

# Matters Arising 135

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 12 - 16 Jun 2023

## Ladder Finesse

In a double finesse you finesse against two cards at once. There are two varieties, with one shown right in which declarer (South) leads small towards table with intent to insert the J, thereby finessing against both the K and Q which are hoped to be West.

The other variety is a ladder finesse (my own name as far as I am aware), an example of which is shown left. Here South leads small with intent to insert the 10, simultaneously finessing against the K and J. Yet many players habitually tackle this combination by finessing the Q first, presumably on the basis that there is only one card that beats the Q as opposed to two that beat the 10.

Consider though the number of tricks that declarer makes in the suit after 3 rounds depending on which honours East holds on the assumption that win or lose the first trick, declarer will return to hand and try another finesse:

|      | finesse Q first  | finesse 10 first                                  |
|------|--|---|
| K J  | 1: 1st trick loses to K<br>2nd loses to J                                  | 1: 1st trick loses to J<br>2nd loses to K         |
| K    | 2: 1st trick loses to K<br>then finesse of 10 wins                         | 2: 1st trick loses to K<br>then A and Q win       |
| J    | 2: 1st trick wins,<br>then finesse of 10 loses                             | 2: 1st trick loses to J<br>then finesse of Q wins |
| none | 2: 1st trick wins, then<br>West splits their KJ so<br>only one more winner | 3: finesse of 10 wins,<br>then finesse of Q wins  |

We see that in most situations finessing the Q first will generate as many tricks as finessing the 10 first, except when West holds both missing honours when a successful finesse of the 10 can be followed by a successful finesse of the Q but not the other way round.

Consequently we normally only reject a ladder finesse if we both need only 2 tricks from the suit and to avoid losing the lead.

Here is a ladder finesse from Tuesday:  
 North is in 3NT and East leads 5S which runs to West's Q and declarer's A. Declarer can see that they can set up a third spade trick and 2 tricks in each of clubs and hearts along with up to 5 diamonds.

A 10  
 Q 8 5  
 A Q 10 9 4  
 J 7 6  
20

At trick 2 declarer tries finessing the QC. This loses, but they have now set up their second club trick.

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

West returns a club which runs to dummy's A, with East showing out. Now a diamond to the 9, which holds.

Next a heart to the J, which holds, and a diamond to the 10. Another winner, but East shows out. Now the 10S, which holds with West showing out.

Cross to dummy with AH, cash KS and take what is now the marked finesse in diamonds. With two more diamonds and JC to come declarer makes 12 tricks: 3, 2, 5, 2 respectively in S, H, D and C.

What happens if the ordinary finesse of the Q rather than the ladder finesse is taken in diamonds? The Q holds and declarer takes the heart finesse. A diamond from table and West contributes the K\*. Declarer wins and knocks out the JD. West returns a club so that declarer is now open in the suit. Hence declarer cashes out for 10 tricks without taking the spade finesse.

\* West plays the K, the card they are known to hold so as to keep declarer guessing for as long as possible about the location of the J.

A 10  
 Q 8 5  
 A Q 10 9 4  
 J 7 6  
 Q  
 9 6  
 K J 8 7  
 K 10 9 8 4 2  
20  
 K 9 8 2  
 A J 3  
 6 3 2  
 A Q 3  
 J 7 6 5 4 3  
 K 10 7 4 2  
 5  
 5

## Endplay

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

North received the JD lead to their 4H contract on this hand from Monday's play.



J 9 3  
10 6 5 3  
A 8 7  
K 10 7

There is nowhere to discard a diamond or spade loser, and there may be 2 losers in the club suit. However a defender may elect to lead away from the QS at some point enabling declarer to score dummy's J, so even if AC is wrong not all is necessarily lost.

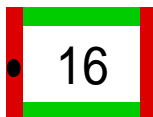
T1 is won in hand with KD - we have plenty of other entries to hand but we might want the AD as entry to table later. Draw trumps as there is no reason not to.

This takes 3 rounds.

Now a club towards table. East jumps up with AC and continues diamonds. Win, cash KC, ruff dummy's last club in hand and exit with the last diamond so that declarer now sees the position right.

A K 6  
9

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J 9 3  
10  
--  
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Whoever is on lead will have the choice between a minor suit lead allowing a ruff and discard, or a spade which if away from QS allows the J to win.

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

7 2  
J 7 4  
Q 4  
J 9 8 6 5 2



Q 10 8 5 4  
8  
J 10 9 5 2  
A Q

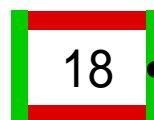
J 9 3  
10 6 5 3  
A 8 7  
K 10 7

We see that East is indeed endplayed by this line as they have to win the third diamond and possess the QS, and this outcome was at least partially predicatble at those tables where East bid spades.

What if East bids spades and the play suggests that West is long in diamonds? Play the same way except before exiting with a diamond cash AK S. Now when West wins the daimond they will have to give a ruff and discard, a different endplay that allows declarer to avoid a spade loser should West have diamond length but which doesn't work on the actual layout.

## Do All Roads lead to 4H?

A 8 4 3  
Q 9 8  
J 9 4  
J 10 8



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

Only half Thursday's field played in the 5-3 heart fit on this hand, with the other half not enjoying a spade lead against 3NT by West.

Suppose North-South are silent throughout and that East opens 1H and West replies 1S. East has a choice of 4 rebids: 1NT, 2NT, 2D, 3D.

The first of these will presumably only be used by those employing a checkback convention in which East then bids 2C to discover more such as the secondary heart support. 4H s reached.

After a 2NT rebid West bids 3H, which must show secondary heart support and be forcing, asking East to chose between 3NT and 4H. East will choose 4H.

After a 2D rebid West gives preference to 2H. East counts their losers and bids 4H.

A 3D rebid is game-forcing and on this hand is slightly pushy. However on the day it works as West now bids 4H, using the principle of fast arrival to deny any slam interest. (Fast arrival: in a game forcing auction bidding the game is weak).

Suppose now that South bids 1S over the 1H opening. West has an easy 1NT response with their 8 points and spade stop. Whether East rebids 2NT, 2D or 3D West bids hearts next. It is worth noting that 3D has greater justification here than without the overcall for West won't feel the need to reply to keep the bidding open with a grotty 6 count. However if East's fear of missing game leads them to rebid 3NT rather than 3D then finally we uncover a way to miss the heart fit.

Some players are so fixated on showing their flat point count that they would reply 1NT to the opening 1H even without interference. This leads to similar auctions to those with a 1S overcall.

10 6 2  
J 5  
10 7 5 2  
Q 9 7 2

A 8 4 3  
Q 9 8  
J 9 4  
J 10 8



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

K J 9 7 5  
A 7 6  
K 3  
5 4 3

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (6½ tables): Robert Harvey & David Allison

Tuesday F2F (4½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (5 tables): John & Wendy Ellwood

Thursday (5 tables, teams):

Total 21 tables for the week.

I welcome any comments or queries sent me at [martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk](mailto: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