

Matters Arising 74

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 11 - 15 Apr 2022

Set Your Target

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

Monday saw three Easts play board 12 in a club part-score. With the contract clearly safe, "as many tricks as possible" is declarer's target. How many is that on a spade lead?

Our second spade can disappear on AD, and the fourth heart ruffed, so the limit of the bad news seems to be a heart loser and a club loser, though on a good day we'll lose neither.

Win AS, cross to AH, cash AD discarding the spade and then tackle trumps. Since we need a trump on table to ruff a heart we won't worry about a 3-0 break, just lead small and finesse the J. This loses to the K. Ruff the spade continuation and cross to 10C for a heart lead with intent to finesse. However North produces the Q on the second heart, so up goes our K, followed by the J and a heart ruff. Then it's clubs all the way. 12 tricks.

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

Only one declarer made 12 tricks. I fear I detect a love of drawing trumps that blinded declarers to the possibility of discarding their spade loser.

I said earlier that the limit of the bad news appears to be two losers. If South holds Kxx C and QTxx H (or similar) they can hold declarer to 10 tricks by returning trumps whenever they gain the lead.

Tick or Bust

This hand appeared on Monday with North declaring our favourite game against a small heart lead. Perhaps the bidding was 3D-3NT.

If the diamonds are no worse than 2-2 with the A appearing on the first round, either by necessity or dozy defence, then 3NT succeeds thanks to 6 diamond tricks, 2 hearts and AC. Both defenders duly follow to a diamond at trick 2, but the A doesn't appear. You are on table. Now what?

Once the defence get in they will clear the hearts ready to have fun next time they regain the lead. And with one defender having at least six hearts that could be a lot of fun.

Plan A: admit defeat.

Run 10C hoping to come to 5 club tricks, 2 hearts and a diamond for one off.

Plan B: Play for West to hold Kx C.

Lead a small club and finesse, then lay down AC hoping to crash K. If this succeeds the 10C is an entry to table, so revert to diamonds and the contract makes. If the finesse fails or KC doesn't come down, revert to plan A, accepting you will additionally lose KC so will only make 7 tricks.

Plan C: Play for singleton KC.

Knock out AD and win heart continuation. Lay down AC hoping for K to tumble so that 10 becomes an entry. If this fails you may end up with just the 4 tricks you have already won.

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

On the night two declarers ended up with just 3 tricks. That sounds like Plan D: play the defence for mugs - knock out AD, win the heart continuation and hope the defence will allow a small club to the 10 to win.

Finesse Against Partner

You hold KJx in a suit, partner leads small and dummy hits with a small doubleton. What do you play? The K. There is a temptation to keep his majesty for bigger fry and send the J to war, effectively hoping that partner has the Q and finessing against it. But if partner has the Q then K, Q and J are worth the same so any can be used. What you wish to avoid is allowing declarer to win with the Q when partner has A 10. Hence the mantra *don't finesse against partner*.

There are no hard rules in bridge play worth having, and the situation changes if your holding is AQx against a NT contract. Now a small lead from partner with small cards on the table draws the Q. A finesse against partner's K. If the finesse works - partner has the K - then A and small can follow. If the finesse fails declarer can win with the K. Indeed declarer is almost forced to win with the K as they will be fearful that the A sits over them which would have disastrous consequences should they duck. If on the other hand you rise with the A at trick one, then declarer can duck your Q at trick 2 in order to break defensive communications.

9 7 5 4
J 3
A J 5 2
A J 3



K 3 2
8 6 5
10 7 6
K 9 6 5

Once dummy has an honour deeper finesses become attractive. Here is the last hand from Thursday's simultaneous pairs, with West leading a low club against 3NT, and dummy contributing the 3. The KC is surely a

winner now or later, but winning now gives dummy a double stop in the suit. Partner has led so presumably has some liking for the suit. Suppose they have both Q and 10. Then our 9 is boss, so why not try it? If declarer has one of the missing honours we were never going to win more than the K quickly.

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

9 7 5 4
J 3
A J 5 2
A J 3



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

K 3 2
8 6 5
10 7 6
K 9 6 5

The 9 holds, and on the 5 back partner produces the Q. Declarer makes just one club trick. Equally importantly the long club gets set up quickly so that when the heart finesse fails the defence come to 3 clubs a heart and 2 spades. 2 down. Only one pair found this defence, and

they had the misfortune to be defending 1NT. Three East's played KC at trick one, so that that the club suit remained protected for declarer when they took the losing heart finesse. The defence could only come to a heart, a club and 2 spades before declarer romped home on the back of red suit winners. One further East played the 9C at trick one, but inexplicably their partner wasn't prepared to dislodge the A at trick 2 - had declarer really held off with the K at trick one?

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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