

Matters Arising 61

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal Online 10 - 14 Jan 2022

Let Him Ruff

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



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

Tuesday, and at several tables North found themselves declaring 4H on the lead of a black J. No doubt several were cursing when they saw dummy, for on normal breaks there are an easy 12 tricks (6H, 5S, AD). When the lead was JC West won with A and switched to a low trump, whereas on JS lead declarer was in at trick one.

Drawing trumps looks right, but East shows out on the second round. West started with 5, so has a natural trump trick. Those with a one track mind continued drawing all the trumps so that West was on lead after the fifth round. No surprises when a club came back, and with the A over the Q the defence came to 3 club tricks and a trump for one off. One moment declarer was worried about missing a slam, the next they found themselves off in game!

As the saying goes, there is another way. Suppose you draw 4 rounds of trumps and then switch to spades. If West has 2 or fewer spades he can ruff in and switch to a club. As with the draw all the trumps line you are now dependent on West having started with AK C so that you only lose 2 tricks in the suit.

But suppose West has at three spades. Then on the lead of a 4th spade from table you can discard a club, and even if West ruffs the most the defence can now get is the ruff and 2 clubs.

6 5 4
9 8 6 5 4
Q 10
A 7 5

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



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

J 8
10
K 8 7 3
K J 10 9 8 2

As is so often the case when the defence has a late boss trump letting them use it to ruff turns out better than forcing them to win it on one of your trumps.

Same Again

Next board, and North is in game again, this time 4S on the lead of the 2H. This runs around tamely to the 9 and J. A pretend finesse of 9D is followed by a real one of the QS, which holds. Now the AS, and rightly or wrongly a third trump. East shows out, so West wins with the 10 and returns 4H. Now What?

A Q J 7 4 3
A K J
K 5
9 3



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

From here it would take something special to find a way of losing more than 2 trumps and AC, so the game is safe. But like Oliver, we want more. So don't simply return something black and allow the defence their tricks. Overtake KD, and then lead Q and hopefully J, discarding clubs. As long as West has at least 3 diamonds you will get both your clubs away and just lose two trumps.

A Q J 7 4 3
A K J
K 5
9 3

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



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

5 2
Q 10 5 2
8 4 2
10 5 4 2

What's with the rightly or wrongly comment? The third round of trumps when they are 4-2 allows the defence to win their AC before you discard your clubs on the diamonds. Going straight for diamonds after 2 trumps secures 11 tricks on suitable distributions.

Against that if spades are 3-3 and East has a doubleton diamond, trying to run diamonds before playing a third round of trumps allows the defence to take their trumps separately alongside their AC for three tricks, whereas playing a third round of trumps with this distribution holds the defence to at most 2 tricks.

Your choice.

The diamond suit is so nice that you should immediately be aware of the discard potential. Consequently starting the play with K and another diamond before taking the trump finesse is wrong, as you now have no entry to table without losing a club first.

One declarer receiving a diamond lead tripped over a dead finesse. Winning the diamond in hand, they led a club knocking out West's A. On the heart return declarer tried the J, losing to the Q. Since JH can be discarded on dummy's third club a successful finesse achieves nothing, so don't risk it.

A Little Imagination

A K 3
Q 7 6 2
Q 5 4 2
6 4



J 2
K J 10 5 3
K 8 6 3
K 3

North-South were in the wars on Tuesday, reaching 4H on board 14 after East had opened 1S. Whether played by North on the 10S covered by J and Q, or by South on QS lead there are clearly three bullets to lose, so the success of the contract even if AC is onside depends on picking up the diamond suit for one loser.

There's no sure way of arranging that, but a little imagination should reveal how it might be done.

Your spot cards in diamonds are so small that there is no cunning low finesse available. A singleton AD might help if you lead through it having first drawn trumps and cleared the black suits as a ruff and discard without having one of your honours eaten by the A would suffice. More probable would be a doubleton AD. If we correctly guess who holds it then leading through it on the first round of the suit will enable one honour to win. Then lead small back towards the other honour **but playing small** will force the A to be used to beat lowly spots.

There seems a good chance on the bidding that East holds AD, particularly as QS has turned up West, so the plan is 2 towards the K, and if this holds, the 6 back to the 4.

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



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.

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The hand tallies with our wishes, so even if East doesn't make life easy by playing AD early, the defence cannot prevail.