

Matters Arising 229

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 31 Mar - 4 Apr 2025

Oh No, Not Again!

J 9 7 5

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A 10 9 7 5

9 7 6 2



A K Q 10 6 4

A 10 5 3

6 3

4

Monday board 15. EW have lots of hearts and the balance of the points, but NS hold the spades. As so often happens the spades usually won the auction, and South found themselves declaring game against a defence that saw West attempt to cash the two top clubs.

How should declarer tackle their assignment, and how many tricks will this lead to?

Two red Aces join 6 trumps in the top tricks count, so two more are needed to land the 4S contract. If diamonds are 3-3 then the suit can be established for those two extra tricks, but a more likely 4-2 break would lead to just one extra diamond being set up.

Dummy's heart void though screams ruff hearts, and declarer has 3 small ones to ruff. That would be three extra tricks leading to 11 in total. Of course you can't get those heart ruffs if you draw trumps first, so go straight for the ruffs.

T1 is lost of course, but then play goes ruff the club continuation at T2, ruff a heart, AD, ruff another club, ruff heart high, ruff club, ruff heart high, draw trumps in at most 3 rounds and enjoy AH. Eleven tricks - 3 club ruffs, 3 heart ruffs, 3 top trumps and 2 red Aces.

J 9 7 5

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A 10 9 7 5

9 7 6 2

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Q J 9 8 6 4

Q J 4

A K J 5



A K Q 10 6 4

A 10 5 3

6 3

4

8 3 2

K 7 2

K 8 2

Q 10 8 3

The lure of drawing trumps was just too strong for some declarers, after which there is but one heart ruff available. Assuming that trumps have been drawn at tricks 3, 4 and 5, declarer can still rescue their contract as diamonds are 3-3, by ducking a diamond at T6. Say the defence switches to a heart. Win with A, AD, ruff a diamond, and enter dummy via a heart ruff to enjoy the 2 long diamonds. Ten tricks salvaged. Note the

importance here of ducking the first diamond to ensure enough entries to establish and enjoy the diamonds.

And Again!

Thursday, and another board on which the holders of the spades usually won the auction. Try your hand at 4S by North on the lead of KH.

Five natural trump tricks and the three side-suit Aces represent an easy 8 tricks. The other two tricks needed will have to come from ruffs.

The easy suit to ruff is diamonds, but that would be ruffing in the long trump hand, which doesn't generate

extra tricks as it simply turns natural trump tricks into ruffing ones. There are though two doubletons on the table, presenting the opportunity for a ruff in each of hearts and clubs.

Duck the opening lead - there was no indication in the bidding that East holds 7 hearts. Win the heart continuation and ruff your last heart with 6S. Now A and another club to set up the club ruff.

K J 9 8 7 2

A 10 6

4

9 6 3

A 5 3

8 5 3 2

K 10 9 8

K 8



Q 10 6 4

7 4

A J 6 5 2

A 7

K J 9 8 7 2

A 10 6

4

9 6 3



Q 10 6 4

7 4

A J 6 5 2

A 7

extra tricks as it simply turns natural trump tricks into ruffing ones. There are though two doubletons on the table, presenting the opportunity for a ruff in each of hearts and clubs.

West wins with KC and plays A and another trump to try to reduce your ruffs. It is too late though for the defence, and your 10 planned tricks duly arrive.

Drawing trumps usually won't hurt, since normally they will split 2-1 and you then have two left in dummy with which to ruff. With the 3-0 break though three rounds of trumps will leave you a trick short.


Still A Chance

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

If you like variety you'll have to put up with this hand from Thursday being played by West rather than NS, as once more we are in 4S. The 10H runs around to the Q, and on a normal 2-2 trump break we can count 8 trumps, 2 hearts, AC, and a choice between the club finesse and leading towards AD as a try for a 12th trick.

It seems to be Kendal's Trumps Don't Break Week though, for South shows out on the first round of spades. Can you see how declarer might still be able to find 12 tricks? Its a less than a 50-50 chance, but still better than nothing.

There is a certain trump loser, and the defence could cash AD if forced to take their trump early, so we limit ourselves to taking just the top two trumps. For any chance of 12 tricks the club finesse will need to work. You could hope that North is dozy and refuses to cover the QC so that you can make 3 club tricks, discarding your diamond on the third, but that does seem a bit optimistic. The other useful card in dummy is JH. Maybe someone (presumably South) started with Kxx in hearts and we can ruff the K out.

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

After AK S comes QC covered by K and A. a small heart is ruffed and indeed the K tumbles. Back to JC to discard the diamond on JH. This line also works against the aforementioned dozy North, without the need to ruff out the heart. Against the odds chances like this usually fail of course, but if there is nothing better to try they might as well be played.

Should South have played KH at T1? It is not needed if North has QH, and after an auction in which West has promised a whole string of trumps (eg 4S, all pass) North will surely not have risked underleading an Ace. Had North led 4th best then the play of the K would

have been more natural as the small heart would be suggestive of a decent honour.

Thanks Tim

Tim has pointed out that in Matters 227 *Break before Finesse* I claimed a suit split 3-3 when a quick look at the diagram shows otherwise. This means that the line I gave doesn't work either, though the principle still applies.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7½ tables): Chris Walker & Chris Wilkinson

Tuesday F2F (8½ tables):

NS: Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

EW: Sheila Wilson & Chris Needham

Tuesday BBO (5 tables): Roger & Catherine Preston

Thursday am (6 tables): Jean Dale & Moira Williams

Thursday BBO (4 tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

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