

Matters Arising 76


being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 25-29 April 2022

An Amusement

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

You are East declaring 4S after North opened 1NT on this hand from Tuesday. South cashes AD and leads a second one to North's King. Naturally you ruff. With two top spade losers, you can't afford any others, so the club finesse will have to work. And the clubs will need to be 2-2 so that JC falls and you can make 10C on your 4. Which means an entry to dummy. There is only one possibility for this entry - overtaking the QH with dummy's K. You set about trumps, and in due course play as planned. It works.

Three declarer's spotted the need to overtake the QH on the night, even in a part-score, a further three faced the lead of JC, so weren't put to the test, but I'm sure they would have been OK too.

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

There was a seventh table with bidding
1NT-3S-3NT-P-P-X

The QS was led and dummy may have come as a bit of a surprise to the rest of the table.


Assuming no diamond void declarer can count 6 diamonds and two spades. One more needed, with KC looking the likely candidate. Unfortunately the bidding strongly suggests the AC is wrong, so without help one off seems to be the limit of North's ambitions.

Sad. But not so sad. North can ask themselves about their defensive chances against 3S had South not bid. One diamond and two spades look normal for the defence, and even if another defensive trick appears (readers know it doesn't) that is still 140 to them. One off doubled non-vulnerable is a perfectly acceptable alternative.

Buoyed by this, how might North set about the play, determined to go at most one down, but giving themselves a chance of the contract making, assuming East holds AQ C?

We aim for an endplay, forcing East to lead away from their AC.

First, win trick one. Then diamond to A (not K first - if there is a club void the bidding suggests it will be East who is out). Run the diamonds discarding a heart and a spade. East must retain QC else declarer can now play a club to set up a trick there with spades still stopped. The position after 7 tricks will be something akin to

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

though West has other combinations of hearts and clubs possible as their last 6 cards. Now a spade to your K - that's your 8 tricks safe, and exit with a heart. As the cards lie if East carelessly wins with the Q they will have to give you the KC at trick 13. Instead they must win with the A and either before or after cashing their last spade play QH, hoping partner can and will overtake with the K to put the club through.

East can be hopeful on the "can" front for declarer has shown AK S and KD so West must have one of the missing Kings, and their discards will surely indicate it is not the club one. Given that even if East gets it right there is no guarantee that West will be alive to the necessity of overtaking the Q the line surely has a fair chance of success. Indeed if East has bare AK H instead of AQ there is no defence.

Amazingly the best defence as the cards lie is for East to ignore their spades and lead A then Q hearts. West has to overtake at trick two, also ignore partner's spades, and switch to a club, securing 6 tricks there. Four off for 800. Somehow I think any defence finding that line could reasonably be suspected of cheating.

How To Bid 3NT

Thursday, board 10. Eight tables, eight different auctions, only three of which led to 3NT. On this combined 27 count what else would you want to be in?

10 8 3
K Q
K Q 9 8 6 5
A K



After 3 passes North opened 1D. At half the table East overcalled 1S, with East-West subsequently quiet throughout. At the other half East-West didn't even make that much noise.

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

If East overcalls 1S, South has three options

- a) Double. A negative double promising 4+ hearts and, like a 1H response without interference, an ability to cope with anything partner says. Now

a(i) North wants to be in NT if South can control spades so bids 2S asking for a spade stop. South likes this development and rebids 3NT. Not 2NT which could be passed – how weak could North be to be pushing the bidding to the 3 level if South has no such stop?

a(ii) North rebids 3D showing a good hand and 6 card suit. South rebids 3NT reckoning that with at most 6 points in diamonds, and even less in spades North must have useful cards elsewhere.

- b) 1NT. Shows spade control, and sensible responding values. The overcall means that partner gets another bid, so this 1NT isn't just to keep the bidding open - you can pass and do that. There will be at least a little substance to the bid. North bids 3NT. If partner has anything useful in diamonds the contract will roll home, if not playing in diamonds may not be much fun either.

- c) Pass. If partner has a grotty minimum defending may be best. The pass though does put pressure on partner to re-open with any extra values, which applies here.

c(i) 2S, forcing. Possibly an overbid as you are in no position to underwrite a 3 level contract if partner is near bust. If partner cannot come up with 3NT now, find another partner.

c(ii) X. Partner knows your preferred suit is diamonds, though this won't stop them bidding another genuine suit. Partner also has the option of passing for penalties if being stacked with spades is their reason

for passing.

It looks like 3H-3S-3NT from here, though 1SX-3/4 for 800/1100 would look nice on the scorecard.

- c(iii) 2D. Perhaps an underbid even though it shows more than a minimum opening as pass is available for that. But surely partner will have bid if you have game on, so just trying to buy any contract now. (but see c(ii))

- c(iv) 3D, stronger, but like c(i) could come badly unstuck.

a(i), b) and c(ii) look attractive, with a(i) being my personal preference, though I might rue the missed penalty opportunity available in c(ii). However as two off doubled wouldn't be sufficient compensation for the missed game I wouldn't be too upset.

Without interference I find it difficult to look beyond
1D – 1H – 3D – 3NT.

Responder bids 1H not 1S to maximise the chance of finding a fit, and North rebids 3D, not 2D to show the extra strength. South can pass 3D with a minimum response but otherwise should be looking to reach 3NT unless there is a clear problem suit.

Playing with a partner who insists on responding 1S with the South hand despite the difficulties this may create in unearthing a heart fit, North is probably better to rebid 2NT since they know their side must be at least close to game, and that South may be deterred from bidding NT by a weak holding in one of the other suits. South of course would happily raise to 3NT.

In all the possible auctions only in option c) after interference can North justify bidding 2D. In all other cases they need to distinguish between their actual holding and say

x x Q x K J x x x x K Q x

on which opening 1D and rebidding 2D over a response from partner would be normal.

10 8 3
K Q
K Q 9 8 6 5
A K

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



K Q 9 5 4
10 7 2
J 4 2
Q 4

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

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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