

# Matters Arising 71

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 21-25 Mar 2022

## Off-Centre

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

West had just finished counting their points (17) and started to contemplate possible auctions when South opened in front of them. With 1S. They don't give these hands in the books. Pass is surely out of the question, and I confess to disliking making a simple suit overcall on 17 points, at least in part because I'm sufficiently fond of overcalling with less than opening values that I like to limit my suit overcalls to 15.

Some will swear by double, though I can envisage partner bidding 2C and then squirming over my 2D continuation if lacking diamonds.

My preference thus is for 1NT. Hardly the classical shape, but at least it gets the strength across, allows partner to transfer out to hearts if they so wish, and can cope with the probable spade lead.

Given their point count, partner on this particular hand has no difficulty in raising to 3NT, and the spade lead presents declarer with an easy 10 tricks.


## Needs Must

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

On Monday only 1 of 5 pairs reached 3NT on the above deal. Played by West the contract is cold unless one defender holds at least five clubs including the 9. Barring that break there are 8 top tricks, and North has to lead a club to avoid presenting declarer with a ninth. Yet all declarer does is run the clubs discarding hearts, and then run JS to set up an extra trick there even if the Q is offside.

The fact that several declarers languished in a heart part-score suggests a reluctance to open the hand 2NT. Not an ideal hand for the opening admittedly, but all suits are stopped. Indeed there is the bonus that as the long suits are the majors Stayman will find a fit with partner's four card major, and indeed those using Puppet Stayman will find a 5-3 spade fit. There is no such fit on this occasion, but East will surely raise to 3NT.

## Losing Track Part I

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

Defence is frequently regarded as the most difficult part of the game. On Tuesday's board 7 at five of the eleven tables West made at least ten tricks in spades despite the reported limit being nine. In Part I we will

shadow some Norths.

Exhibit A. With South silent West reached 4S, bidding the suit twice en route. The QD lead ran to declarer's Q. Two rounds of trumps felled South's J, so it looks like declarer started with 6. North ducked the heart continuation to table, and watched partner beat dummy's KD with his A. Partner now cashes AC and leads one to North's K. West has 4 trumps remaining. If declarer has no hearts then their remaining two cards go under QC and 10S as a ruff. Yet a club was led, and declarer was happy to discard their losing heart. North's AH never scored.


--		10
A 10 9		K Q 7 5
--		--
10 7 5		Q

Exhibit B. North led 6D. Dummy contributed the K and partner won with the A, continuing with a second diamond won by declarer's Q. Declarer gave little away by leading 4H, which North won with the A. Three possibilities:

- Declarer is looking for a cross-ruff – North should now lead a trump.
- Declarer was looking to reach table to lead a trump, but partner is singleton. Lead a heart for partner to ruff.
- Declarer is looking to discard losers on the hearts. That will be club losers. Lead a club.

This North chose b), but the situation was c). and 11 tricks made. Whether or not you feel b) was a good choice, this variation highlights the benefit of giving defenders choices.

Exhibit C. This time South opened a weak 2D, but West overcalled and reached 4S. A diamond was led to South's A, and returned and won on table. Next came a small trump, with South contributing the J and West

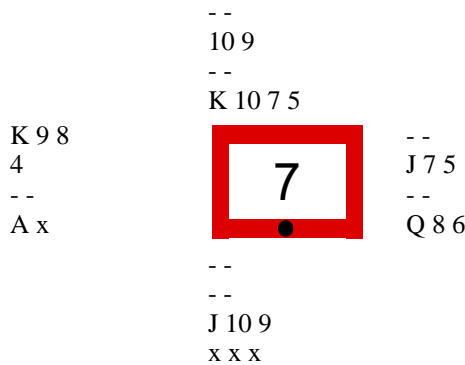
winning with the A. Now came QD ruffed by North and over-ruffed by the 7 on table. The 10S held the next trick, with all following. The KH went to North's A who was left with the choice of a heart to dummy's winners or a club away from the K. North chose a heart, and declarer's clubs disappeared.

Once again the play is not without logic, for if declarer started with

AKxxx xxx Qxx Ax

then the heart allows partner to score their QS and declarer appears unable to avoid a club loser.

Appearances though are deceptive, for North would be caught in a simple positional squeeze:



*Assumed position after South has ruffed with QS*

Suppose South exits with a small club. Declarer rises with A and cashes 2 trumps. North discards 2 clubs, so is down to bare KC and 2 hearts. Table discards a heart and a club so retains 2 hearts and QC. South is out of the game. Then comes the last trump. Ouch. If North throws KC table throws a heart; if North throws a heart table discards QC and makes 2 heart tricks.

It is easy to see that in the position above a diamond from South rather than a club has the same effect.

## Losing Track Part II

Time to cross over to South to see the difficulties they had.

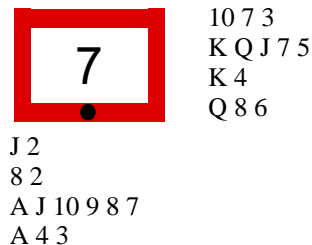
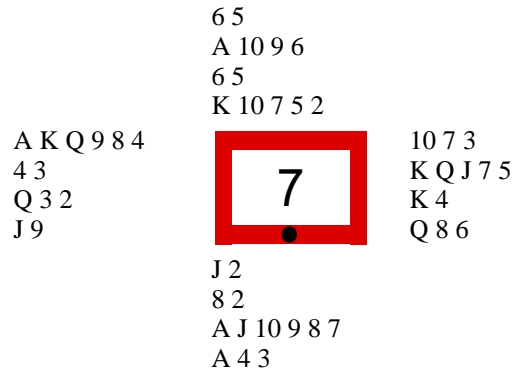


Exhibit D. South opened a diamond and North dutifully led the 6 to table's K and South's A. A trump switch saw declarer draw two rounds and lead a heart. Partner jumped up with the A and led a club to South's A. That is 3 tricks. Declarer presumably still has 4 trumps, and dummy's hearts look good. If partner can't produce KC

South can concede, yet South tried JD, sure to be ruffed on table giving easy access to the hearts.

Exhibit E. Again South had opened 1D and received a diamond lead from partner. Declarer called for small from table, so South ducked too and declarer won with the Q. Two rounds of trumps followed, and a small heart towards table was intercepted by partner's A. Another diamond to South's A. Once more South ignored the major suit peril and led a third diamond. Declarer could claim.



I welcome any comments or queries sent me at [martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk](mailto: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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