

Matters Arising

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 4 - 8 Apr 2022

Handle With Care

On Monday North found themselves in 4H on the lead of 5S. Put yourself in their shoes and plan the play.

We are only missing 4 spades, so the 5 cannot be fourth highest. It looks singleton, top of doubleton, or MUD from three, though could be small from Kxx.

As far as losers are concerned we have to count two top trumps, so we can't afford the KS and a spade ruff, unless of course the ruff is with a high honour.

It seems sensible to rise with the A and tackle trumps immediately. How should we tackle trumps? With care. If trumps are 2-2 or 3-1 there should be no problem. But a 4-0 break opens up the possibility of a third trump loser in the suit if we play off the Q first. Small to J enables us to take a finesse against the 9 in either direction should it prove necessary.

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

It proved necessary. Those starting by laying down the Q were unable to escape three losers in the suit, which together with KS spelt one off, the fate also met by those who ran the opening lead, enabling West to win their K and give partner a ruff.

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



A 10 6 3

Q 7 3
A K 7 4
A 6

Run?

Q J 8 South had a tricky decision to make on Monday's hand 20. North opens 1NT.
8 5 Should South stand it or run to diamonds? With an 8 count and nice
K J 10 7 6 5 intermediates the higher scoring NT
J 10 contract could be the winner.

Suppose South decides to run to diamonds. How can they achieve this?

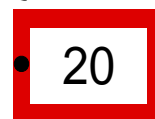
Traditionally 2D was used as a weak take-out, and some pairs still play this way. However using transfers puts paid to that option, but release another bid 2S for a partnership's use.

The natural invitational 2NT response can be allocated to 2S, with 2NT being a puppet bid, telling partner to bid 3C so that responder can then pass with long clubs or correct to 3D with long diamonds as here.

A common approach is to use Stayman and then rebid 3 of your minor, negating your interest in majors and showing this type of hand instead. I would suggest this is the method most likely to be understood by a partner with whom you have not discussed the situation.

I have seen, but confess don't approve of, the use of a transfer followed by 3 of a minor to show this sort of hand. To me, transfer and then bid a new suit at the three level is always natural and game-forcing, giving partner two suits to think about.


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



On the night those who ran sored well, for an unfortunate distribution of the cards allowed East-West to take the first ten tricks - 5 clubs, 4 hearts and AD. Another day pass might work out better.

Peter Ruff

We are all used to the idea of using a peter (high card followed by a low one) to indicate an even number of cards in a suit, particularly in the case of doubletons. However there seems little point in doing so in the trump suit, so we can attribute a different meaning to playing trumps in an unnatural high-low order. A useful option is to use a trump peter to tell partner you want a ruff - indicating both at least a third trump to do the ruffing with and something to ruff.

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

Above is Tuesdays board 4 on which South typically played in 2H having opened 1NT and obeyed partner's transfer bid.

West led 3S, fourth from strength, suggesting an honour. This went to Q and A.

Declarer tackled trumps, starting with the J, which West ducks. Winning the second round, he notices that partner has petered. Given the unlikely length that declarer would need in a minor for East to be seeking a ruff there, West knows to continue spades.

K and then 8, which East indeed ruffs. That 8 looks high, so East returns the high suit, namely diamonds., hoping that their 6 looks low so that partner knows to continue. (In general there is a reverse attitude element to leads - low cards tend to be from strength and high cards from rubbish. That's why I tend to talk of fourth from strength rather than fourth from length.)

From the West side of the table that 6 is the lowest of the low, so they win their A and continue diamonds, enabling the defence to collect AH, KS, a spade ruff and three diamonds. One off.

Unfortunately it didn't go like that at most tables where NS were able to chalk up a plus score.

Lebensohl

I am probably not letting you into any state secrets if I tell you that opposition bidding can be a nuisance. In some of these situations you have little need for 2NT as a natural bid, so you can put it to use to help distinguish between hands of different strengths.


At it's simplest Lebensohl uses 2NT as a puppet bid, requiring partner to bid 3C. Partner makes the meaningless 3C bid - a relay - and the 2NT bidder reveals what they are up to.

Imagine partner opens 1NT and the next hand makes a suit overcall. Using Lebensohl the system becomes

- a) If you bid a suit at the 2 level you are merely competing - you have no interest in game.
- b) If you bid a suit at the 3 level it is game forcing.
- c) If you bid 2NT and rebid a suit over partners forced 3C response (you can pass it) then
 - i) If you could have bid the suit at the 2 level your bid is now invitational
 - ii) If you couldn't have bid the suit at the 2 level your bid is competitive.

Had you been intending to bid 2NT as a natural raise double now seems the natural action to take.

Here is Thursday's hand 2:

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

Serious partnerships will go into detail about the meaning of cue-bids and of 3NT both either with or without 2NT, and of any differences between the treatment of artificial and natural intervention. The underlying idea though is still the same - to use 2NT as a puppet bid to create extra sequences.

The convention can be applied elsewhere. For example if the opposition open a weak two and partner doubles then you can use 2NT to open up another set of responses beyond the occasionally available 2 of suit bid and a 3 of a suit bid. It does mean though that if you have the enemy suit stopped you can only play in 3NT, not 2NT.

Counting to 10

4H by North was a popular contract on unlucky 13 on Thursday, but for most declarer's it proved a trick too far. A variety of opening leads were faced, but then there were a variety of auctions, with North variously choosing 1C, 1H, 2C or 2NT to kick-off proceedings.

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

13

I'm firmly in the 1C camp, but as East for the night didn't have to prove it. 2C and 2NT seem to be driving with the foot too hard on the accelerator even for my taste, whilst opening the suit above the singleton with a 4-4-4-1 hand can lead to accidents, though here North is sufficiently strong that 2C from partner is perhaps survivable. In general if you open the suit above the singleton a response in the singleton will hurt if you have at most 14 points, whereas one in the suit below the singleton can cause problems if stronger and the singleton is red.

10 8 2
Q J 10 9 3
9 7 4
10 4

But I've digressed. How are we to tackle the assignment on 6S lead?

Two black AKs and no diamond tricks means we have 4 tricks in the side suits, so need 6 in trumps. If the KH is onside that means 5 natural trump tricks and a diamond ruff, if KH offside it is 4 natural trump tricks and two diamond ruffs. Two diamond ruffs look doable, so there are reasons to be confident.

The lead runs around to our K and we send the QD into battle. East nips up with the K and leads QS, which of course we do not duck. Cash AK C. The Q tumbles from East.

Now we wish to enter dummy for a diamond ruff. Either a club ruff or a small trump seem worthy of play. The latter may not get there straight off, but by starting to draw enemy teeth it has its attractions.

We lead 2H and 9 holds, with West showing out. Friendly. Diamond, ruff with the 4.

Re-entering dummy will have to be done by a club ruff as a small heart, our third, would see East rise and continue the suit, leaving us with no trump for a second diamond ruff. East ditches JD on the club, which we ruff with the 3.

Now comes the third diamond, which we ruff with the A. Dummy is down to a spade, which we are planning on losing, and trumps, all bar one of which will win, so there is no need to risk an over-ruff which would be the setting trick.

The contract makes for the loss of a spade, a diamond and KH. The ten tricks are 2 spades, 2 clubs, 2 diamond ruffs, a club ruff and 3 natural trump tricks. This is essentially what our initial plan was, with a club ruff on table taking the place of one of the planned natural trump tricks.

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

13

9 3
--
A 10 8 6 5 2
J 9 8 5 2


10 8 2
Q J 10 9 3
9 7 4
10 4

Q J 7 6
K 8 7 5
K J 3
Q 6

Another hand on next page ...

Little Agreement

The 8 tables on Thursday produced 8 different auctions to reach 6 different contracts across all five denominations. There were two pairs of the same contract, though a different number of tricks were taken at the 2 tables constituting a pair, and indeed for one of these pairs of tables the contract was played from different sides of the table. Not much agreement there, even though 6 of the North's opened the bidding with 1NT. All eight auctions are given below. I'll let you decide which, if any, you like.

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a) N E S W
P 1C P 1D
P 1H P 1NT
P 3NT</p> | <p>b) N E S W
P 1C P 1D
P 1H P 1NT</p> |
|--|--|

In a) and b) I can't help feeling that West's 1NT rebid is of similar strength to an initial 1NT response, so I prefer b) to a). These sequences also beg the question "Is 1S fourth suit forcing?" It is possible to play it either way.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>c) N E S W
1NT 2C 2H</p> | <p>d) N E S W
1NT P 2D P
2H</p> |
| <p>e) N E S W
1NT 2C P 2D
P 3C</p> | <p>f) N E S W
1NT P 2D X
2H P P 2S
P 4S</p> |

I'm guessing that West's 2C in e) shows hearts and another suit.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>g) N E S W
1NT P 2D X
2H 3C P 3D</p> | <p>h) N E S W
1NT P 2D X
2H X P 3D</p> |
|---|--|

In f), g) and h) West's double of 2D shows diamonds. It is not alertable as showing the suit is regarded as the standard meaning for the double of an artificial bid.

In such auctions I find it convenient as North-South to

use completing the transfer to promise at least three cards in the suit, passing with a doubleton. No doubt some will argue that this can result in the contract being played from the wrong side, but I believe showing at least secondary support makes it easier for partner to decide whether or not to compete.

In case you are wondering, I was East in f). Our contract went 1 down.

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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