

Matters Arising 145

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 21 - 25 Aug 2023

Why not Eleven?

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


Monday, 4S by West at all eleven tables. At first sight this is a straightforward 10 tricks losing two clubs and a heart, but the trump lead favoured at six tables opened up the possibility of 11 tricks.

Win on table, cash a second trump. South shows out, so the suit is 3-1. Cash the JD, then cross to hand via a third round of trumps. Three clubs disappear on the top diamonds and declarer loses just one club and one heart for eleven tricks as there is a trump on table to ruff declarer's second club..

Half of the declarers receiving the trump lead only made 10 tricks. I can see two ways this might have happened, both involving substituting rote for thought.

One is that declarer simply started by drawing three rounds of trumps, cashed the JD (now protected against the dreaded 8-0 diamond break) and then had no way back to hand except via a fourth trump, leaving them unable to ruff declarer's second club. Amusingly declarer can try to rescue themselves if they realise early enough what they have done by overtaking JD in hand, hoping the 10 falls so that the 9 is a trick. It does. We'll never know if this happened at other tables, as playing records don't exist for our F2F bridge.

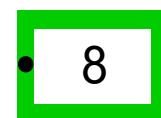
The less likely way is they got the trump and diamond play correct, but inexplicably discarded one or more hearts on the diamonds. Daft if you can look forwards to what you want to do next, but some players seem attached to always discarding their smallest cards regardless of suit.

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

Twelve Needed

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

No doubt this hand from Monday will have generated plenty of discussion North-South as to whether they could reasonably be expected to bid 6S, and if so how. I'll steer clear of such arguments here.




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

Everyone was in spades and the most common lead of 7D gave no problems, with each recipient racking up 12 tricks. Those facing a club lead fared less well, with two out of 3 making just 11 tricks. How would you chase the 12 tricks on a club lead that you can see should be easy on a diamond or spade one, and hence that you may need to avoid a poor score?

Annoyingly the club lead sets up a club trick for the defence whilst they still have AS as entry. You will have to get rid of that club loser before tackling trumps.

Win T1 with AC, overtake KD and cash the QD discarding your small club. If the defence can ruff that you have simply exchanged a club loser for a ruffed diamond one, so you are no worse off. When both follow to QD you know there is only one more left, so lead another diamond and ruff it, high if West follows. Now tackle trumps. Once they are out of harms way the AH provides an entry to the diamonds to make as many discards as you need, which actually is just one (small heart).

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

Ogust

A 5 Monday board 22, and West, left,
 A K Q 10 2 probably quite liked their hand. It is not
 A K Q 9 3 recorded whether they were pleased or
 J annoyed when partner dealt and opened a
 weak 2S.

Even a wimp will be thinking game on this collection,
 most will be aware of the possibility of slam. There is
 no hurry though to roll out Blackwood if you have the
 common and useful convention Ogust in your
 repertoire. 2NT asks partner to describe both the
 strength of their hand and the quality of their suit.
 Responses are

3C: low points, at most one high honour in the suit

3D: low points, two high honours in the suit,

3H: high points, at most one high honour in the suit


3S: high points, 2 high honours in the suit

3NT: the suit is AKQxxx

High honours here means A, K, Q. High points is the
 upper half of whatever range you are using.

On this hand the reply to the 2NT enquiry is 3S. As
 West has AS they know partner's trumps are KQxxxx.
 Consequently a normal 3-2 trump break would usually*
 lead to 6 trump and 6 red tricks. Moreover there is still
 enough room for partner to hold AC, so a grand could
 be on.

4NT draws a no ace response, and West settles for 6S.

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

The trumps are indeed 3-2 and it takes a club lead to
 prevent the overtrick. Less than half the field reached
 slam. Maybe Ogust is not as widely known as I thought.

*I wrote *usually* not because of the small chance of a
 ruff before declarer gains the lead, but because if the
 defence can start two top clubs, forcing table to ruff,
 then there might be difficulty reaching declarer's hand
 to extract the remaining trumps after cashing the A - a
 red suit Jack or ruff would be needed. In practice
 partner's KC puts paid to any chance the defence have
 of forcing dummy, and East had JH too as a side entry.

Strong Two

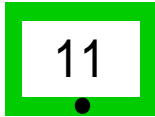
How strong is a strong two? Some players define it by
 points, and others by playing tricks. Perhaps though the

A K J 9 4 3	most important feature of such	x x
A Q 8 3 2	a hand is that there is a fair	J x x
7	chance of game opposite	x x x x
A	hands that partner might pass	x x x x
	an opening bid of one.	

The hand above left has just 3 losers. How might it fare
 in 4H opposite the x laden hand above right?

The defence starts with two rounds of diamonds, the
 second of which we ruff. AS, KS, ruff a spade with JH,
 perhaps overruffed by the K from Kx. Another diamond
 which we ruff. AH, QH fails to clear the trumps as the
 10 is still at large. Shovel black suit winners at the
 defence. They can ruff when they like, but we have one
 trump left to regain the lead on yet another diamond.
 Contract makes for loss of a diamond and 2 trumps. 4S
 looks equally good on 3-2 breaks.

Can you afford to miss game opposite a hand as weak
 as that - indeed even JH may prove superfluous to our
 needs.

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

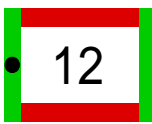
This is Thursday's hand 11, and only one pair reached
 game, and for them East failed to pass out 1S.

Not only is opening a strong two needed, but a suit
 rebid then needs to be a one round force, for there is no
 point in opening two in case partner can't reply to one,
 only to find that with such a hand partner exits the
 auction at the two level. Thus 2C - 2D - 2S needs to be
 forcing regardless of whether 2D is a negative or just a
 relay.

- 2C - 2D - 2S - 2NT - 3H - 3S - 4S,
- 2C - 2D - 2S - 2NT - 4H - 4S
- 2C - 2D - 2S - 3S - 4S

are all credible auctions. Yes, if partner has 11 cards in
 the minors making 2S forcing might get you too high,
 but are you really willing to allow partner to pass out
 the hand at either 1S or 2S?

Find The Queen

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

West opened 1NT on this hand from Thursday's play. Where North overcalled in diamonds East showed their hearts; where North was silent East transferred to hearts and possibly showed their spades later. All auctions led to a major suit game for East-West, with the number of tricks made dependent on declarer's success in finding the QH, for they have a two-way finesse in the suit to choose from, or can simply play for the drop.

If strongly suspicious that South harbours length and the Q you might play off the K first just in case North has the singleton Q, but otherwise starting with the J looks best. This leaves all options open, for not only can you run it to finesse against South but you can also rise with the A and either finesse or play for the drop as you return towards East. Meanwhile if South is conditioned to cover an honour with an honour the Q will appear on the J and solve your problem.

Only one declarer tried the J first, and they were delighted to see the Q covering it. They were joined on 11 tricks by one other declarer who found an opening heart lead to their liking.

South of course shouldn't be covering in this instance. Whether declared by East so they can see Axx on the table knowing that declarer has at least five for their heart bid, or by West so they can see six on the table knowing declarer has at least two for their NT opening, South knows partner has at most two hearts. If partner holds the hidden top honour it wins without the play of the Q from South, if declarer has the hidden top honour North can never win a trick in the suit.

South needs to work this out quickly, preferably before the suit is even led, for hesitation gives away the location of the Q. Note that it would be unethical to hesitate with only small cards so to mislead declarer into thinking that you have a significant card in the suit.

Around The Club

Monday saw a post-covid record of 10½ tables playing F2F. Very pleasing, but no-one will object if that record doesn't last long.

This weeks winners were

Monday (10½ tables) Babs Matthews & John Farmer

Tuesday F2F (6 tables): Andrew Peill & Sarah Bullock

Tuesday BBO (7 tables):

Robin Rose & John MacLachlan

Thursday (6½ tables): Ray & Irene Gregory

Total 30 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