

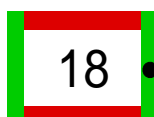
Matters Arising 215

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC on Mon 23rd Dec

Combination Order

A K 8 5 3
K 7 6 5
A 8 7
7

West overcalled hearts en route to North's contract of 3NT, with East then likely to lead the 8H, the top of their doubleton in the suit.



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

West covers with 9H - they don't wish to play small in case partner started with a singleton, nor to rise with A and continue the suit as this would leave partner without a heart to lead should they have a quick entry - West doesn't know that North has both AS and AD.

North has enough hearts for it to be safe to duck the first heart as a counter to West's play, but I suspect most North's won their K early. Now what?

They have 7 top tricks (2S, 3D, 2C) to go with the heart they have won, so need one more trick. This could come from diamonds behaving or from a successful club finesse. Which to try (first)?

Diamonds, not because their behaving is a better chance than the finesse, though it is, but because diamonds can be tested without losing the lead.

Thus a diamond to Q is played at T2 followed by a return to the A. If both defenders follow then the suit has broken 3-2. The K then clears the suit allowing two more diamonds to be taken for an overtrick. Had East started with Jxxx then West shows out on the second round and there is a marked finesse against the J.

If West started with Jxxx then East shows out on the second round and declarer knows to abandon diamonds and put their faith in the club finesse.

A K 8 5 3
K 7 6 5
A 8 7
7

J 10 2
A Q J 10 9 2
J
Q 5 3

Q 9 7 4
8 4
9 6 4 3
10 6 2

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

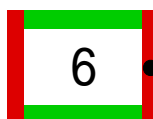
An early club finesse allows West entry to their hearts and the contract is defeated before diamonds are tested.

Classic Duck

As declarer we are often told to start by counting our winners and our losers. This won't necessarily result in our knowing how to play the hand, but it can provide some very useful clues.

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

This is board 6, with South declaring in 3NT on the lead of KH.



The winner count is 3 spades, 1 heart, 3 clubs and 3 or 4 diamonds depending on the location of the K. A healthy total of 10 or 11.

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


Losers may appear to be AC, possibly KD, and 2 hearts, but as we are in NT we can lose more tricks in a suit than we have cards there. With our AH removed from action the defence can take as many hearts as they have, and one defender must hold at least 4 hearts, possibly 5 or more. Thus we have at least 4 losers - three in hearts plus AC.

10/11 winners, 4+ losers: there aren't enough tricks to go around. It is our job to try to ensure that it is the defence who fall short of their trick potential, not us. It is also worth noting that with just 4 tricks in the majors we will need to tackle both minors even if the diamond finesse works.

If AC is with the long hearts then all we can do is hope that hearts are 4-3 and that the diamond finesse works so that we lose 3 hearts and AC.

Suppose though that AC is in the short heart hand. Then if we can run them out of hearts before letting them have AC they won't be able to continue hearts. Moreover if the KD is onside or in the short heart hand this too will not allow them to cash lots of hearts.

The KH lead suggests long hearts West, so KD will be either onside or in the short heart hand. We play for AC East and embark on a classic ducking play in hearts to sever communications between the defenders. West is allowed to win T1, and T2 too assuming a heart continuation. The third heart has to be won, but now we tackle the minors knowing that as long as East holds AC the contract is safe.

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

East does indeed hold AC (and KD) but having held off with the AH until the third round the defence cannot come to more than the two hearts you allowed them at T1 and T2, and AC and KD.

Taking the AH early would allow East to play a heart when in with AC or KD, and the defence now makes 3 hearts, AC and KD for one off.

Around The Club

This weeks winners - just the one session - were
Monday (6½ tables): Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell

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