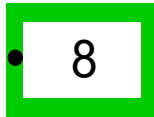


Matters Arising 72

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 28 Mar - 1 Apr

Heart Problem

3
5 2
A Q J 10
K Q J 8 5 4



A Q J 7 6 4 2
J 10 7 4 3
K
--

A surprising number of South's failed to make ten tricks in spades on this hand on Tuesday. A diamond lead was popular.

Missing five trumps, even if the spade finesse works we will have a trump loser unless East started with Kx, and we certainly have a spade loser if the finesse doesn't work. That leaves the (at least) three potential heart losers being one more than we can comfortably afford.

We could try to ruff one on table, but surely the defence will remove dummy's sole trump before we can achieve that.

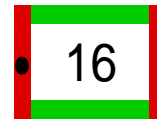
The solution is to discard hearts rapidly on diamonds. Win trick one on table with the Ace, felling your King, and continue the suit. If diamonds split 4-4 you get rid of 3 hearts reducing yourself to just two possible losers. Even if East ruffs in early it may be with a trump from Kx, in which case their King will drop under your Ace rather as it would had you gone straight for the finesse.

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

The diamonds are indeed friendly, so three hearts disappear. The spade finesse works, but the K fails to fall subsequently, so relying on no trump losers fails. Finally those who can't bring themselves to play a K under their own A, so allow the opening lead to run to hand should have no chance.

Quickie From Thursday

8 7 6 4
Q 8 2
8 2
A K 7 5



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

South kicks off the defence to 4H with three top spades, with North showing out on the third round. Over to you, East.


Provided hearts are not 4-0 we can count 6 hearts, 2 clubs and a diamond. The tenth trick will need to be a ruff in the West hand. As we have met before ruffing in the long hand, East on this occasion, simply converts a natural trump trick to a ruffing one, so doesn't increase the trick count.

The only suit that can be ruffed West is diamonds, so we need to arrange this before drawing trumps.

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

The 3-1 trump break ensures that anyone drawing trumps before tackling diamonds will be restricted to 9 tricks. Those playing diamonds first will get their ruff on the table to make 10 tricks.

Deadly Double

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

The defence will be asking themselves why they didn't take South off in 6C on this deal from Monday. After all if they get the play right they can take the first six tricks. Being Monday we know neither bidding nor play, just that West led AD. East may have attempted to signal, but it is not clear that such a signal will work. Any diamond whether asking for a spade or discouraging could also look singleton, so West may continue diamonds hoping for a ruff, reasoning that if partner has the KS they will come to it in due course as it is sat above the Ace.

Nevertheless I blame East for the failure. Not for his play but for his bidding. Even though we don't know it!

The most flexible bid at our disposal is double. We use it for take-out and for penalties. Some even have optional doubles, particularly over pre-empts, where the choice of action is up to doubler's partner, who reputedly always takes the wrong option.

There are negative double, responsive doubles, competitive doubles, support doubles and value-showing doubles.

If we double an enemy artificial suit bid it shows that suit, a particularly safe double as partner need take no action as the opposition are unlikely to leave it in. At a higher level these are likely to be lead-directing doubles, telling partner to lead the suit, rather than showing possible interest in playing in the suit.

There is even a Stripe-Tailed Ape Double, not to be tried at home, whereby you double the enemy in a contract you suspect they can make in order to dissuade them from bidding a higher and better scoring one.

This hand though calls for a Lightner Slam Double, asking for an unusual lead, normally for a ruff. If East makes such a double to complete the auction West leads a high spade, asking for a heart return, and the defence enjoy their cross-ruff.

You rarely get a bad score for defeating a slam, so the need for a tight penalty double is not great, whilst if the


slam is so bad you can easily double for penalties the lack of a ruff at trick one shouldn't hurt you even if partner doesn't read the overbid situation.

An alert North on this hand might pull 6CX to 6NT, which makes, but looking at the score sheet the double would still have cost nothing as only one pair bid the slam. Taking the contract off converts a bottom for the defence into a top.

The Importance of Majors

South had a bidding problem on Tuesday's board 5. Their partner had opened 1C and East overcalled with 1H or even 2H. This major suit intervention was unwelcome, but South had to deal with it. How?

With decent clubs there is a temptation to support partner. However major suit contracts score more highly than minor suit ones so a negative double is better. If partner doesn't have spades too you can support the clubs later.

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

North is thrilled to hear you have spades, and you should reach game, which makes comfortable by various means against a 3-2 trump break, and with care against West holding 4 trumps. This outscores the admittedly even safer club game.

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