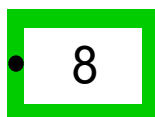


Matters Arising 160

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 4 - 8 Dec 2023

3 of The Usual

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



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

All six Norths played in three of the usual (3NT) on this hand on Tuesday. What are your thoughts when faced with KC lead?

Four diamonds and three Aces comes to 7 tricks. The heart suit may provide one further trick via a successful finesse, but the last trick needed surely has to come from spades, which could provide both extra tricks if the finesse works. Indeed if spades break 3-3 the 4 could come to the top for a

further trick in the suit.

Counting winners and spotting potential ones is relatively easy on this hand, but counting losers is rather different. There are no top losers, but we must be aware of the possibility of an unknown number of losers in clubs should we lose the lead after our Ace has been removed. If clubs are 4-4 we will be limited to 3 club losers on loss of the lead, but a 5-3 or worse split could be fatal to the contract if the lead is lost.

We can take out some insurance against an uneven club break by holding off with the AC until the third round. After the hold-up play if clubs are not 4-4 only one defender will hold clubs and it will be safe to lose the lead to their partner. Given the KC lead it seems likely that if anyone it is East who will hold the long clubs, so it will be safe for the heart finesse to lose. However it could be that East has started with a short suit lead and we can afford to lose the spade finesse.

Play starts with three rounds of clubs, the last of which we win whilst discarding a heart from table - we have no plans beyond two heart tricks so don't need that card. West also discards a heart on the third club - East must have started with 6 clubs.

Cashing the winners in our good suit(s), in this case diamonds, is always attractive in NT, but we need to run a couple of checks before we do.

First, will running winners cause us problems with discards in the other hand? Here the answer is no, for with 4 diamonds in each hand we will be making no discards.

Secondly do we need the suit for communication between the two hands when dealing with the other suits. We wish to take the spade finesse twice, which means getting to table twice. The AH is one entry, but it would be foolish to rely on QH being the other. Thus diamonds need to be used as an entry for a spade

finesse, which means that whilst we can cash all our diamonds we have to make sure we end up on the table ready for the first spade finesse.

There is a third reason for not running a suit and that is that it gives the defence a chance to communicate via their discards, but here they don't seem to have anything useful to tell each other.

Thus we cash the diamonds ending on table and take the spade finesse. The J holds, which seems pretty good evidence that the K is onside for else East would surely have won and run clubs.

In hand we try the heart finesse. It loses, but West can't hurt us as we made sure to run them out of clubs at the start.

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

On the actual distribution and the line described declarer looks set for 3 spades, AH, 4 diamonds and AC for 9 tricks, which is more than half the field achieved on the night. But there is a hidden bonus as East is 2-2 in the majors and so provides the defence with no help in dealing with those suits. The first seven tricks were three clubs and 4 diamonds with declarer following to all and discarding a heart from dummy. But what of West? They want their last six cards to be 4 spades to prevent declarer's fourth spade from winning and three hearts to prevent dummy's third heart from winning. Something has to give, and as long as declarer is alert they will make an extra trick with an x in one of the majors.

The KC is of course the natural lead from the East hand. Hopefully you would have spotted the danger of giving declarer a cheap trick by leading the 4th highest club without needing to see all the hands.

After the Double

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

North opens 1NT on this hand from Monday. East may feel a little uncomfortable doubling, but with pass the only other credible option if 2C is conventional, double it may have to be.

South acts in accordance with their partnership defence to 1NTX and it is over to West who knows that South has at most 2 points provided partner's double is up to strength (15+). With AKA looking like 3 certain tricks, and partner having the strongest hand at the table sat over the enemy values West shouldn't be involving themselves in bidding 2S (which sounds weak) or indeed 3S or any other constructive bid. Instead they can happily wave the bright red card at any natural enemy bid that comes their way.

In 2HX the defence takes 2 spades, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs, AH, a spade ruff and a diamond ruff. Four off doubled is 800, and even if one of those tricks goes astray the resulting 500 will still beat any EW game. And as it happens the EW games don't include 3NT, which is the one they would be most likely to try.

Around The Club

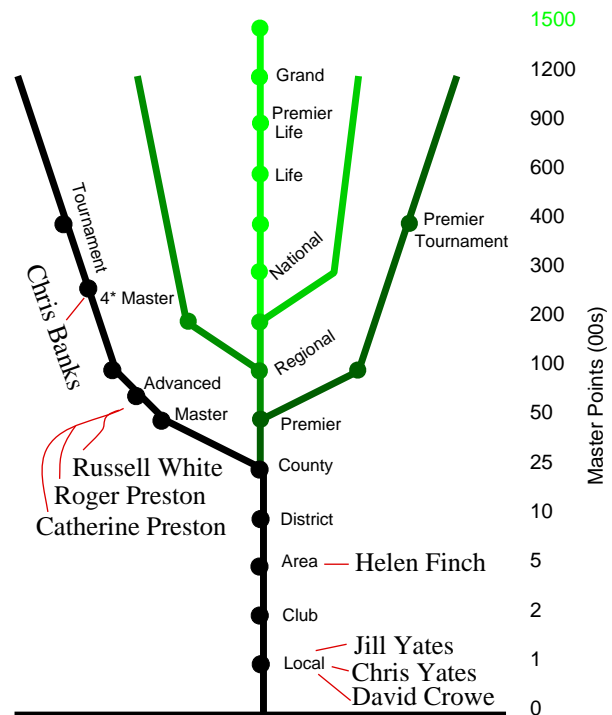
This weeks winners were

- Monday (4½ tables): Mike Howse & Martyn Harris
- Tuesday F2F : Cancelled - inclement weather
- Tuesday BBO (6 tables): Ina Gray & Mary Anne Peden
- Thursday am (5 tables): David Airey & Tutor
- Thursday BBO (8 tables): Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell

Total 23½ tables for the week, plus 4 on Sunday.

Lots of blooms on the master point tree during November:

Chris Banks is now a 4* Master, Russell White and Roger and Catherine Preston have all reached Advanced Master status, Helen Finch has moved up to Area Master, and David Crowe together with Jill and Chris Yates have received their first promotion to become Local Masters. Well done all.



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