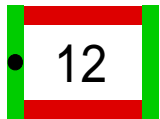


Matters Arising 148

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 11 - 15 Sept 2023

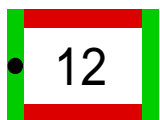
Who's Afraid of The Big Bad Trump?

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

Whether employing a Jacoby 2NT or not, West plays in 4S on this hand from Monday. Suppose the lead is 6C. Think your thoughts and read on.

It looks as if there are at most three losers - maybe an offside KH, one, perhaps two in diamonds. However there is nothing that needs doing, so we can tackle trumps immediately. If these are 2-1 it matters not whether we start with A or K, but suppose they are 3-0. If North has the 3 then by playing the A first we will expose this and have a marked finesse against the Q to pick up the suit for no loser. If South has the remaining three trumps then whilst this can also be exposed there will be no finesse for the Q is backed up by the 10 so playing off the K first doesn't help. Thus AS first, not because it's the Ace, but because of its position. North shows out, so we have a certain trump loser.

At this point many will continue not only with the KS but a third round too. This puts South on lead, and if they find a diamond switch would leave us with a nasty guess. Better to abandon trumps at this point and play on hearts, for if the suit is 3-3 or North started with say Kx, declarer will get to discard a diamond from table on the fourth heart before South can ruff in with their QS, and there will only ever be one diamond loser.

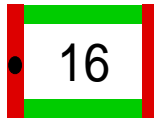
	--	
	9 8 6	
	A 7 6 4 3 2	
	9 6 5 3	
A 9 4 3 2		K J 8 7 5
A J 10 3		Q 4 2
K 8		J 5
8 4		A K 2
	Q 10 6	
	K 7 5	
	Q 10 9	
	Q J 10 7	

Having endured the bad luck of the trump break it would be a pity not to take advantage of the favourable heart position, yet some declarers are so afraid of the defenders trumps that they won't even allow them to retain their winning ones.

Have A Plan

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

How would you as South propose to make 10 tricks in hearts on a club lead on this hand from Thursday?




Having thought your thoughts, read on.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, *draw trumps and then think about the rest* is not a plan.

K 9 5
A K Q 8 7 5 4
A 10 9
--

Assuming trumps are 3-2 there are still five potential losers in spades and diamonds combined. One can disappear on the AC at trick one, disposing of another is slightly harder, but only very slightly. If we lose a spade immediately then we can ruff one whilst we still have trumps on table. That will leave us with just 2 further losers, both diamonds, or a diamond and a spade, depending on our T1 discard. We're not overly fussed whether they go down to ruffs or enemy honours.

Play goes win T1 with A and discard a diamond. Now a spade from table. They can win with the A and lead a trump, but it is too late to stop you getting a spade ruff. On a normal trump break it is job done.

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

In practice East rises with AS at trick 2 and returns a trump. Too late. Rise with A, ruff the small spade, return to hand with a club ruff - given the number of cards you start with in each minor this will be safer than crossing to AD. Now draw trumps, cash KS and AD and concede trick 13. Eleven tricks.

Start by drawing trumps and you will have to play spades from hand and even 9 tricks are not certain.

Chinese Finesse

Let's look at some finesses.

AQx	AQx	Axx	Ax	Axx	ATx	AT9	Axx
xxx	JTx	QJx	QJT	QJ9	KJx	KJx	Qxx
(i)	(ii)	(iii)	(iv)	(v)	(vi)	(vii)	(viii)

(i) is a simple finesse. I think of the A and Q as the jaws of the finesse into which we hope the K will fall, though the proper name for a combination such as AQ or KJ is a *tenace*. The best way of handling this combination is to get East to lead the suit, but failing that the finesse can be taken by leading from the South hand or by inserting the Q when West leads the suit.

In (ii), by leading the J and playing small from table if the K doesn't appear we take a *running finesse*. The advantage of taking this running finesse rather than playing small to the Q is that if the finesse works you are in the right hand to repeat it as opposed to needing to use up an entry to get back to the South hand.

In (iii) we always have 2 tricks even if we start by laying down the A. The advantage of taking a running finesse by leading the Q is that we might get those two tricks without losing the lead.

The standard defence to a running finesse is to *cover an honour with an honour*, forcing the use of two high enemy cards for one of ours, and so promoting to winner status a lower card. If the enemy have that lower card it doesn't help, but if either we or partner do, we have gained a trick. Thus in (iii) if West can cover the Q with the K then the 10 will be promoted to win the third trick.

There are no hard and fast rules in card play, and cover an honour with an honour is no exception. In (iv) suppose you are West holding Kxx in the suit. Covering the Q would merely serve to allow declarer to pick up your K when otherwise it could not be trapped.

On to (v) where covering the Q would again be a mistake, for this would allow declarer to finesse against the 10 on the way back to the South hand. Holding off until the J appears stops that play. Unfortunately if you think that *cover the second honour* is the correct rule for all seasons you will again be disappointed.

Hand (vi) illustrates the two-way finesse. If West is thought to harbour the Q finesse the 10 after laying down the K, if East finesse the J after cashing the A. Taking the high honour first caters for the situation where you are wrong about the location of the Q, but it is singleton.

Beefing up the holding slightly to (vii) allows us to go fishing. Suppose you think East has the Q. Then lead the J from South and play the A, before taking the running finesse back. The object of this exercise is that if you are wrong you have given yourself the chance that West will cover your J with their Q ("must cover an honour with an honour partner") and you still don't lose a trick.

How should we handle (viii), a combination that might be regarded as a split finesse, for the jaws of a simple finesse are split between the two hands? Ideally get West to lead the suit, for then low from North gives us two tricks. Otherwise the normal play is to lead towards the Q hoping that East has the K. Whether or not you play the A first depends on whether you are more intent on crashing a singleton K or retaining some control over the suit if the K is with West.

However if we believe West has the K then we have to resort to the *Chinese finesse*, an unsupported running finesse, by leading the Q and hoping West fails to cover.

Choosing whether or not to cover is sometimes difficult for a defender, though there may be clues available from the cards on the table and their own holding as well as from the bidding and the play to date.

The hand that brought these musings on was Tuesday's hand 12, with West declaring in 4S.

	4									
	A K 8									
	K 8 6 5 3									
	J 9 7 6									
A Q 8 3 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: red;"></td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: red;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: green;"></td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: green;"></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">●</td> <td style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle; font-size: 24px; font-weight: bold;">12</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: red;"></td> <td style="width: 20px; height: 20px; background-color: red;"></td> </tr> </table>					●	12			J 7 6 5
●	12									
10 7		J 3								
4 2		A J 10 9 7								
K Q 8 3		A 5								
	K 10 9									
	Q 9 6 5 4 2									
	Q									
	10 4 2									

North cashes two heart tricks and then switches to a minor suit. At this point the contract is doomed, yet two declarers dodged a trump loser with the help of a Chinese finesse, running the unsupported JS. South should see that covering the J guarantees a trick for the defence, but some mantra or longing to retain the K led them to play the 9.

Clobber With Clubs

A K 10 9
K 2
K
A K 10 8 6 2

17

Q J 8 6 2
10 8 4 3
Q 8 3
4

Tuesday board 17. West leads the QH against your 4H contract.. You call for the K, but are not overly surprised when East produces the A and returns the suit. West is marked with the J, so you try the 8, but West has the 9 too. West now cashes AD before switching to 5C. You're in at last. All you have to do is make the rest.

Needless to say you do have a plan, don't you. The position on the 5C lead with with your 10 cards remaining is shown right. Clearly we will win this trick on table.

A cross ruff is a possibility, but there is some fear that your small trumps may be inadequate. If clubs are 3-3 we can draw trumps in three rounds if necessary, ending on table, cash the second club honour and ruff a third round. We can then re-enter dummy with the last trump and enjoy the clubs.

Missing 6 cards a 4-2 break is more likely, so play for such. After AC ruff a small club high (8 upwards are all the same), and lead a small trump to table. If both defenders followed to the second club the suit is no worse than 4-2. Now ruff another club high and draw trumps. Table is good. Even if clubs are 5-1 you will be OK unless trumps are 4-0 too, for the play now goes after winning T4: club ruff, trump to table, club ruff, trump to table, club ruff, red card ruff, draw trumps, table good).

Note that as is often the case there is no need to cash the second club winner before ruffing little ones.

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

As neither black suit splits evenly drawing trumps first fails as declarer cannot both establish and enjoy the clubs.

Squeeze Without The Count

K 7
A K Q J 9
Q 7 2
K 7 5

11

A Q 8 6
4 3 2
A K J
9 6 2

Monday board 11. With a combined 32 count and an 8 card fit it was not surprising to find several pairs in a slam on this hand. There are 11 top tricks outside of clubs, with a twelvth to come if AC is onside by leading towards the K.

That looks like the natural way of playing the contract, but what if you have reason to suspect that the A is offside? - perhaps East found a bid which would mark them with pretty well all of the defence's values.

Finding an extra trick may mean a squeeze, though usually this requires you to be able to win all bar one of the remaining tricks, with the squeeze securing the final one too. Arranging to have only one loser left is known as rectifying the count. However some squeezes will work without the count - you still have 2 potential losers left.


For any squeeze you will need potential winners in at least two suits. Here the red suits are loser-free, so our potential winners will have to be in clubs and spades. The KC and fourth spade will have to do. If AC is wrong then East will have to guard the spades too for a squeeze to work, so assume that is the case.

Suppose that North declares in hearts or NT, and that a diamond is led. In some order cash KS, 3 diamond and 4 heart tricks, ending in the North hand. The 5 card ending will be

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

West's hand is irrelevant as they started with at most 3 spades, East may not have JS, but is assumed to have at least one bigger than the 8. Now play 9H. A spade discard from East would be fatal, allowing the 8S to score declarer's 12th trick. Hence the small club has to go. Now declarer can play a small club to dislodge the A and the K wins. Note that attempts by East to retain a long diamond won't work. Provided East starts with AC and at least 4 spades the squeeze secures 6H or 6NT by North, or indeed by South barring a club lead, unless

hearts are 5-0. Not as good odds as AC being onside, but definitely worth trying if you believe AC offside.

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

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Robert Harvey & David Harris

Tuesday F2F (5 tables): Andrew Peill & Steven Barron

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday am (3 tables)

Jo Ainsworth & Dorothy Bayliss

Thursday (5 tables):

Tim Harrison & Martyn Harris

Total 25½ 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