

Matters Arising 63

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 24 - 28 Jan 2022

Game Becomes Slam

The Norths who played this hand in 4H on Monday made 10 or 11 tricks on the lead of KD.

6
A K J 8 6 5
A 9 4
A 10 7



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

Imagine you are at the helm, and win trick one and lay down AH under which East drops the Q. You may be in game, but it's time to be thinking slam.

Seen it?

Continue ruff a diamond, club to A, ruff a diamond, AS, ruff a spade, draw trumps and concede a club at trick 13. Twelve tricks to the good guys.

Oh, hang on! Did I say small slam? Perhaps I meant a grand. Unless East is being particularly devious with their QH we can safely ruff spades in hand without fear of being over-ruffed. As it only takes 3 rounds to draw trumps we can afford 3 spade ruffs, which will set the suit up even if 4-2.

Spade to A, ruff a spade.

Diamond ruff, ruff a spade.

Diamond ruff, ruff a spade again.

Draw trumps.

AC, KC and last club goes on a spade.

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

See Trick, Take Trick

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



On Thursday five East-Wests tried their luck in spades, but only one made 10 tricks. How close to 10 could you get as East on the lead of 3D.

Taking it one match at a time may well be a football manager's mantra, but playing a contract one trick at a time is rarely a good idea. See a trick, take it, repeat, is a philosophy of hoping that when the dust has settled you have enough tricks. Even a bad plan may beat this.

There are no red suit losers, so if we can play lots of black tricks but lose at most three we are home and dry. Ruffing the red suits is a distraction - it will not help us burn our clubs. Instead we need to establish the clubs and still have an entry to them once this job is done.

Win trick one and lead a small club towards hand.

North rises with the A and continues diamonds, which we ruff. Time to tackle trumps, so spade to J, losing to North's K. Another diamond, ruffed creates the position below with three enemy trumps outstanding:

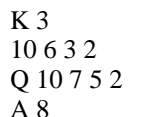
A 7		Q 9
A J 9 8 7		Q
--		--
10		K 9 6 5 3



Complete the establishment of the clubs by cashing the King and ruffing a small one with the AS. Spade to Q, and if 10 drops clear the suit. Else run clubs until the enemy ruff in, which will be their last trick.

4S is not the world's best contract, all though we make 10 tricks with the help of 3-2 breaks in both blacks suits and AC onside despite KS being offside.

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



Winners And Losers

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

To make a contract we need to win enough tricks without losing too many first. On some hands we concentrate on finding winners, on others avoiding losers. This hand from Monday played in 3NT by West on the 4D lead it was sensible to keep track of both.

The three AKs give us 6 tricks. Where should we turn for the other 3? Our long suits are spades and hearts, so it is natural to examine these suits, though relying on a 3-3 club break for an extra trick there is possible too.

Consider the spades. If 3-3 we can set up two extra tricks. One more needed elsewhere, either from a 3-3 club break or by tackling hearts.

If we duck a club that will be a spade, a club and 2 diamonds to the defence who will presumably have continued diamonds when in with their spade, and then they might just grab AH before we cash out. Not good.

Ignoring the clubs and going for hearts requires AH with South so we can make 4 spades, 2 in each minor and KH. Sounds a bit better until you realise that in order to set up and enjoy the spades we have to use both of dummy's top clubs, so even if AH is inside the defence will now have a club trick to go with a spade, 2 diamonds and AH.

And all that of course depends on spades being 3-3, for if they are 4-2 we cannot both establish the suit and return to dummy for the long trick.

It looks like tackling spades would require some friendly defence to succeed. Time to consider hearts. Win trick one and lead a heart towards table. Defence win with Q and lead another diamond. You win and play a big heart. Defence wins, cash 2 diamond tricks and the rest are ours provided hearts no worse than 4-2.


This sounds better, but does depend on diamonds being 4-4 so that the defence can only take 2 tricks in that suit. The opening lead looks hopeful on that score, though North could be harbouring a fifth heart in the form of the 3.

There seem to be three possible ways of trying to improve our chances, but they each come with their own problems.

First, in an attempt to avoid losing to a singleton QH we could lead the K. Yet losing to a singleton Q doesn't matter if it is to North without using any of our high hearts, whilst losing the K to a singleton A will always prevent us winning 3 heart tricks.

Next we might try to pick up QH South by finessing. So cross to table and lead either heart. Say this loses to North's Ace who knocks out our second diamond stop. Now what? Return to table to repeat the heart finesse. This is fraught with danger, for if South started with Qxxx in hearts we will have to let them in to establish a third heart winner, yet this will be after we have used table's club winners. The defence can come to a club as well as two tricks in each red suit.

Lastly we could attempt to cut enemy communications by ducking the opening diamond lead. However with a diamond under their belts and 2 hearts to come the defence might switch their attention to spades, and if these split 4-2 result in our losing two spade tricks too alongside a diamond and two hearts. At least though this idea can be modified to get some benefit by taking the first diamond but ducking the second one. Now it is too late for the defence to switch to spades.

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

With both black suits 3-3 ducking the opening lead doesn't cost, but as North has the heart entries he will always get in for his diamonds. That suit also behaves so the defence is limited to 2 tricks in each red suit.

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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