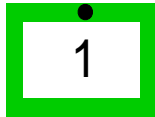


# Matters Arising 86

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 5 - 9 Jul 2022

## Rarity Value

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



A Q J 8 6 5 3 2  
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Q J 10  
8 2

Monday's board 1 had rarity value. Not only was the contract the same at every table and by the same declarer - 4S by South - but so was the opening lead, namely the 6D. Despite this the board was not flat for there were three different results corresponding to declarer making 10, 11 or 12 tricks. East-west were silent throughout the bidding.

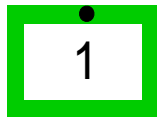
As Monday bridge is conducted face to face we don't have records of play. However 12 tricks seems right.

Given South's diamond holding it is tempting to run the lead around to hand. However closer inspection of dummy reveals we have a discard on AH, and another on the third club honour. These can be used to park diamonds, so there is no need to risk the distinct possibility that the lead is singleton.

Rise with AD at trick one and cash AH and then the club honours to rid yourself of diamonds. There is a certain nervousness on the third club for a 5-2 break is not that unusual, but even then discarding a diamond is a loser on loser play if the enemy ruff. Now ruff a heart to hand and play spades from the top.

--  
A J 10 6 4  
A 8 4 2  
A K Q 9

K 10 4  
K 7 5 3 2  
6  
J 6 5 4



A Q J 8 6 5 3 2

--  
Q J 10  
8 2

9 7  
Q 9 8  
K 9 7 5 3  
10 7 3

On the night the suits behaved well enough for this line to generate 12 tricks. Those who finessed at trick one lost to the King, presumably followed immediately by a diamond ruff. With KS still to lose that was 10 tricks.

11 tricks is harder to spot. A finesse at trick one with East not returning the suit possibly, though East has no obvious switch. Or perhaps declarer started by cashing dummy's winners and then ruffed a heart with JS, promoting West's 10 into a second trump trick.

## Misfit

Misfits are bad news, as the bidding is likely to spiral upwards in a desperate search for a fit, with the "natural" compromise of NT often proving a poor choice. Here is board 3 from Monday.

What lead would you least want to face in 3NT as West, and how might you try to counter it?

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



A 10 9 8 4 2  
A K 5 3 2  
4  
A

The K or Q of diamonds, or a small diamond on which South contributes one of these cards is the stuff of nightmares, as your entry is knocked out before you can unblock the club suit.

On any other suit lead you can win on table, cash AC (if clubs not led) and cross to hand via AD for at least 11 tricks, provided clubs not 5-0.

What happens on a small diamond lead which you are allowed to win with the J?

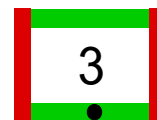
You do so win, and then play AD, discarding AC. If clubs are 3-2 you have an easy 12 tricks at least.

This hints at how you handle a first diamond trick that contains either the K or Q. You duck, hoping for a continuation. If so you again get to discard your AC and you are able to enjoy some club tricks in hand. Lots of them when the suit behaves.

The normal way of defending a misfit NT contract is to force declarer to play entirely from one hand. Here then if North-South are allowed to win the first diamond trick they switch with intent to force declarer to play the hand just from dummy, anticipating that in the fullness of time plenty of major suit tricks will come their way.

7 6 3  
9 7  
K Q 8 6 3 2  
8 7

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



A 10 9 8 4 2  
A K 5 3 2  
4  
A

K Q 5  
Q J 8 6 4  
10 5  
10 4 3

Indeed such a defence defeats 3NT on this hand.

## Three Spades

Most members of the club use red suit transfers in response to a 1NT opening, and are aware that these remove the weak take-out meaning of a 2S response without stipulating a replacement meaning. This leaves partnerships free to allocate their own meaning to a 2S response and these include

- No meaning - the 2S response is not used.
- A transfer to clubs, showing a club suit.
- A puppet bid on a modest single minor suited hand. Partner is required to bid 3C and this is passed or corrected to 3D according to the minor suit held.
- An 11 point flat hand, presumably with no major, to distinguish from a similar 12 point hand which is shown by bidding 2NT.
- Either a natural raise to 2NT or a strong ~18+ point hand with no 5 card suit. Subsequent bidding will distinguish between the two. Some additionally play that the strong option must contain no 4 card major.

No doubt other meanings are possible. Certainly it is sensible to check with a new partner how you intend to play the 2S response.

Red suit transfers over 2NT create a similar vacancy for a meaning for a 3S response. This could be ignored or used as a transfer to clubs (4C is Gerber partner) or a puppet to 4C though how often facing a 2NT opening are you sure you prefer 4 of a minor to 3NT? Splitting the strength of the response is unnecessary as 4NT quantitative does the job of finding whether opener is maximum for slam purposes. Nor does a 2-way meaning akin to e) above make sense.

There is though one problem type hand when trying to decide which denomination to play in, namely a hand with at least the values for game and containing precisely 5 spades and 4 hearts. Transferring to spades and rebidding 4H takes you past 3NT which may be the best contract, whilst Stayman doesn't help if opener rebids 3D. This then seems a useful meaning to attach to the 3S response enabling you to alight in any of 3NT, 4H or 4S as seems best.

Note that there is no problem with 5 hearts and 4 spades as the auction 2NT – 3D – 3H – 3S describes this hand admirably whilst leaving all 3 common games available.

Note also that giving the suggested meaning to 3S means that the auction 2NT – 3H – 3S – 4H must show 5 hearts.

East had a chance on Tuesday's board 11 to use the bid:

K J 8	11	A Q 10 5 4
A 6 5		J 10 8 2
K 3		A 10 9
A K Q 3 2		5

2NT – 3S (game forcing with 5 spades and 4 hearts)

4S (preferred game from 3NT, 4H, 4S)

– 4NT (an 11 count, known 8+ card fit, good intermediates and a singleton is surely enough for slam interest)

5C (3 keycards using Roman Keycard Blackwood - in this case 2 Aces and KS) – 6S.

The contract is an easy make provided trumps are no worse than 4–1, diamonds no worse than 6–2 and the opening lead isn't ruffed. Suppose a heart is led. Rise with the A and cash KS, which tells you about any possible 5–0 trump break. Assume spades are OK. Now KD, AD and ruff the third diamond with the JS. Draw the remaining trumps, throw 2 hearts on club honours and concede a heart. Job done.

If Spades are 5–0 you cannot afford to ruff with an honour as it is needed for drawing trumps. Thus you have to risk using the 8 and playing off the top clubs to secure 2 heart discards. If you survive that, you are home.

	7 6	
	K Q 4 3	
	J 8 6 5 4 2	
	8	
K J 8	11	A Q 10 5 4
A 6 5		J 10 8 2
K 3		A 10 9
A K Q 3 2		5
	9 3 2	
	9 7	
	Q 7	
	J 10 9 7 6 4	

It is possible to reach 6S by other means, but would these means also allow you to find a heart fit or to back off if opener had only 2 spades?

It would be possible to use Stayman followed by 3S over 3D as this type of hand, but I prefer that for a feeble hand on which I'm trying to find the best major to play in at the three level.

## Winners, Losers, Entries

When planning play declarer may be concerned about not having enough winners, too many potential losers, or limited entries. Thursday's hand 23 featured all three. Despite their enormous club suit 7 out of 9 Norths permitted partner to play in spades, all of whom received a red suit lead.

The contract was of course at the game level, and declarer could see 2 red Aces, AK C and 5 trump tricks, which comes to 9. From the loser point of view in hand he has a trump loser and 6 potential red suit ones. Entries to dummy beyond AD are rare.

An extra trick (and entry) can most readily be found by ruffing a diamond, yet it wasn't unusual to see declarers go straight for drawing trumps. Particularly after a diamond lead this allows the defence to rise with AS, return one and await red tricks. Those clubs must be used or lost.

Thus after winning AD at trick 1 play AK C throwing 2 hearts. Not diamonds, as these can be ruffed. The club suit breaks 3-2, so you are still on lead. Indeed the QC tumbles on the second round from East. Now heart to A, ruff a diamond, ruff a heart, ruff a diamond. Still your luck holds, or more precisely bad luck stays away. The first 7 tricks are yours and you are down to your 5 top spades and a diamond. With 4 trump tricks to come you are destined to make 11. The majority didn't.

Varying this line to cope with a heart lead isn't difficult.

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

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I welcome any comments or queries sent me at [martyn@orpheusmail.co.uk](mailto: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