

Matters Arising 256

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 6 - 10 Oct 2025

5-3 or 4-4

A 10 9		K Q J 5 3
K Q 10 3	11	A 9 4 2
9 6 4		8
10 7 2		A Q 6

Thursday board 11, and EW had the choice of playing in a 5-3 spade fit or a 4-4 heart one. No-one chose NT, which given the diamond holding was just as well.

Assuming both major suits break 3-2 then in spades there are 5 spade tricks, 4 hearts and one or two clubs depending on the location of the KC. 10 or 11 tricks in total.

In hearts declarer arranges to ruff two diamonds before drawing trumps. They make 5 spades, 2 diamond ruffs, 4 natural trump tricks and AC for 12 tricks. There is no point in taking the club finesse in many lines for there is always a diamond loser so never more than 12 tricks. It is just a matter of whether the defence can make communications too difficult to get the ruffs and draw trumps, forcing declarer back on the club finesse for the twelfth trick.

		8 6 4
		8 7 5
		A Q 5 3
		K 5 3
A 10 9		K Q J 5 3
K Q 10 3	11	A 9 4 2
9 6 4		8
10 7 2		A Q 6
		7 2
		J 6
		K J 10 7 2
		J 9 8 4

On JD lead life is easy. North wins but even a club switch doesn't hurt. Rise with A, spade to 10, ruff diamond. Spade to A, ruff diamond. 4 rounds of hearts discarding clubs. East's spades are good.

Overtricks Matter

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

Ideally one would want to be in 3NT on Thursday's board 2 even though the spade suit is problematic, but several pairs stopped short in 3D. There should be no risk to the contract, but at match points simply making the contract is not always sufficient.

After a spade lead and continuation from North, declarer ruffs T2. The only potential losers in hand are in clubs, one of which is unavoidable. The other two can disappear though, one by being ruffed and the other on AH. Declarer cashes one top diamond, KQ H and AC before losing a club.

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

The defence are powerless to prevent declarer's plan coming to fruition.

Should declarer take 2 rounds of trumps, perhaps hoping for a 2-2 break, then when South is in with a club they can lead their last trump and prevent the club ruff and subsequent discard on AH. Declarer is restricted to the 9 obvious tricks in hand and a fortuitous 2nd club trick when the 9 comes to the top for the last round.

11 tricks in a diamond part-score was worth 7 out of 14 match-points on the night, 10 tricks just 2. The extra trick was well worth having.

Major Advantage

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

You don't need to have played the game for long to learn that if there are the same number of tricks available in both NT and in a major suit contract then the NT contract scores better. This can lead some players to seek to play in NT at every opportunity. However that *if* in the first sentence is a big one, for in a suit contract there may be a ruff in a 4-4 fit, a ruff in the short hand in a 5-3 fit or the trumps may simply prevent the defence running a long suit.

Monday's board 3 featured a 5-3 heart fit in which a club ruff before trumps are drawn leaves declarer with an easy 11 tricks, losing just to AS and AD. In NT an attack on either minor would see the defence gain at least one non-Ace trick before declarer can find 11.

How does one reach 4H after an auction that will naturally start 1H - 1S - 1NT?


East rebids 3H. After 1H - 1S - 2C say, opener has shown 5 hearts and 3H would simply be jump preference, leaving opener to decide whether to continue. 1NT doesn't promise 5 hearts, yet 3H is presumably only secondary support. Responder can't be keen to play in a 4-3 fit at the 3 level, so 3H is forcing, giving opener the choice of games. Further, if opener does have only 4 hearts they can show secondary support for spades en route to 3NT in case responder has 5 spades and there is a 5-3 fit there.

Q J 3		K 8 7 5	1H - 1S
A Q J 9 2		K 10 7	1NT - 3H
Q 4		K 9 7 3	4H
A 5 2		K 9	

Q J		K 8 7 5	1H - 1S
A Q J 9		K 10 7	1NT - 3H
Q 4 2		K 9 7 3	3NT
A 5 3 2		K 9	

Q J 3		K 8 7 5 2	1H - 1S
A Q J 9		K 10 7	1NT - 3H
Q 4		K 9 7	3S - 4S
A 5 3 2		K 9	

Q J 3		K 8 7 5	1H - 1S
A Q J 9		K 10 7	1NT - 3H
Q 4		K 9 7 3	3S - 3NT
A 5 3 2		K 9	

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

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Bob Churchward & Lynn Percival

Tuesday F2F (7½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (2½ K tables + 2½ Barrow):

David & Janet Owen

Thursday am (7 tables):

NS: Bernard & Sabina Houssin

EW: Sarah Bullock & Diana Smethurst

Thursday BBO (3½ K tables + 5 Wearside):

Linda White & Jackie Stabler

Total 27½ 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