


Matters Arising 124

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 27 - 31 Mar 2023

Why Not 12?


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

3NT by West turned out to be a simple challenge for declarer on Tuesday's board 2, but being pairs overtricks matter. Imagine there was a heart lead.

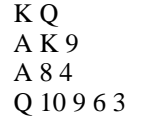
With three spade tricks, at least 2 in hearts, 3 in diamonds on a normal 3-2 break and at least 2 in clubs we have plenty of material. Winning trick one with the A over the K is a good start.

We'd prefer to play both hearts and clubs from table, but the clubs promise more gain, and with extra length pose less danger. Thus we cross to AD, noting the fall of QD from South, and lead 10C, ducking if South does not cover. Yes, the KC is more likely to win this trick than the 10, but playing the K condemns us to 2 losers in the suit unless North has the singleton Q. Ducking allows us the prospect of three tricks in the suit if South is Qx or Qxx.

The 10C draws the A from North. Another heart is won, and we cross to AS for another club finesse. The J holds and the K drops the Q on the next trick. Assuming North started with Jxxx in diamonds we can still get to table via the 10 to reach the last club, but we might as well play off the KD first. Christmas - South started with QJ doubleton in diamonds and we make 4 tricks in the suit. That's 3 spades, 3 hearts, 4 diamonds and 3 clubs. Pity we had to lose the AC otherwise it would have been 13 all told, but 12 will do nicely. In practice it would have done very nicely as no-one made more than 11.

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

Interference Works

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


All 7 tables saw North open 1C on Tuesday's hand 19, with 5 Easts electing to overcall 1S. Where East was silent North-South found it easy to reach game, but the 1S overcall chosen elsewhere caused sufficient problems for South that game was only reached at two of these tables.

South's problem is a classical one: too good to pass, not strong enough to introduce a new suit at the two level, and lacking the spade stop partner would expect from a 1NT response after the overcall.

Something has to give, and it seems to me that pass is the worst choice. In practice both 3NT and 4H make so either 1NT or 2H works. I think I'd err towards 2H since if partner has a (partial) spade stop I'd prefer the lead round to them. After all if partner doesn't like hearts then NT will figure highly in their thoughts.

South does have another option though, a negative double which in the auction 1C - 1S - X shows 4 hearts. Partner's natural rebid is 2NT and South continues with 3D. Often this will now be showing longer diamonds than hearts, but North can still afford 3H in case South has a fifth one. They do and 4H is reached. Without the fifth heart South would now bid 3NT.

The Art Of The Switch

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

The bidding was identical on all six tables for this board on Thursday, with North opening 1NT and South transferring out into spades. Every East led a diamond. The scene was set for cardplay to be decisive. Declarer made 10 tricks at four tables and 9 at one. How come they only made 7 at ours? I fear they were the victims of accurate defence.

Alan chose 10D, an honour from the top of a sequence, though in truth the 9 as second from rubbish would have worked just as well.

After winning with AD I switched to 6H, trying to indicate the lack of personal interest in the suit that a small card would suggest. Why the switch? Alan might have led from an interior sequence - K 10 9 x perhaps - but if so his K will be making later for on what do I fear a diamond discard from dummy? Certainly not on clubs whilst I have the A. It is possible that declarer has AKQx H and good enough trumps to draw Alan's before running his hearts, but that doesn't seem too likely. Moreover if Alan wins and continues the suit declarer will surely be expecting me to be out so ruff with the 9.

The switch works well with Alan winning with the Q and switching in turn to KC. Then comes a small club - I had encouraged on the K - and a club ruff. Next came the AH and the defence had 6 tricks whilst declarer was unable to do anything other than follow suit.


Where did KC come from? Dummy has 8 points, giving total resources of 20-22 to their side. Alan has 10 so knows I have 8-10, of which he has seen 4 in the form of AD. My lack of interest in hearts means I've little there, and declarer is known to Alan to have KD else I would have won trick one with it. Thus there seems an excellent chance that I hold either A or Q in clubs.

Often the defence should avoid continuously switching from one suit to another as opening new suits may well help declarer. Here however it is the failure to switch

that limits the defence's chances as declarer can make 5 trumps and 4 diamonds on a diamond continuation at trick 2. Defence is justifiably regarded as the hardest part of the game.

An Extra Chance


North opened 1S on this hand from Monday and often reached game. A top heart was the chosen lead, which held with West contributing the 2. Now what?

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

East has 16 points, can see another 11 on the table and is aware that North opened. Partner has little or less in the high card department. Moreover partner's 2H doesn't hold out hope for a ruff there.

Dummy is definitely a disappointment, particularly the KQ D which East had hope would be North. However possession of the Ace of trumps means East is confident of regaining the lead quickly if needed. This gives a glimmer of hope - if partner has a doubleton diamond we can give them a ruff.

East switches to the 8D at trick 2 which is won on table with partner playing the 6. Declarer tackles trumps and East wins immediately and cashes AD with partner now playing the 3. It looks like their original 6 was high encouraging, the only reason for which would be a doubleton. A third diamond is indeed ruffed by West, which proves to be all the defence can score as North has a singleton heart.

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

Had West not been able to signal interest in diamonds then East would continue with their other top heart when regaining the lead with AS, so the top heart never disappears as a trick. Possession of the AS gave East the perfect opportunity to combine the chances of the top hearts standing up and partner being doubleton in diamonds.

This Week's Winners

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

Tuesday BBO (7 tables):

Hilary Storey & Jacky Truelove

Tuesday F2F (4½ tables):

Robert Boyd & Dorothy Bayliss

Thursday (6 tables): Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 24½ 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