


Matters Arising 125

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 3 - 7 Apr 2023


Long Minor

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

What contract would you wish to declare on this deal from Tuesday after South opened 1H, and how would you get there?

On a heart lead you can count a heart and 6 clubs, so 3NT depends on the diamond finesse, which is likely to work after South's opening. Yes I want to be in 3NT.

Getting there should be straightforward as West has a simple 1NT overall of the heart opening. Even if you play a 16-18 1NT overcall rather than 15-17 still overcall 1NT. The 5 card suit and 10 9 backing a higher honour in both majors make it worth upgrading the hand if necessary. East can use Stayman to check for a spade fit before going to 3NT.


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

A small majority of pairs on the night languished in a club part-score either because West couldn't find the 1NT overcall that describes their hand better than pass, double or 2D, or because East was too concerned about their weaknesses in the red suits rather than the major contribution their clubs would make in NT. Yet from East's point of view their clubs will come to the party provided partner has a black Ace or if partner holds more clubs than the owner of the AC. Not a bad bet when partner has overcalled 1NT.

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

Rather dicier was this hand from Monday. West opens 1NT and East sees lots of tricks in NT if their partner holds the A. East's hand is ideal for those who use a 3 of a minor response to show about a 10 count with a good 6 card suit missing one of the top honours, asking partner to bid 3NT if they can fill the gap or to pass otherwise.

West is aware that the partnership may be wide open in a black suit, but the lure of 9 red tricks is strong. 3NT.

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

Declarer romps home on the lead of the 4th best heart, though the defence could take the first 6 tricks if a black card is led.

Back to Tuesday and hand 5 on which the hand with opening values held the long minor.

K 10 3	South held a flat 11 count and on
A 9	hearing partner's opening bid of 1D
A Q 10 9 7 6 2	was probably thinking <i>show my</i>
3	<i>hearts, then bid 2NT.</i>


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East's 2C overall was a nuisance, but shouldn't derail proceedings. South has options. My preference is for a negative double which in this auction I take to promise at least 4-3 in the majors. Those for whom it shows 4-4 will have to choose between 2H and 2NT, the former perhaps hinting of a 5 card suit and the latter hiding the hearts entirely.

After a double partner rebids diamonds, South bids 2NT and North raises to 3. Over 2H North probably bids 3D

though might try 3C asking for a club stop, whilst over 2NT North raises to 3 expecting their diamonds to be of considerable use. Their suit is not as solid as those in the previous examples but side entries are more certain.

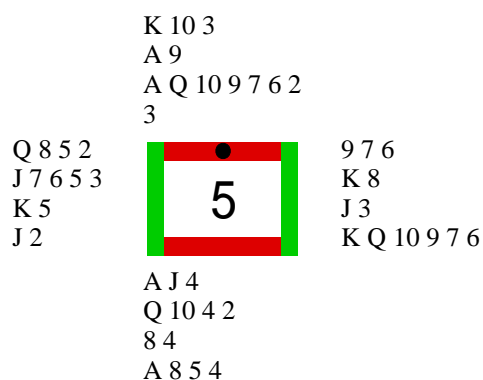
Thus in my book all roads lead to 3NT, but I'm like that if I can't play in 4 of a major.

West kicks off the defence with JC. Plans?

With 4 top tricks outside diamonds we only need 5 from partner's suit to make the contract. Moreover experience tells us that many players avoid these sort of 3NT contracts in favour of playing in the long minor, so it is not essential to grab every possible trick.

First duck a couple of rounds of clubs to break defensive communications. Now tackle diamonds. With communications broken we wish to keep East off lead if at all possible. So no finesse but simply play small to Ace, return to hand via a spade and lead the second diamond towards table. Losing to an onside King may look silly, but it is preferable to losing to a singleton offside King and having clubs run against you. Remember we don't need 7 diamond tricks to make the contract.

Note also that if West plays the K on the first round of diamonds we duck from dummy as playing the Ace would allow East in with their Jxx should West's King be singleton.



On the layout the dangerous diamond finesse works, and indeed permits 12 tricks to be won if the position of the QS is also correctly guessed. In practice though my suggested line brings in 10 tricks for a joint top.

This Week's Winners

Monday (8 tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris,

Tuesday BBO (5 tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Tuesday F2F (8 tables): Debbie & Roger Wilkinson

Thursday (3½ tables): Linda White & Jackie Stabler

Thursday's numbers were probably reduced by players in the Kendal v Keswick match that afternoon not wanting to play twice in a day.

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