

Matters Arising 262

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 17 - 21 Nov 2025

Bad Luck?

A Q J 3 2
7 5 2
K 7
K Q 8



K 9 8 4
J 10 4 3
4
A 9 4 3

Monday, and you are North in 3S after West opened 1D. Naturally East leads a diamond which West wins before cashing three top hearts with East discarding a diamond on the third one. Then comes another heart. Over to you.

Five spades, at least 3 clubs plus KD means there should be no problem in securing the rest, though hopefully you are sufficiently awake to ruff the fourth heart with the JS rather than a small one which would allow East to

overruff and defeat the contract.

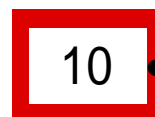
You then draw trumps and it is all over, or at least should be. Having used the JS to ruff you now have only the three top trumps so could run into trouble against a 4-0 break. You can guard against this by the simple play of cashing AS first. If either defender shows out there is a finesse against the 10 in the marked hand for the 9 8 on table support a running finesse against West if needed.

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

Those who started by laying down KS left themselves with an inescapable trump loser to East. Unlucky that trumps were 4-0 in the hand they could now not finesse against, but an avoidable defeat with the correct preventative play.

Dead Finesse

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



K 9
A K J 10 8 4
J 10 9
5 2

Monday was teams night, and several declarers ran into trouble playing 3NT as West on the lead of 3C.

One can imagine South winning T1 with the A and returning the Q with declarer winning either the second or third round. In hand declarer took the heart finesse which loses. The defence cashed their clubs - the original 3C lead correctly implying the suit was 4-4, before South led a diamond. This too was finessed, and declarer cursed their luck when North produced KD to defeat the contract.

Declarer was guilty of thinking insufficiently deeply. Assuming hearts are no worse than 4-2 then after losing to QH they can count 5 heart tricks, 2 spades, KC and AD, assuming of course that no hearts were discarded on the defence's club tricks. The diamond finesse is not needed, and indeed having already lost 4 tricks a successful finesse would not bring in an extra trick anyway.

It is also possible to sidestep any problem with a 5-1 heart break by playing on diamonds instead of hearts. After KC cross to table and run JD. This time you are looking for four diamond tricks, KC and two in each major without taking the heart finesse. The diamond spots are big enough to bring in 4 tricks against any bad break in the suit.

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

Double Dummy?

	A K 4	
	Q 6 4	
	A J 5	
	K 6 5 2	
Q 10 9 8 7 5	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">17</div>	J 6
A 5		8 7 3
Q 10		9 8 7 4
J 10 3		Q 8 7 4
	3 2	
	K J 10 9 2	
	K 6 3 2	
	A 9	

You are South in hearts on this hand from Thursday, facing JC lead. Your task is to make 12 tricks double dummy. There is more than one successful line, (at least) one of which follows fairly closely what for many would be the natural line. Think your thoughts and read on.

Ignore the EW hands for the time being and concentrate on the view from the South hand. North can take care of all South's black suit losers, whilst QH fills the hole in South's trump suit, meaning this can be picked up for the loss of just the A.

This leaves diamonds, where a 3–3 with Q onside allows the suit to be picked up without loss.

Thus it would be fairly natural to win T1 with AC and lead K trumps. Suppose West wins the first round and switches back to 3C. Win with the K and play QH, discovering the suit is 3–2 as normal.

At this point many declarers would draw the last trump before tackling diamonds, and be disappointed to have to lose a diamond at the end when the suit breaks 4–2, which of course is normal when missing 6 cards.

Imagine though leaving the last trump out before tackling diamonds.

If diamonds are 3–3 then three rounds of diamonds hold up, so now draw the last trump before playing the 13th diamond.

If the third diamond is ruffed by the defence whilst this may look bad - a diamond winner being ruffed - it means that the suit was 4–2 and you get the trick back by being able to ruff the 4th and otherwise losing diamond. Thus you are no worse off than if you had drawn the last trump.

There is another possibility though, reflected in the actual layout, that the defensive hand short in diamonds is also short in trumps. Now the 3rd diamond holds and you get to ruff the fourth one too.

Thus not drawing the last trump gives an extra chance of the same hand being short in hearts and diamonds, a standard play of which it is useful to be aware.

Rather than looking from South's point of view, we could choose North's. To them assuming the diamond finesse works there is just one loser in the red suits, to AH, and the small black cards can be taken care of by South one via AC, the other by ruffs. However three ruffs in South hand mean that trumps cannot be drawn in their entirety, and that QH will be needed to draw the last round after the ruffing has taken place.

Play might go: win AC at T1 and lead KH. West wins and continues clubs. Win with K and ruff a club. Cash JH. AK S and spade ruff, diamond finesse and club ruff. Diamond to A, cash QH discarding a diamond, leaving KD to win the last trick.

Moving fully into double dummy territory we note that East started with a doubleton spade. Since with the help of the diamond finesse we count 11 tricks (2S, 4H, 3D, 2C) with at least some hearts coming after the loss of the A we will be in squeeze territory wanting all the tricks with apparently just one loser left. With West having to look after spades and East diamonds this could be a double squeeze posing the question who will look after the clubs?

There is indeed a double squeeze there that could be used to make 6NT too, though the squeeze is broken by a club lead and continuation. Those who understand squeezes might like to check they can get it to work on a spade lead. The position you are seeking to reach is

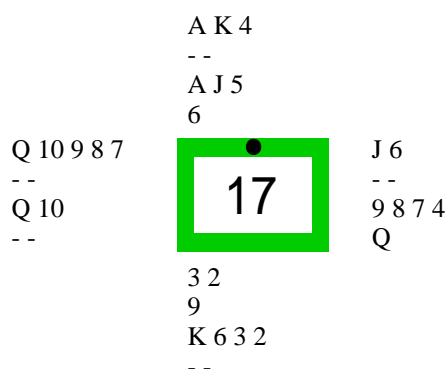
	4	
	--	
	--	
	K 6	
Q	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">17</div>	--
--		--
--		9
J 10		Q 8
	--	
	9	
	6	
	9	

Declarer has only two more winners, 9H and KC, yet the play of 9H causes heartache for the defence. West must keep QS to prevent table's 4 coming to the top, so has to discard a club. The 4S can now be thrown, it's job done. Whatever East now throws will be wrong: discard 9D and South's 6 makes, discard a club and North's 6 comes to the top.

Several Norths made 12 tricks in NT on the night, not via the double squeeze but through an early diamond discard from East even though they knew they were in charge of looking after diamonds as they could see the 4 diamonds on table.

A further squeeze is available in hearts but not in NT.

Declarer draws trumps and ruffs a club, isolating the club menace against East alone, leaving them trying to protect both minor suits.



The position after three rounds each of trumps and clubs in some order, with the third club having been ruffed. AK S removes East's remaining none-working cards, and a spade ruff squeezes East in the minors so they have to decide whether to allow declarer to score 6C or a 4th diamond.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday Ellis Cup Final (4 teams)

John Ellwood & Ray Gregory

Brian Smith & Carl Penson

Monday (9 tables teams):

Bernard Houssin & Ralph Rogerson

Phillip Burley & Sarah Bullock

Tuesday F2F (7½ tables):

Andrew Peill & Steven Barron

Wraight Cup winners:

Sarah Bullock & Brenda Richardson

Tuesday BBO (4½ K tables + 2 Barrow):

Patricia Palmer & Graeme Walker

Best K: 2 Mary Sapsford & Vanessa Cordwell

Thursday am (5½ tables):

Bernard & Sabina Houssin

Thursday BBO (4½ Kendal tables + 6 Wearside):

John Dobson & Iain Gordon

Best K: Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell (2nd)

Total 35 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