

## Matters Arising 228

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 24 - 28 Mar 2025

### Red Opposite 2NT

2		A Q 9 4 3
A J 6 5 2	14	Q 7
9 8 7 6 5 2		A K 3
6		A J 7

Whatever their thoughts on hiding a five card major within a 1NT opening, most people accept that it may be necessary to conceal one within a 2NT opening. So it proved on Tuesday, with East opening 2NT on hand 14.

How might West handle their red hand in response?

Transfer and rebid 3NT is the usual way of showing a 5 card major in responder's hand, and indeed this was the option chosen at some tables. The alternative is to transfer and rebid diamonds, showing no desire to play in NT and effectively saying to partner "if you can't bid 4H bid 5D".

How would you play 3NT by East on the lead of 4C to North's Q, and 5D by West on the lead of 10D to which South follows?

3NT first. East wins T1 as it is their only chance of maintaining some control in clubs - declarer's remaining Jx now renders South a safe hand.

If diamonds are 2-2 then there are 9 tricks on top. It seems sensible to try this first. North shows out on the second diamond, leaving no sure route to success. However a third diamond puts South on the spot as a black suit switch gives declarer their 9th trick (5 in diamonds, three Aces, and a second trick in the black suit led). Should South find a heart continuation I suggest rising with the A, cashing the diamonds and taking the spade finesse as a means of keeping North off lead.

First impressions of 5D are that there is possibly a loser in each of the red suits, but closer consideration reveals that a 4-2 heart break could mean 2 losers there. Consequently declarer will want to play to ruff a heart.

Win T1 and immediately take the heart finesse. North wins and switches to something black. Win with the A, play the second top trump, then AH and a small heart ruff - the defence can only over-ruff with their natural trump trick, so you're not bothered if they do. From here it will be difficult lose anything other than that trump.

	K J 8 7	
	K 8 4	
	10	
	Q 9 8 3 2	
2		A Q 9 4 3
A J 6 5 2	14	Q 7
9 8 7 6 5 2		A K 3
6		A J 7
	10 6 5	
	10 9 3	
	Q J 4	
	K 10 5 4	

If the second round of trumps is played before tackling hearts it is possible that North might be able to play a third round when in with KH, denying you the chance of ruffing a heart. As it happens North has only the one diamond, so the precaution was not needed, and indeed as hearts are 3-3 the heart ruff isn't needed either. However it can't hurt to develop good habits for when they are needed - leaving trumps out whilst playing the first heart is unlikely to cost.

Back to 3NT, and we see that playing to keep North off lead is indeed necessary as the cards lie, and the suggested line works.

Had North had the long diamond declarer's only real hope is to glean 2 tricks in spades, 4 in hearts, 2 in diamonds and AC, and has to rely on the heart finesse working with the suit 3-3, as well as the spade one.

There is a twist though - in order to enjoy the hearts East runs the QH, ducking if South produces the K. The natural play of covering with the Ace would leave no chance of winning more than 2 heart tricks.

## Grand Options

8  
A K Q 9 7 6  
9 3  
A K 6 2

20

A K J 2  
4 3  
A K J 7 5 4  
4

With plenty of distributional values, plus all the Aces and Kings, it is not surprising that plenty of NS pairs got excited on Monday's board 20.

How would you tackle 7H by North, and would your underlying plan depend on the lead?

You might as well assume trumps split 3-2 - you will struggle to make the lot otherwise. On that assumption there are 12 easy tricks - 6 trumps

and the three side-suit AKs.

For a 13th trick there appear to be four main options:

- Rely on the spade finesse
- Rely on the diamond finesse
- Establish diamonds
- Ruff a club

On a spade lead you would need to choose between a) and b) at T1, but on other leads you could draw several rounds of trumps first and then pick between the finesses on the basis of the defensive discards.

Plan c) involves drawing trumps, then A, K and another diamond, the last being ruffed to establish the suit if originally 3-2. To enjoy the diamonds on this plan dummy has to be re-entered via a spade, so a spade lead destroys it.

Plan d) is ridiculously simple. On a club lead, win and ruff a club at T2. Draw trumps and cash out for 13 tricks. On a spade or diamond lead the club and club ruff come at T2 and T3, as they do on a trump lead. In the last case though there will then be no trump left on table to initiate drawing trumps, so declarer returns to hand via AS and a spade ruff. Notice that both black Kings are retained until trumps are drawn.

As the combined chances of 7-1 and 8-0 club breaks is about 3%, plans a) to c) shouldn't get a look in.

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

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (8 tables): Chris Walker & Chris Wilkinson

Tuesday F2F (8 tables): Andrew Peill & Steven Barron

Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday am (5 tables):

Sarah Bullock & Diana Smethurst

Thursday BBO (3 tables): Irene & Ray Gregory

Total 29½ 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