

## Matters Arising 255

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 29 Sep - 3 Oct 2025


### Best of a Bad Job

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

Monday, and a bidding accident has put you, West, in 3NT after South opened 1C. North's club lead comes as no surprise. Over to you.

You might well prefer to be in 4S, but your task is to find 9 tricks to beat those who failed to reach any game. At first sight the assignment looks easy - 6 spades, 2 clubs and at least two diamonds. Hearts may not contribute, but the combined holding provides an eventual stop against any distribution.

The club lead is a nuisance, removing an entry to dummy, which you might want for the long spades. You could of course cash AJ S and rely on KH as entry, but that would need North to hold AH. As you and partner have a combined 26 count, and South opened, that doesn't seem like a good plan. Overtake JS then on the second round of the suit, playing for a 3-2 break.

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

When spades fail to break you can cash the third spade winner, but cannot afford to set the suit up by leading a fourth round - that would allow North in and whether they led 10H through table or simply continued clubs you would be in trouble. A diamond switch from table, relying on diamonds being 3-3 is required.

Looking forwards at the start you can see that if spades don't behave you will need the diamond suit, so tackle diamonds at T2. Whatever you do, don't forget the bidding, which tells you that South is all but certain to have both the red Aces. Any line that requires North to have one should be rejected.

### Lead

3 You are South at love all on Tuesday. East  
A Q 5 deals and opens 1S, which West raises to  
Q J 8 4 2S following your 2C overcall, ending the  
A J 10 8 2 auction. What do you lead?

Admit it. On most hands you would happily delegate the task of choosing an opening lead to partner, and this hand isn't an exception. One is often torn between trying to set up and/or take one's own tricks before declarer has a chance to dispose of their losers, and avoiding giving declarer any undeserved tricks. The former approach is known as active defence, the latter as passive. Inexperienced players are inevitably drawn towards being active, experienced ones know that there is a time and place for both approaches.

The bidding suggests that the opposition aren't packed with goodies, and it is not clear on which side-suit you have to fear declarer discarding their losers. You are in no hurry.

Would you lead 5H? Might work a treat if partner has the K, and may not cost if the K is on the table. But if partner does have KH, are our heart tricks going anywhere? No, so no need to lead a heart.

The same applies, only more forcibly to clubs. Why more forcibly? Because with five in your hand someone is known to have at most 2 clubs. Since you are intending to take one club trick with the A a club lead ensures that whoever has the K will take the other certain club trick - any other clubs may be ruffed. Fine if partner has the K. It may not be OK if K is on table - eg Kxx on table, Qx in declarer's hand when a club lead allows them 2 tricks instead of one.

Better to turn down the aggression and lead either a trump or QD. Either could be wrong - the trump solving a 2-way finesse conundrum for declarer if partner has the Q, the diamond costing a trick if dummy has say ATx and declarer the K.

	10 8	
	K 10 8 6 4	
	K 9 7 2	
	Q 3	
K Q 9 5 4	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">14</div>	A J 7 6 2
7 3 2		J 9
5		A 10 6 3
7 6 5 4		K 9
	3	
	A Q 5	
	Q J 8 4	
	A J 10 8 2	

On a club lead declarer loses just 2 hearts and AC for 10 tricks as they can ruff 3 diamonds even if they start by drawing trumps. On a trump or QD lead (and as it happens on a heart one too, though that would be good fortune) declarer has no way of avoiding a second club loser.

## Free Finesse?

Q 5  
Q J 9  
A Q 6 3  
Q 6 5 3

23

A J 3  
A 7 5 4 3 2  
10  
A 9 7

You are South on this hand from Thursday, with your 1H opening bid leading via an uncontested auction to a heart game. West leads 10S. Thoughts?

A reassuring lead leaving you with no spade losers. Assuming you will ruff a third round of spades then you will need trumps 2-2 with K onside to avoid a trump loser. Best assume we have one. No diamond loser, one or two in clubs depending on the location of the K. Prospects look good.

Is that a free finesse in diamonds? If it works you get away a club on AD, and if it doesn't you still get a club discard. Sounds like it, except that if KC is onside your club discard wouldn't be of a loser - you can't discard the one that would lose under KC but keep the one to be played under QC. Thus there is no point in the diamond finesse unless KC wrong, in which case playing for split honours from different suits - KD and KC - and taking it would now allow a useful club discard.

You call for the small spade from table at T1 - you never know East might rise with the K relieving you of the need to ruff the third round. However East plays small and you win with J. AS and spade ruff follow, and then QH. East plays the K, you win with the A, losing some of your feeling of well-being when West shows out. A quick check of the pips of the missing trumps tells you you have to lose 2 trump tricks.

Time to see whether you need the diamond finesse by playing a club towards the Q. West rises with the K and

switches to a diamond. With nothing useful to discard from hand the finesse is of no use, so rise with A, cash JH and play on clubs.

	Q 5	
	Q J 9	
	A Q 6 3	
	Q 6 5 3	
10 9 7 6 2	<div style="border: 2px solid red; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">23</div>	K 8 4
--		K 10 8 6
9 8 7 4 2		K J 5
K 10 8		J 4 2
	A J 3	
	A 7 5 4 3 2	
	10	
	A 9 7	

Testing the clubs first to see if you need the diamond finesse allows the contract to make for the loss of KC and two trumps. Had the minor suit Kings been in the opposite hands you still make, for now after losing to KC East you take diamond finesse. However with the actual layout taking the finesse before testing clubs to see if it is needed would leave you with a loser in each minor.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7½ tables): Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell

Tuesday F2F (9½ tables):

NS: Mary Simm & Jennifer Spence

EW: Robert Harvey & Russell White

Tuesday BBO (2½ tables + 2½ Barrow):

Julie Colin Hillyer

Best Kendal: David & Janet Owen (2nd)

Thursday am 5½ tables):

Bob Churchward & Sue Van Eijkern

Thursday BBO (4½ tables + 4½ Wearside):

Brenda Osborne & Peter Avery

Best K: Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris (3)

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