

Matters Arising 137

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 26 - 30 Jun 2023

Transfers

Almost everyone uses transfer responses to 1NT, and no doubt all of these claim to know how to use them. Yet only 2 of 6 East-Wests were able to find the optimum 3NT on this board from Monday.

10 7 5 4 3	● 1	K 6
7 5		A K 10 9
A Q 8		K J 9
K Q 7		10 9 5 2

The standard auction with East opening is

1NT	2H
2S	2NT
3NT	

West's 2NT rebid shows a hand of invitational strength containing 5 spades. East gets to choose between 2NT, 3S, 3NT and 4S as the final contract depending on shape and strength.

Two pairs played in spades, suggesting their auctions started

1NT	2H
2S	3S

For most pairs the 3S rebid shows an invitational hand with 6 spades since with only 5 they would rebid 2NT as above.

The whole point of transfers is to generate extra auctions, so you don't really know transfers unless you have meanings for these extra auctions, yet one gets the impression that transfer and pass is the only transfer auction some have mastered.

Other common transfer sequences are

- transfer and rebid 3NT: game forcing with a 5 card major
- transfer and bid a new suit at 3 level: game forcing with at least 5 cards in the anchor suit and at least 4 in the new one
- 1NT – 2D – 2H – 2S: invitational with 5 hearts and 4 spades.

Plan C

On Tuesday North tried their luck in 4H on board 19. What are your thoughts on JD lead?

2	A K 10 8 5
A 3	A 7 6 4 3

There are 4 top tricks in the side suits which suggests we need 6 trump tricks. That means all 5 in our hand plus a ruff on the table. Somehow I think that is not going to happen.

● 19

A 7 4 3	6 3
K 9 7 5	J 9 8

We do though have rather a lot of clubs. Perhaps we can get extra tricks there. Missing 5 including K Q 10 suggests two losers, which means we can only afford 1 trump loser. Looks like we may require trumps 3–3.

Win T1 on table and play a heart to the 10. East wins and continues diamonds. Our Ace wins and we cash the top trumps getting good news about the break. Now duck a club. East wins and plays another diamond. Ruff, A and another club clears the suit. We still have a trump left, so regardless of whether another diamond comes or we are put on table with AS, we can get back to hand to enjoy the long clubs. We make 4 trumps including ruffs, 3 clubs, 2 diamonds and a spade for the required 10 tricks.

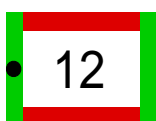
2	A K 10 8 5	
A 3	A 7 6 4 3	
K 8 6 5	● 19	Q J 10 9
Q J 2		9 7 4
Q 6 4		J 10 8 2
K 5 2		Q 10
A 7 4 3		
6 3		
K 9 7 5		
J 9 8		

Plan C (for Clubs) brings home the bacon. Indeed on the actual hand there is a bonus in that the play of trump to the 10 holds and declarer loses no trump tricks, so makes 11 in total.

Too often with this sort of hand declarers have no plan, taking tricks apparently at random. Here that may well involve spade and/or diamond ruffs in hand. As often met before, ruffing in the long hand doesn't increase the trick tally. Here it merely serves to ensure that declarer lacks the control necessary to secure club tricks when declarer finally realises the suit has to be tackled.

Killing Dummy

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



A 5 3
A 6 5 3
A
Q 10 8 7 5

Everyone likes taking tricks, including defenders, and this can lead to a frenzied search for one's own tricks. Often though the defence does better to concentrate on denying declarer their tricks.

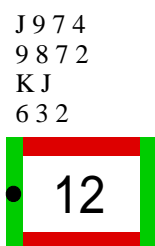
On this hand from Thursday four Souths led a club against 3NT, East's reply to West's opening pre-empt of 3D. The lead ran round to declarer's 9. Declarer next played a small diamond which South won, with North contributing the J. Now what?

Perhaps partner has a good major and if we cash both our Aces they will signal which suit they wish us to continue. Or perhaps we should underlead an Ace hoping to hit paydirt that way.

Stop thinking about us and instead consider declarer's plans. We know they haven't bid 3NT off the back of a running club suit. Further they presumably have at least the semblance of a stop in both majors, so attacking those will help them rather than us.

If declarer's plan revolves around lots of diamond tricks and they have the two outstanding diamonds there seems little we can do. But suppose partner has the KD, or even that partner has the small one and declarer has erred by starting with their small diamond rather than the K. Then a second club from us removes the entry to dummy before the diamonds are established (or with the suit blocked if declarer just has the K left in hand). This kills dummy - there is now no chance of running lots of diamond tricks.

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



A 5 3
A 6 5 3
A
Q 10 8 7 5

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

The club switch works and declarer is forced to lose 2 spades, 2 diamonds and AH. Major suit switches give declarer time to establish diamonds whilst KC is available as an entry. Only one of the four Souths found the killing club continuation.

Which Chance?

South opens 1S, and West's heart Q intervention is brushed aside as North propels themselves into 6NT. The expected heart lead is of course pleasant as it resolves any doubts in that suit. What chances can you see for 12 tricks?



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

Two hearts and three clubs gives a solid base of 5 tricks. If spades divide 3-3 we can add 6 spades and AD. Job done. Is that the only possibility?

No, if only because I asked! Suppose diamonds are 3-2 (likely) with the missing honours split (not unreasonable) with the doubleton West (it would have to be somewhere). Then running the 10D would lose to East's honour, with the A on the second round crashing West's honour. That would give 6 diamond tricks, which added to our base of 5 means we only need 1 spade trick. Moreover this line works if West has both missing honours either doubleton or with a third card as either they will split their honours or the 10 holds and A and another clears the suit for the loss of one trick. Playing diamonds this way would also work if East held doubleton KQ.

Which chance should we back? Be greedy and try both. The diamond plan requires us to lose a diamond, so if we attempt the spades first and they don't behave we could lose a spade and a diamond. But trying the diamonds first allows us to try the spades afterwards if the diamonds don't lie favourably.

Cash QS and cross to dummy via a club. Now comes 10D to start the examination of that suit, knowing that a club entry to dummy remains so that spades can be tested later if necessary.

7
K J 9 8 7 6 4
K
10 9 4 2

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



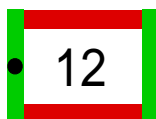
A K 10 8 6 2
10 5 3
10
A Q 8

J 9 5 4 3
2
Q 7 4 2
6 5 3

The spades don't split, and the diamonds aren't 3-2. However when West's singleton K appears on the 10 declarer covers, knocks out the Q and enjoys their long suit.

Unlucky?

K 10 9 7 5
9
A 9 7
A Q 10 8



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K 4 2
K Q J 6 3 2
J 6 5 2

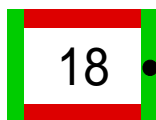
The club suit looks good for three or four tricks depending on the location of the missing K. Often we would start the play in clubs with the J from this sort of holding so that if the finesse works South remains on lead to repeat the finesse. However with plenty of entries to the South hand declarer can afford to take the more leisurely route of leading small towards the 10 with intent to return to hand to repeat the finesse if it works.

The benefit of this slower approach became apparent when West turned out to hold the singleton K. On the lead of a small club declarer scores 4 tricks, but the lead of the J covered by the singleton King means East's 9 is promoted to a trick.

Unlucky, yes in the sense that a singleton King is against the odds, but perhaps not when as here declarer has the entries to be able to afford to insure against the possibility by leading low first time.

Tuesday Starter

K 8 7
A 7 6 2
A K 10 7 5
2



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

You are South playing in 4S on this board from Tuesday. The lead is 4H and East follows with the 3 when you call for the A. Over to you.

Is this a trick problem? You have 7 spade tricks and three obvious winners in the red suits. What more do you need?

This is pairs remember, and cashing 10 top tricks and giving up will see a nice looking 620 on the scorecard, converting to a big round zero in matchpoints. As is so often the case overtricks matter.

Look again. From South's point of view they have 3 red cards easily taken care of by North's AAK. No trump losers. Just clubs to worry about, and with only one on the table two could perhaps be ruffed. That would leave just one loser, and so 12 tricks for a healthier 680.

The 4H looks suspiciously like fourth best, so defenders will follow to this suit for a couple more tricks if necessary. Play off AK D, discarding your heart, and lead the club. When East plays low you insert the J. West wins with the Q, but with you to play last to the next trick they can't hurt you.

Perhaps they lead a trump so as to remove at least one ruffing opportunity (as they see it). Run to hand, ruff a club. Heart ruff, club ruff with K. Heart ruff. Draw remaining trumps. 12 tricks.

Note that the trump switch may well allow you to ruff hearts high.

If East does have AC and rises with it when the singleton is led from table you now only need one club ruff. A diamond switch from them may run into an over-ruff, so you ruff high, ruff JC, KS and draw any remaining trumps. As so often happens we can ruff our losing club before taking our winning one, thereby cutting down on the risk of an overruff.

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

This is not the only line that works. We could set up diamonds for a club discard, though this requires the suit to be 4-3 and trumps 2-1 so is not as good a line. The play from trick 2 goes AK D, throw a heart. AS and trump to K. Diamond ruff. Duck a club. Your two clubs now disappear one ruffed and the other on the fifth diamond.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (6 tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris

Tuesday F2F (6 tables): Debbie & Roger Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

Hilary Storey & Jacky Truelove

Thursday (6½ tables): Jackie Stabler & Linda White

Total 24 tables for the week.

Martyn Harris

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spadeilike on BBO