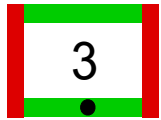


# Matters Arising 161

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

## Christmas Cracker


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

This was the joke hand from the Christmas Party, but no doubt not everybody was amused. If West pre-empts 3H then East probably raises to 4 hoping that there aren't 4 red losers, or if there are that a black suit lead enables partner to off load some diamonds. Raising on a void is unusual to say the least, but red the pre-empt suit should be of decent quality.

Where the bidding ends if West opens 1H is anyone's guess, though 4S and 6NT both figure on the travellers.

Plan 4H by West on a club lead.

Let the lead run to hand, which guarantees no loser in the suit unless South can ruff. Then AK H followed by some top spades on which diamonds are discarded. If three rounds of spades hold up you can then ruff a diamond and continue trumps. There looks a good chance that you will lose just one trick, to the QH.

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

As it's Christmas the QH tumbles under declarer's top trumps, so they can continue drawing the rest of them before tackling spades. When the spades break 4-3 declarer has 17 tricks - 7 trumps and 5 in each black suit, but they won't be allowed to enter 4H + 7 into the Bridgemates.

Without a club lead declarer is unlikely to take the club finesse, but there are still more than 13 tricks available, except on a diamond lead, and that is true in NT and spades as well as hearts. Seven people didn't receive a diamond lead. Only two made 13 tricks.

## Every Card Matters

K 9 6 4	East opened 1H and often rebid diamonds in an attempt to become declarer on this hand from Thursday, but the commonest outcome was for South to declare in spades.
A 7 4	
K 3	
K 10 6 3	



A Q 10 5 3	The 9H lead looks potentially singleton given the bidding. Suppose you are in 4S.
K 8 2	
8 5	Unless the defence are generous there won't be any ruffs on table, so there are just five trump tricks to be had.
J 9 8	


AK H makes seven, so we need three tricks from the minors. Whilst we might get one in diamonds by leading towards the K if the A is inside it seems more likely on the bidding that that won't work, and instead that we will need all three extra tricks to come from clubs, presumably needing the Q to be onside. What is clear though is that later in the hand we shall want to be able to lead minors from hand, so T1 should be won with the AH to preserve the K as an entry for later.

Now to trumps. We wish to end in hand so again starting with the K on table is tempting. However a closer look at the trumps reveals there is a 2-way finesse against the J if necessary, which will be preserved if we cash an honour in hand to begin with, but not if we start with the K.


Thus T2 sees a spade to the A, and when East shows out the 9 can be finessed on the way back to table. Then K and Q clear the suit leaving declarer in hand as desired.

Next comes JC, which runs to East's A. No surprise that a heart comes back and that West shows out. Our foresight at T1 means we can win in hand and lead 9C to finesse again. This time West covers with the Q, drawing the K from table and the 7 from East.

That 7 is significant for it means that we can cash both 10 and 6 to secure three club tricks and the contract.

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

## Latent Loser

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

Nearly all of the 16½ tables on Monday saw this hand played in 3NT by East on a small heart lead. Following best advice we start by counting winners and losers.


Counting tricks suggests 3 in spades, 2 in hearts (by allowing the lead to run to hand), 3 in diamonds and 2 in clubs, with another spade possibly available if the K is onside. AD, KH and KS looks like the limit of the losers as declarer's 3rd club can disappear on dummy's long diamond.

Appearances though can be deceptive, and we need to be aware of possible extra tricks that the defence can establish. Imagine that North produces the KH at T1 and continues the suit. Then we will have only one heart stop left yet we may lose the lead twice, to AD and KS. On the first occasion the defence can knock out our last heart stop, and on the second they will be free to take any long hearts they have.

The opening lead suggests that it is South who is long in hearts. If they have both KS and AD then there is nothing we can do to stop them setting up their heart suit - we just have to hope that they started with only 4 so that all we lose is KH, AD, KS and a small heart.

Equally if North has KS we don't have to worry as then the spade finesse works so we will only lose the lead once after T1 in setting up our 10 tricks.

Suppose though that South has KS and North AD. If we tackle diamonds first North can take their A and clear the heart suit ready for South to cash their long one when in with KS. However if we try spades first then South can win their K and clear the hearts but now has no way of regaining the lead to take their established long heart.

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

North indeed wins trick one and returns their partner's suit.

With 7 diamonds and only 6 spades it is tempting to tackle diamonds first as they are the longest/best suit, but that costs a trick since as feared North can win and clear the hearts ready for when South gets in with the failing spade finesse.

However winning the heart continuation at T2 with the A and immediately running the QS leads to 10 tricks.

Counting winners and losers, particularly the latter, is not always easy as the defence will seek to undermine your winners and conjure up additional losers for you apparently from thin air.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday Christmas Party (16½ tables):

Robert Harvey & David Alison

Tuesday F2F (7½ tables): Jill & Chris Yates

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

Dudley Hargreaves & Andrew Smith

Thursday am (4 tables):

NS: Lynn Percival & Denise Williamson

EW: Jill & Chris Yates

Thursday (6½ tables): Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell

Total 40 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