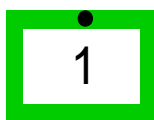


Matters Arising

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 17 - 21 Jan 2022

Delaying the Inevitable

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



A 9 3
Q 10
A 9 7 3
A 7 5 2

The return of mask to mask bridge on Monday saw immediate interest with North-South unsurprisingly reaching 3NT with a combined 30 count and no major fit. I can't report the bidding sequences, but I suspect you would have got there too.

With South declarer the lead was an equally unsurprising 6S. For how long should South hold up their AS and why?

With 4 tricks in clubs, 3 in hearts and two further Aces the contract is an easy make, and in any form of the game where the contract is king - IMPs, total point scoring, rubber bridge - you do nothing to jeopardise the contract. By all means duck a couple of rounds of spades in the hope that the opponents will switch as this would allow you to take the diamond finesse, but if they force out the Ace just cash your 9 top tricks.

However like many club nights Monday was match-pointed pairs. It would still be right to cash out if we thought everyone else would be in a lower scoring contract, but we don't think that.

Our choices are

- a) Cash out for 9 tricks either immediately or after holding up AS.
- b) Hold up the AS for 2 rounds and take the diamond finesse. This produces
 - i) 11 tricks when East has KD
 - ii) 10 tricks when West has KD and at most 3 spades
 - iii) 9 tricks when West has KD and 4 spades
 - iv) 8 or fewer tricks if West has KD and 5+ spades, though you'd be foolish to take the finesse if West has 6+ spades as East will have shown out and you will know.
- c) Take AS immediately and take the diamond finesse. This produces
 - i) 12 tricks when East has KD
 - ii) 9 tricks when West has KD and 4 spades
 - iii) 8 or fewer tricks when West has KD and not 4 spades.

We see that if East has KD c) is superior.

If West has KD then a) is best if West has at least 5 spades, all lines produce 9 tricks if spades 4-4, and b) is superior if West has at most 3 spades.

Overall c) is superior half the time and part of the rest of the time is no worse than the other lines.

c) it should be.

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

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



J 10 8 5
J 4 2
K 8 6 5
10 4

A 9 3
Q 10
A 9 7 3
A 7 5 2

With KD outside backing the favourite produces 12 tricks. The computer analysis says 13 because you can get a 4th heart trick by finessing against the Knave, which is not recommended. However some Wests won't be able to resist discarding a heart on one of the minors as you run your tricks, so you might make 13 anyway.

Minor Escape

Board 17 presented some bidding problems for East-West on Thursday. First, what should East open with the West hand after 3 passes, and then how should the bidding develop?

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



5
10 7 5
A Q 7
Q J 8 6 5 2

On the night 4 Wests each opened 1S and 1NT. It is very much a matter of partnership style and agreement as to whether 5 card majors are allowed within a 1NT opening, and if so whether there is a limit on the strength of the suit. Some will say yes always, others yes if it would otherwise mean rebidding a poor suit, whilst others are firmly in the no camp.

Those opening 1S had mixed results. All received a 2C response. Two rebid their spades where they were left.

The contract was not a thing of great beauty for with KD offside there were 3 red suit and 4 trump losers. The other two took advantage of their partner being a passed hand to pass 2C. South led from their KD and East easily wrapped up 10 tricks with the help of a heart ruff.

East has an interesting decision opposite a 1NT opening - to run to 3C or pass 1NT. The shape says 3C, but the fear is that NT scores better. In the end all ran to 3C, either via Stayman or by some extension to transfers that makes use of 2NT or 3C. They probably had mixed feelings when they discovered that in NT there are 8 tricks on top, scoring 120 and beating the 110 for 3C tick.

Those seem to be the options, with 1S followed by 2S the clear loser. The remaining question is what to tell your opponents if escaping from 1NT.

The Stayman people have it easy, for they simply announce "Stayman" for their 2C bid. It is common bridge knowledge that some people escape to a minor in this way, so there is no need to mention that East is not guaranteeing a major for their Stayman bid unless specifically asked.

Those using 2S (or 2NT) may need to be more careful. My gut reaction on being told that 2S is a transfer is "what to?", for the announcements for red suit transfers are "hearts" for 2D and "spades" for 2H.

"Transfer to clubs" is fine as long as it shows clubs, but what if the partnership in common with many use the bid to reach 3D on a weak single-suited diamond hand by the simple expedient of tagging 3D onto the auction after partner dutifully bids 3C? Someone might complain for example about being denied the chance to make a lead directing double of 3C.

"Minor suit transfer" may sound like it covers this, but it may also sound to the opposition as if you are showing both minors and asking partner to choose.

The basic problem is that many players understand a transfer to show the suit that the partner has been instructed to bid even if the transfer may be broken, It seems best therefore to avoid calling it a transfer unless it does indeed show a specified suit - some partnerships use 2S to show clubs, 2NT to show diamonds, with all balanced 11 counts going through Stayman.

Face to face I describe our 2NT bid - for that is the one we use for minor suit escapes - as "A relay to 3C which may show a number of different minor suit hands" for we do indeed include several hand types in the bid. Online that is more than I wish to type habitually, so simply type "relay to 3C", hoping that experienced players will recognise I'm not promising clubs and that less experienced ones will ask for clarification if necessary. I haven't been sent to the naughty corner by a director yet for this, but that doesn't mean there won't be a first time.

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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