

## Matters Arising 234

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 5 - 9 May 2025

### Finesse & Discard

8 6 5 2  
K 8 6 5  
7 5  
A K 5

There was no difficulty in reaching the obvious 4S contract by South against silent opposition on this hand from Monday's play.



A K J 10 9  
A  
A 8 4 2  
J 7 4

The play against the opening lead of QD wasn't hard either, though declarer did have 2 questions to answer:

- Whether to finesse in spades,
- what to discard on KH.

Declarer wins opening lead and cashes AH to unblock the suit. Next comes AS - if East has all the trumps this will reveal a marked finesse. Imagine if you could now immediately lead a trump from table and East follows. Finesse or not? We have seen no clues as to the whereabouts of QS, so halfway through this trick West has one more card left than East so a bit more space to hold the QS. Thus the odds slightly favour playing for the drop. Realising that that would be the case if East follows, and that if East shows out nothing works, declarer might as well lay down the KS without wasting time and entries crossing to dummy to lead trumps from there. Any hint though that QS is East is enough to go for the finesse instead.

Today the Q drops. Next comes a club to table and KH. What to discard? The 2D looks very unlikely to win a trick, and some players will always discard their smallest card on this basis. However we have to lose 1 diamond, and after that the others are effectively winners for they can be ruffed. A club discard on the other hand is useful, for now there will be no club loser as you now get to ruff dummy's third club.

8 6 5 2  
K 8 6 5  
7 5  
A K 5

Q 4  
J 9 2  
Q J 10 6 3  
10 9 2

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

A K J 10 9  
A  
A 8 4 2  
J 7 4

On the night most people indeed made 12 tricks losing just a diamond. Finessing in spades costs a trick though, as does discarding a diamond rather than a club on KH.

### Game

A J 10 6 2  
J 7  
K 10  
K 8 3 2



K Q 4  
A K 10 5  
J 8 5 2  
J 7

1NT - 2H - 2S - 3NT - 4S seems the natural transfer auction on Monday's board 22, though in fact most pairs reached 3NT and one languished in 3S.

4S can't be stopped, and 3NT can be held to 8 tricks, but things didn't always turn out that way, with neither the killing defence in 3NT being automatic, nor the successful play there if EW deviate from their best line.

In 4S West leads 7D and West gobbles up the first two tricks with their AQ. From here declarer has little choice. They must lose to the AC so have to assume that AC is onside, for they lack 10C which would give them the option of finessing against the Q to lose just one club trick if A offside. A successful heart finesse allows a club to be discarded on the third round, but as dummy's third club can be ruffed and the fourth discarded on JD nothing has actually been achieved other than taking on the risk that the heart finesse fails.

Typical line. At T3 East switches to a trump which declarer wins in hand to lead a club to the K which wins. Then comes a club to J and A. A second trump is won on table with East following, and a club ruffed. Now 8D is ruffed high and the last trump drawn. AK H, discard the last club on JD and dummy has just a trump left. Contract makes.

A J 10 6 2  
J 7  
K 10  
K 8 3 2

9 8 7  
Q 9 4  
9 7 6 4  
A 9 4

5 3  
8 6 3 2  
A Q 3  
Q 10 6 5

K Q 4  
A K 10 5  
J 8 5 2  
J 7

A heart switch by East at T2 is reasonable, as they may fear that declarer has JD and hence cashing the second diamond allows declarer a heart discard from table. It also gives declarer a losing choice, for if East has QH declarer can count 5 spades, 4 hearts by running the switch to the J and later finessing the 10, which with a



diamond to come by force is 10 tricks. Three clubs are discarded on red suit winners. However this is only worth doing if East has AC as well as QH, whilst the early play in diamonds would suggest East has AQ D. But they didn't open 1NT - either the heart finesse fails and with it the contract, or AC is onside and the previous line works with a little bit of extra effort to set up JD.

## **Around The Club**

This weeks winners were

Monday (7½ tables): Russell White & Jeremy Harris

Tuesday F2F (7 tables, teams):

Robert Harvey & Russell White

Helen Adams & Patricia White

Tuesday BBO (4 tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday am (5 tables): Bernard & Sabina Houssin

Thursday BBO (5 tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Total 28½ 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