

# Matters Arising 155

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 30 Oct - 3 Nov 2023

## As Many As You Can

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

Many NS pairs had a bidding accident on Tuesday's last hand, languishing in a heart part-score when game is surely correct.




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

There are several ways that declarer may react on seeing dummy. One is to lose interest, taking the obvious tricks and moving on. Another is to start marshalling one's arguments as to why partner is at fault. A third is to hunt for some obscure distribution that defeats game, and play for it.

Lastly declarer may be determined to squeeze every last overtrick they can find so as at least to beat any other pairs who stopped short of game.

West led the 5S as East had opened 1S, the opening bid no doubt being at least partly responsible for the NS accident. Adopt the last mentioned declarer attitude - how will you play in order to take as many tricks as possible? Assume that East rises with the AS at T1 and returns the suit, West following with the 4.

We have already lost AS, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the AD will prove an inescapable loser. The target then is to make the rest, which effectively means avoiding a second diamond loser. This will entail leading twice towards hand in diamonds so that East has to use their A on our 9. On this hand East is all but marked with the A to justify their opening bid, though even without such help we would play the same way, for East with the A is the most likely distribution which makes avoiding losing a second diamond trick possible.

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

The KS is followed by two rounds of trumps and then a diamond from table. East ducks. We win and draw the last trump, before returning to table via AC to lead another diamond. Job done. 11 tricks, and with so many other pairs also in part-score this equated to a 70% score

on the night since for many drawing trumps took precedence over leading diamonds rowards hand so that they could only do the latter once when on table with AC.

What of the bidding accident? The root cause seems an inability to handle strong hands when the opposition open. Most players are now happy to overcall on less than opening values, sometimes much less. Partner will be so used to this that, without careful prior discussion, making simple overcalls on strong hands is liable to result in the sort of accident that happened here where a simple 2H overcall may be passed out.

The usual solution is to include hands that are too strong for a simple overcall (or indeed a 1NT overcall when balanced) in the take-out double, distinguishing between the strong hand and a normal one by making another bid opposite a minimum response. Thus

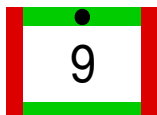
1S - X - P - 2C - P - 2H will show a strong hand. Some would even bid 3H to get the message across, though this increases the chance of a minus score if partner is completely bust.

Should North reply 2C to a take-out double? In terms of strength they are very close to bidding 3C, but I feel that 1NT is a better response as this is a bid that is never made on a bust hand, and indeed leans more towards 7-10 than the usual 6-9 high card points for a 1NT response. South could be forgiven for jumping straight to 4H over a 1NT response given the quality of their suit and the likelihood that most if not all of the significant missing cards will be in front of them.

Another article on next page ...

## Late Losers

A K 3  
K 4  
10 7  
K J 10 8 7 2



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


On Monday South found themselves declaring 4S on board 9, their partner having opened 1C and East then preempting 3D.

East produced two top diamonds to commence play. Naturally South ruffed the second one. Over to you in the South seat.

There are no natural trump losers, but we are missing both minor suit Aces.

The contract appears to hinge then on not losing 2 heart tricks. Missing 6 hearts the most likely split is 4-2, and this is still true after a pre-empt though the probabilities will be different than those when we have no knowledge of the distribution. There is an obvious danger that if we draw three rounds of trumps then late in the hand we will lose 2 heart tricks and drift one off.


After ruffing the diamond play off the AS which will warn us if trumps are 4-0. Assuming trumps aren't 4-0 play a second trump to hand. Then KH, AH and ruff a heart with KS. Next comes KC. West can win, and even cash a heart winner if they have one, but the rest are declarer's as long as they remember to draw any outstanding trump as soon as they get back in.

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

In practice with hearts 3-3 declarer still makes the contract if they draw three rounds of trumps, losing just one heart and the minor suit Aces. The suggested line still does better though, for now there are no heart losers, so declarer makes 11 tricks.

Particularly in the light of East's pre-empt perhaps we should consider the possibility that hearts are 5-1. Try this variation. After AS play off KH and lead the 4 towards hand. If East ruffs or discards we know we have 3 potential heart losers. We intend to ruff one and lose one - indeed we may already have done so to a ruff. The third will need to disappear on the KC, so when next in the South hand we lead a club to set up that possibility whilst still retaining an entry to table.

If both defenders follow to the second heart then we immediately ruff a heart high and use the 3S to help draw the remaining trumps, so the line still works when hearts are 4-2.

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

An example of a 5-1 heart split which can be allowed for as described.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (5 tables): Phillip Burley & Sarah Bullock  
and Brian Smith & John Nicholls

Tuesday F2F (5½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (6 tables): Ray & Irene Gregory  
and John & Wendy Ellwood

Thursday am (5 tables):  
Alison Jones & Dorothy Bayliss

Thursday (6 tables): John & Wendy Ellwood

Total 27½ 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