

Matters Arising 129


being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 1 - 5 May 2023

Rebid

K Q J 10 9 3
A Q 8
8
A Q 6

Tuesday board 5. You open 1S and partner replies 1NT. Now what?

My choice: 4S. The spade is so good that even opposite a void it is likely to play for 1 loser. If my partner can produce either KH or KC then the contract may be no worse than depending on the finesse in the other suit. And whilst partner isn't forced to have either King, they ought to have a few points somewhere which might make up for it. eg AD and JH.

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

It is difficult to lose more than AS, AD, KC, but only 2 out of 6 pairs reached 4S. Perhaps those who rebid 3S though might be a little disappointed their partner couldn't find the fourth. The near maximum points for their 1NT response together with a couple of 10s is surely more important than having only a singleton spade. Thus not reaching game takes a partnership effort.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Russell White & Jeremy Harris

Tuesday F2F (6 tables):

Helen Finch & Moira Williams (NS)

Mary Simm & Brenda Richardson (EW)

Tuesday BBO (6 tables):


Richard Brazier & Martyn Harris

Thursday (6½ tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 25½ tables for the week.

Dreams of 11

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

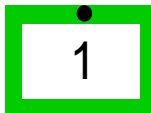
Thursday board 1, and as East you are in 4S. The opening lead of 5H is covered by the J, Q and K.

Thinks: *draw trumps gives 5 spades, 5 hearts and AD. 11 tricks in all, no sweat.*

However these dreams were shattered when North showed out on the second trump. Over to you.

Four spades, five hearts and AD still comes to ten tricks, yet not all declarers made 10 from this point.

Without panic inducing pressure you should see that cash the third top trump, then the AH, followed by a fourth trump works (even if you don't get to play a fourth trump should South ruff the AH) as you have unblocked the hearts and preserved AD as entry to table whilst extracting all the enemy teeth.

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

When in the defence can take a couple of clubs before declarer enters dummy with AD and discards all their small diamonds on dummy's hearts.

This hand is also an exercise in reading the lead for North. If the 5H is 4th best declarer has a singleton and playing the Q only gains if partner has underled the AK, which may be credible against a NT contract but surely not a suit one as the third round of defenders' good side-suits tend to get ruffed. MUD means the position is as was. A slightly unusual lead from Kxx would justify playing the Q, but duck is surely with the odds.

Just one North found the duck which left declarer with no chance.

Ruffing Puzzle

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

The last hand on Thursday saw all tables in 4H, usually by West but sometimes by East. What are your thoughts when you see a diamond lead?

The first reaction is to test the idea of a cross-ruff. With only 2 side-suit tricks we would need 8 in trumps. We have 9 trumps, so not impossible, but if the defence get one over-ruff and lead a trump we would be down to 7 trump tricks for the trump that was overruffed wouldn't score, and we'd also be forced to use 2 trumps in one trick when they lead them. This line seems possible but dangerous.

Suit establishment then. Look to set up the diamonds so that from East's point of view the only possible losers are 2 spades and QH. This needs diamonds 4-3, though might founder if trumps 4-0. Still seems preferable.

Ruff T1, play off two top trumps. Ruff a club, ruff a diamond, ruff a club. If all is well the diamonds now run and you make 11 or 10 tricks depending on whether the QH drops or not.

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

The QH does drop but the diamonds are 5-1. When South shows out on the 3rd diamond (The Ace), continue with K and another. There is still one trump left on table to reach the 6th diamond, so you lose just one diamond and two spades.

Wrong Odds

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

On Monday's board 1 East opened 1S and South overcalled 3 or even 4D. Judging from the results many Easts tried to drop the QS as this is the normal play when missing 4 cards.

Why is this play normal given that the chances of a 2-2 break are only 40% against the 3-1 break's 50%? Because the odds that matter are the ones that exist at the time you make the decision not those from before the start of play. Every card played changes the odds for we can discount the possibilities that required the card played to be in the other hand. We take the decision as to whether to finesse or not part way through the second trick in the suit. At that time the hand to play holds one more card than their partner who has already played, so there is slightly more room for the Q in the hand yet to play. We play for the drop.

On this hand though we have more information, namely that South has lots of diamonds. Let us assume that South has 6 diamonds, so North has 4. Win trick one, taking 1 diamond from each defender, and play K and another spade, with North following. North has 10 cards left, of which 3 are assumed to be diamonds. That leaves them with 7 unknown cards. South has 11 cards left of which 5 are assumed to be diamonds. Thus 6 unknown cards left. The odds are 7 to 6 in favour of North holding QS (or any other card outside of diamonds).

If South's bidding was sufficiently energetic that we can place them with 7 diamonds the odds on the spade finesse are now 8 to 5 in favour of North.

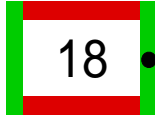
We see there are inferences from the bidding that the QS is North.

The above calculations do though ignore any inference that South must have QS to form part of their bid. You will have to decide for yourself whether that is a reasonable approach to take in this case.

In their book on card play technique Victor Mollo and Nico Gardener coined the phrase *an ounce of inference is worth a pound of percentage*. It is hard to disagree.

Poor Slam

A Q 10 7 2
A K Q 9 4
4 2
2



K J 5 3
2
A 10 9 6 5
Q 9 5

It is not unknown for dummy to come as a disappointment for declarer in any contract, and declarer then has to hunt for a line that gives a chance of success.

All tables played in spades on the hand left from Thursday's event. Your task as North is to find a line that might succeed in 6S against an innocuous lead such as a trump, and if you can see more than one such line, to select the best.

At first sight there is a loser in each minor, so how can we magic one of those away? Two clubs can disappear on KQ H. If we can discard the third one then we ruff 2C and lose just a diamond. Maybe J 10 H will tumble under our three honours and the 9H provides the necessary resting place for QC. Draw trumps in up to three rounds and play hearts from the top, keeping fingers crossed.

If you don't fancy playing for J 10 H to drop what other options are there? If hearts are 4-3 one ruff will set up the fifth heart. Now though we need trumps 2-2 for we intend to ruff both a heart to establish the suit and a club at the end after dummy's clubs have been discarded.

The choice then is J 10 H to drop in three with trumps no worse than 3-1, or hearts 4-3 with trumps 2-2.

I suspect you wouldn't want to do the corresponding probability calculations at the table, but which does your gut say is the better line?

Time for some numbers.

Missing 7 cards the chance of a 4-3 break is 62%, a 5-2 one 30%. In the 4-3 case there are 35 combinations of cards in the 3 card hand, of which 5 include the J 10. There are 21 possible doubletons in the 5-2 split of which just one helps us. Thus the probability that the J and 10 drop under our AKQ is

$$\frac{5}{35} \times 62\% + \frac{1}{21} \times 30\% \approx 10.5\%$$

But we also need trumps no worse than 3-1, which is a 90% chance. Overall chance is a little over 9%.

For hearts 4-3 and trumps 2-2 the probability is roughly 62% of 41% or about 25%.

(41% is the chance of the 2-2 break, but we often call it 40% as that is easy to remember alongside 50% for 3-1 and 10% 4-0.)

Thus playing for trumps 2-2 and hearts 4-3 is the better chance, and hopefully you have a gut that tells you so.

Now there is just the small task of implementing your choice, for there is a slight problem. If you draw two rounds of trumps, get good news, and then play hearts ruffing one you will have no way back to hand to play the last heart. The solution is to tackle hearts at trick 2, playing the A and then ruffing one. Back to hand via a trump and the hearts are ready to run.

A Q 10 7 2
A K Q 9 4
4 2
2

6 4
10 8 7 5
J 8
A 10 7 6 3



K J 5 3
2
A 10 9 6 5
Q 9 5

9 8
J 6 3
K Q 7 3
K J 8 4

Although the odds aren't good the better chance does work.

The hand plays essentially the same way on a diamond lead, whilst a small heart lead helps declarer. A club lead defeats the contract as the cards lie, for declarer's only chance would be for one hand to hold J 10 x in hearts so that 4 diamonds can be discarded from dummy.

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