

Matters Arising 250

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 25 - 29 Aug 2025

No Rush


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

Monday and you are West in 5D on the lead of the KH, the auction having started 1D – 1H – 2D – 2H around the table commencing with your opening bid.

There are 2 inescapable club losers, so best assume the trumps can be picked up without loss. Ruffing two hearts on table and correctly guessing the 2-way spade finesse will then see you home.


One line is win T1, ruff a heart, diamond to hand and ruff your last heart. Diamond to hand to complete the drawing of trumps. To avoid guessing spades you exit with a club, but instead of opening spades for you the defence continue hearts, forcing you to ruff in hand and play spades yourself eventually.

Suppose you make an early play in clubs. Defenders averse to lead trumps or a suit they can see you can ruff will continue with a black suit. A spade solves the 2-way finesse problem, whilst a club continuation helps set up dummy's clubs for a spade discard. Playing off AK D first looks right, unless the Q tumbles on the first round - a second round of trumps in that case would allow the defence to play a third round when in with a club, removing one of your heart ruffs.

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


AH, AK D, lose a club to South say. A heart sees your J covered by the Q and ruff. Another club. Defence win and lead another heart. A third club ruffed establishes the suit for a spade discard, with AS as entry to achieve it. If clubs fail to break you can always fall back on the spade guess, whilst there is the chance that black suit play by the defence will solve your problems.

Mind-Reading?

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

You are West on this hand from Thursday, defending 2C which North bid as a natural overcall of your 1NT opening. Partner led the 2S. Naturally you rise with A. Now what?

Partner seems very likely to have 4 spades, both from the lead and from the bidding: if they held five they might well have called over 2C unless very weak, and if North held five they might well have bid them in preference to their clubs. There is thus a strong suggestion that North will have 4 spades. How will they want to play the hand? By ruffing spade losers on table. A trump switch is called for.

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

On a trump switch declarer only gets one spade ruff. Even if they rise with AC and take an immediate ruff they have no way back to hand for a second ruff - they will have to allow the defence in who can then led a second round of trumps. If they can only ruff one spade they lose two tricks there - the A at T1 and another later. 2 hearts and a trick in each minor are enough to defeat the contract. Allowing two ruffs gives declarer KS, 2 spade ruffs, a heart and 4 natural trump tricks in hand for tick.

Moral: It is not only declarer who might wish to draw trumps.

The Third Round


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

Thursday, and you are West in a spade contract. North leads a trump. Naturally, as it's pairs you want to take as many tricks as you can. Over to you.

On a normal 3–2 trump break you have no losers there, and clubs are completely covered. Your singleton diamond will be taken care of by dummy's A, which just leaves hearts to worry about. There may be some guesswork involved to avoid losing both the first two rounds in hearts, but what of the third round?

There seem to be two possibilities - take the diamond finesse or arrange to ruff it. The former is a straight 50% chance, the latter relies on the third heart not being over-ruffed and on the defence not getting a ruff elsewhere whilst you set yours up. No sums, but surely the latter is the better chance.

Win T1 on table and immediately lead a heart.

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

South can rise with A and lead a second trump which again you win on table. Heart to K, ruff third heart, club to K, draw last trump, and you have 12 tricks. If South ducks the heart you are on a guess. Get it right by rising with the K and you now concede a heart. Trump continuation, win on table. Cross to hand with KC, ruff last heart, AD, ruff D, draw last trump. 12 tricks. Guess the heart wrong and you make just 11.

In 4S there is little to go on to inform your heart guess. However if you are in slam there is a slight tendency for defenders to lead an Ace if they have one, so here the lack of a heart lead would hint at AH South. Far from foolproof as an inference, but perhaps better than nothing.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Russell White & Jeremy Harris

Tuesday F2F (9 tables):

NS: Andrew Peill & Steven Barron

EW: Brenda Richardson & Sarah Bullock

Tuesday BBO (4½ tables):

Keith Bainbridge & Gay Talbot

Thursday am (5 tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Thursday BBO (5 K & 4½ Wearside tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 30½ 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