

## Matters Arising 249

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

### Plan

K Q 10 9 5  
A K 10 9 7  
5  
7 2

Monday, and you are South in 4S on the lead of 8H after West opened 1NT.

Over to you.

11

J 8 4 2

--

A K 10 8 6  
J 6 4 3

There are 4 top tricks in the red suits, with a possibility of another in diamonds if the suit is 4-3. Clubs are unlikely to contribute, so we need at least 5 trump tricks, 6 if the extra diamond doesn't materialise or we choose not to chase it. As there are 4

natural trump tricks, that means 2 ruffs in the short hand will be needed.

Drawing trumps would be fine if we could be certain they are 2-2, but a 3-1 split would leave us with only 1 trump in the short hand with which to ruff. The bidding though does indicate that the defence have no singletons or voids other than possibly in trumps, barring West having 6 clubs.

There is no need to take the top hearts before ruffing. Suggested line: at T1 follow low from table and ruff in hand. AK D discard a club. Small spade towards table.

If the defence don't win their A you can immediately ruff a second heart in hand and lead another trump. The most that can be lost is AS, AC and a heart.

If the defence do take their AS on the first round, even returning one won't stop a second heart ruff, and the contract makes in a similar fashion.

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

Trumps are 3-1. Removing them first will leave declarer a trick short as they only have one ruff in the South hand and will be unable to set up and cash a long diamond trick.

As is often the case ruffing small hearts before taking the winners in the suit makes life easy.

### How To Lose A Trick

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

With 8 card fits and 6 losers opposite 7 EW naturally felt they could make a 4 level contract, yet the duplicated shape meant they had no way of arranging to escape a loser in spades, one in diamonds and two in clubs. Even a ruff and discard provided by a second diamond wouldn't help whichever of their 4-4 fits they played in.

Yet three declarers on Tuesday made 10 tricks thanks to their defences each finding a different way of losing one of their club winners.

One North led away from their KC at T2, having won the opening diamond trick against East's 4H.

Another played their J rather than 8 when a small club was led towards the A. Naturally the A won and a club went to 10, Q and K. The 9 was now boss.

The third variation saw South play their 10 when the clubs were opened by a small one being led towards the Q. Showing a doubleton maybe. The Q duly lost to the K and on their next play of the suit a correct declarer decision (as the cards lie) to finesse the 9 again saw just one club loser when their should have been 2.

Perhaps all were variations on the theme of trying too hard - opening the club suit when letting declarer sort their own problems would have fared better, or contributing an early high card in an attempt to stop a possible attempt at a cheap win.

## 2NT?

A K Q J 2  
9 8  
K Q J  
K J 2

Opening 2NT with a small doubleton is, or at least should be known to be fraught with danger.




On Tuesday all six Norths opened 2NT, and with only one pair being equipped with 5 card Stayman, five ended up in 3NT. Yes, East found a heart lead. No, it wasn't away from the A.

10 9 5  
K  
9 5 4 3  
A 7 6 5 4

North might stretch to claiming to hold 8 playing tricks and open 2C if that is how they treat such hands, but 1S will rarely miss game, for if partner cannot respond then game will be at best thin.

1S – 1NT – 3C/D – 3S – 4S is a straightforward route to the major suit game. Using a 3 card minor as a forcing bid is not uncommon, and South would avoid giving immediate support to it if at all possible.

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


West enjoys the first seven tricks against 3NT, but with QC onside 4S makes with an overtrick.

## Exit

Playing in 1NT when the defence have the majority of the points can be soul destroying. Being doubled at the same time is a far from enjoyable experience.

No surprise then that various conventions exist to get you out of 1NTX into something hopefully a little less disastrous.

My preference is to turn the normal response to 1NT system off, and have all responses natural and to play on 5+ card suits. Others will swear by exit transfers, whereby all bids are transfers, with XX a transfer to clubs. Both approaches allow an escape into any suit. Escaping when holding no 5 card suit normally involves more complex manoeuvres,

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

Tuesday's board 12 saw West doubled in 1NT, except at one table where West elected to pass. There NS had no difficulty bidding to 4H.

An unalerted exit transfer of 2C was brushed aside by South, who was happy to bid 3NT anticipating clubs in the East hand. Had the transfer been alerted then South could double to show their clubs and values, for doubles of conventional bids normally show the suit bid, and North would have bid the NT game.

2D, natural causes South some difficulty. Partner has 15+ points, so a NS game is indicated. However a double of 2D is likely to be taken as penalties, which South certainly won't want, and 3C may or may not be regarded as forcing. Deep breath, 3NT may be the answer, for if South passes North may well do so too.

And 1NTX? 4 hearts, 5 clubs and a diamond through declarer gives the defence at least 11 tricks. At least 1100.

## Nine Needed

Tuesday board 14, and you are West in 3NT on the lead of 6H. Over to you.

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



Four top spades and two red AKs will provide 8 tricks, and there is a 2-way finesse in diamonds, so you know the contract can be made. Equally you can see that the defence are liable to take at least 2 hearts and AK C, so a wrong guess in diamonds will be fatal. One's thoughts therefore naturally turn away from playing diamonds.

Duck the first heart. It is possible that the defence will switch, though unlikely. It may also start undermining defensive communications, but the main reason for the duck is to see what is played on the second heart trick. In particular you anticipate seeing the 3, and if South produces it then the 6 led was all but certainly 4th best.

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



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

South wins T1 with QH and naturally returns the 3, strongly hinting at a 4–4 break. That means declarer can afford to attack clubs to set up a ninth trick there whilst the defence comes to 2 clubs and 2 hearts.

Diamonds can be guessed right, but might not be. The 4–4 heart break makes the club play safe.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (Teams, 11 tables):

Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell  
John MacLachlan & Robin Rose

Tuesday F2F (8 tables): Robert Boyd & Sarah Bullock

Tuesday BBO (6 tables): Janet & David Owen

Thursday am (5 tables): Helen Finch & Moira Williams

Thursday BBO (5½ tables + 6 Wearside):

NS: Iain Gordon & John Dobson  
(Best K: Dudley Hargreaves & Gay Talbot 4=)

EW: Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 35½ 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