourth diamond.

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

The defence fares no better switching to hearts when in with the first trump. They can take their A, but you ruff the heart continuation, lay down AS and play 3 top clubs. As long as clubs are no worse than 4-2 you get your last heart away, not caring whether the enemy ruff with their last trump or not.

Ducking the first trump allows declarer to play two rounds whilst retaining control of the hand.

Simple Plan

A 7 5	23	K J 9 8 6 4
Q J 8 4		7
10 9 8 3		A Q 6
Q 8		K 10 3

The above hand on Monday caused considerable difficulty for the East players in spades, with only one of seven making ten tricks despite most receiving a harmless 5D lead.

From the losers point of view we see at most one in each suit, with the lead giving optimism that there may be none in diamonds. If there is a diamond loser we will have to hope for no trump loser.

For winners there are 5 or 6 in trumps, 1 or 2 in clubs, and probably 3 or 4 in diamonds. A minimum of 9. However a 4th diamond is likely to be difficult to get at if trumps are 3-1, and we'd prefer not to rely on trumps behaving. Thus the best place for a tenth trick is clubs, which we can score either by ruffing the third round on table, or by a successful finesse against the J. The latter should only be tried if an initial small club to the Q holds.

Plan: On trick one play the 8D to try to flush out an honour. Win as cheaply as possible and lead a small club towards the Q. If this loses to the A in the North hand and a diamond comes back you will have to rely on the finesse in diamonds. If however South rises with AC then you have 2 club tricks. Finally if QC holds then play another club to hand, finessing against the J. If North has the J the 10 forces out the A so that the K is a second trick in the suit, whilst if South has AJ C you get a second club trick by ruffing the K.

	10	
	A 9 6 3 2	
	K J 2	
	J 7 5 4	
A 7 5	23	K J 9 8 6 4
Q J 8 4		7
10 9 8 3		A Q 6
Q 8		K 10 3
	Q 3 2	
	K 10 5	
	7 5 4	
	A 9 6 2	

With both the Ace and Jack of clubs in their desired positions the second club trick is easily established.

Incidentally, if you had no concerns elsewhere how would you play the trump suit to ensure at most one loser in it? Answer later.

This Week's Winners

Monday (7 tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris,

Tuesday BBO (6½ tables):

Judy Rayner & Charlotte Casson

Tuesday F2F (4½ tables): Andrew Peill & Steve Barron

Thursday (7½ tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 25½ tables for the week.

Later

That spade suit:

A 7 5

K J 9 8 6 4

To guarantee at most 1 loser, lead small from the East hand and cover whatever South plays, rising with the Ace only if South shows out. If spades are 3-1 or 2-2 the A and K will subsequently clear the suit. If South shows out you will have a marked finesse against the Q, whilst if North is void you will have avoided losing two tricks to South.

The price for ensuring just one loser is that you will lose one trick when other lines avoid this. This is more likely to be a price worth paying at teams than pairs.

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