


Matters Arising 227

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 17 - 21 Mar 2025


The Usual Complaint

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

Tuesday board 5, and South leads the 7C against East's 4S contract. Over to you.

With hearts and clubs well under control, and few worries in diamonds, this looks a good contract.

Winning T1 on table and leading trumps was a common reaction. When North showed out, South was faced with 3 trump losers. Moreover South was inclined to grab their AD when in with AS for 1 down.

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

As we have seen often in the past, drawing trumps is not always the most important task. With the three top honours and a doubleton in hand in hearts, declarer has the chance to discard their losing diamond, so tricks 2 to 4 should be three rounds of hearts discarding JD.

If the defence can ruff the third heart you have at worst swapped a diamond loser for a trump one, though if they have to ruff with what would otherwise have been a natural trump trick you have still gained.

Yes, the defence might have been singleton or void in hearts, and been able to ruff without affecting their natural trump winners, in which case you are entitled to view yourself as unlucky. But allowing the defence the AD if they don't cash it at T1 is careless.


The Usual Complaint II

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

Tuesday again, 4S by East again, this time on KD lead with North having bid that suit.


Once again some declarers rushed to draw trumps, and lost a diamond trick unnecessarily.

After AD try the effect of AC, AH and a diamond discard on KC. You have of course surrendered the chance to take the heart finesse, which might not work anyway, but you have certainly rid yourself of a diamond loser unless a defender has a void that enables them to ruff in even before you get to throw the diamond.

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


In practice the QH appears on the first round, so you will make the JH anyway. Declarer loses just 2 trumps, with the fourth heart disappearing on QC later.

Break before Finesse

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

Monday teams, and East-West do well to reach a small slam in clubs. South leads the 8D. With trumps to spare, potential losers are limited to a diamond and a spade.

There is though a chance that hearts are 3-3, or there being a doubleton J 10 in the suit, which would allow the 10D to be discarded. Moreover hearts can be tested without losing the lead, with the spade finesse to follow. Trying the finesse first leads to defeat if it fails on the reasonable assumption that another diamond would then be led.

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


North contributes the JD at T1, and there is clearly no mileage in ducking. Trumps are drawn and hearts tested. Good news: the 3-3 break indeed allows a diamond discard, and the spade finesse can now be taken in search of an overtrick. This fails, but 1370 is good. Trying the spade finesse first scores -100. Order really matters.

Finesse When You Have To

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

Monday again, and another slam for East to play. 6H on the lead of JC. Missing AS declarer can't afford a trump loser, so they might as well assume trumps are 3-2. Moreover there is nowhere to park 3D, so the diamond finesse needs to work unless you fancy trying to drop a singleton K offside. And something needs to be done about the potential spade losers too. Ruff them, or rely on them disappearing on diamonds.

There is a strong temptation to draw trumps, cross to table with a second club and take the diamond finesse. This works fine if North generously covers with the K, but given table's diamonds what is North expecting to promote by covering? The line also works if North has Kx D.

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

Unfortunately North has Kxx. QD holds, and then AD wins the next trick, but K remains at large. Declarer can return to table with the last club and ruff a diamond. The suit is now set up, but there is no access to them.

If playing to set up diamonds declarer needs to take the finesse at T2. It holds. Now draw trumps, cash AD and cross to dummy with a club (the second). Ruff a diamond - the K falls, and there is still a club left to reach the remaining diamonds, which provide resting spots for the spades.


You might make by trying to ruff spades, but depending on the layout and the defence you could run into a trump promotion for the defence. And you still need the diamond finesse. Much better to take it at T2.

Listen to the Bidding

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

North opened a club on this hand from Thursday, but that didn't prevent EW from reaching 4S. South led 9C to partner's A and followed with the 2 as the suit was returned. The contract is clearly not in danger, but being pairs you will want to take as many tricks as possible. Over to you.

Trumps are drawn, followed by AD. The singleton K tumbles from North.

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

North's opening bid makes it highly probable that they have both red Kings. Finessing in diamonds would thus be optimistic.

With no loser in diamonds declarer wraps up 12 tricks easily.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (9 tables, teams):

Janice Mitchell & Fred Thornton
Robert Boyd & John Nicholls

Tuesday F2F (8 tables, Wraight Cup Handicap):

Scratch: Andrew Peill & Steven Barron
Wraight: John & Lesley Sellar

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

= Ina Gray & Mary Anne Peden
Ray & Irene Gregory

Thursday am (5 tables):

= David Crowe & Jane Curzon
= Bob Churchward & Patricia White

Thursday BBO (3½ tables):

Martyn Harris & Alan Wearmouth

Total 31 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