

Matters Arising 81

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 30 May - 3 Jun 2022

Time For A Break

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

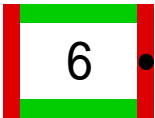
On Monday East found themselves in 4H on board 6, with South's defence of AD followed by the K being brushed aside as easily as their 2D overcall.

Six trump tricks and two black AKs suggests no problems. Which means, particularly as it's pairs, that declarer should be on the hunt for an overtrick.

Clearly such a bonus trick won't come from diamonds, whilst ruffing a long card in a black suit won't help as that would be using a natural trump trick as a ruff. Those long black cards do have potential though as winners in their own right if a suit is 3-3. Thus declarer could lose a spade and later discard their third club on the 4th spade, or use the 4th club as a resting place for their third spade. However testing a suit involves losing a trick there, so declarer can't try both - they have to rely on luck that they test the right one.

A sample line is ruff the second diamond and play 4 rounds of trumps, discarding the black suit you have decided not to test, say a club. Now AK and another spade. Ruff the diamond continuation discarding the same black suit as before - a club. If luck is on your side dummy is good - AK C and the last spade.

If you decide to test the clubs instead you will need a high honour as entry, so after the 4 rounds of trumps on the last of which you discard a spade, you lose a club trick immediately. Again if luck is on your side, the rest are yours.

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

Why 4 rounds of trumps? You only need one for later to regain entry after losing the lead, so use the others to

put pressure on the defence. They will be making at least 3 of their 4 discards before you make yours from table, so you may get some help as to which suit to test.

In practice both black suits are 3-3 so there is no excuse for not making 11 tricks.

Small Is Beautiful

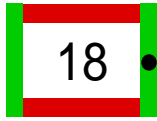
Another day, Tuesday, and another 4H contract, this time with West in the driving seat and confronted with a QS lead, but with the opposition having been silent throughout. As an aside, I'm not sure why several East's opened 1D rather than 1H, but evidently that is the way they bid.

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

Totting up the losers we see 2 clubs and a spade, so it looks like we mustn't lose a trump else we would have to massage one of those black suit losers away. We tackle trumps starting with a top honour, and when North contributes the Q decide whether to take a finesse against the J, if that is still possible, and play accordingly.

By now we've either picked up the trumps for no loser and know we are making, or are set to lose a trump trick and are feeling low. Is there any way of eradicating one of our black losers? There are various ways in which the defence might be helpful, but the one where they have no choice is if South has AK C and at most 2 spades, as we can then set up the QC for a spade discard.

Thus after tackling trumps (no need to play a third round if the J is outstanding and a boss) we lead a small club towards the Q, if necessary getting to dummy first via a diamond. South hops up with the K and continues a spade. Win and lead a second club towards the Q. Up pops the A from South and you wait to see whether another spade appears. It doesn't, so you can reach hand via a diamond ruff, discard a spade on QC and ruff your last spade. If you got the trumps right you make an overtrick, if not you make the contract exactly.

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

Note that with trumps 3-1 playing off three rounds of diamonds before attacking clubs leaves you short of the entries needed to lead small clubs twice towards the Q.

Make Life Easy

Q 10 7 5	To Thursday, teams, and a heart
Q 8 7	contract for South, which one feels
A J 5	should be at the four level.
8 6 5	



A K 9	The contract looks a little tight,
A K 9 5 3	requiring 5 trump tricks, 4 spades
6 2	and AD unless the QC makes or
Q 7 3	dozy defence allows the JD to

score.
At some tables the defence started AK C and a club ruff. Declarer is now very nervous, but a spade

switch from East settles those nerves. Or should do, as small from hand ensures 4 spade tricks. Yet more than once declarer rose with the A, leaving a guess as whether to finesse against the J or play for the break in the suit after drawing trumps. They guessed wrong.


A middle diamond at trick one brings its own problems. One idea would be to insert the J hoping that either West has underled the KQ, or that AK C is onside so that you suffer just 2 club and a diamond loser. It seems a better bet though to rely on spades, rising with AD, drawing trumps, and if getting the spades right discarding a minor suit card on the 4th spade.

Drawing trumps always sounds easy, but there are many combinations where one has to be wary, for less than perfect breaks can scupper ones plans. A reminder of declarer's trump holdings on this hand:

Q 8 7
A K 9 5 3

We wish to give ourselves some chance of picking up a 4-1 break without risking losing a trick to the more likely 3-2 one. If we knew that East holds singleton J or 10 we could cash the A and finesse the 8, and if we knew that East held J 10 x x we could play small to Q and finesse twice back, except we don't have the entries

for that with AD gone. But we don't know these things, and these plays would potentially result in the loss of a trick against a mundane 3-2 split. But we can guard against the singleton J or 10 with West by playing A, then Q (which will reveal any 4-1 break) and so being ready to take a marked finesse if required while still having a simple task if trumps are 3-2.

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

It came to pass that West did indeed have a singleton 10H and the trumps could be safely picked up. Moreover unable to touch the minors for fear of the defence's four tricks there the only inferences available about the spade distribution are the opening lead, which doesn't look to be from an especially long suit even if second from rubbish, and the bad trump break. Together they point towards West having fewer red cards than East, so when the JS doesn't appear on the first two and a half rounds of the suit, finesse looks a better bet than playing for the drop.

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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