

Matters Arising 89

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

Make It Easy

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



A 7
10 7 4 2
A 8
A K 10 5 3

On Thursday some declarers made life unnecessarily difficult for themselves in 3NT on this hand by misplaying the club suit.

If the suit is 3-2 there are no problems, and if West holds Jxxx by the time you discover the bad break it is too late to do anything about it whichever two high honours you played to make the discovery.

Suppose though that East holds Jxxx. Playing the Q and then small to A uncovers the situation, and declarer can return to the North hand to take the marked finesse. The only potential problem is the *return to the North hand* bit, for it uses up an entry that might be better used for other purposes.

The solution is very simple: play off the A or K first, then return to hand via the Q. If both follow no problem, and if East shows out the suit could only have been picked up by a first round finesse of the 9, which could look very silly if the suit is 3-2 and East has the J. If West shows out though you are in hand ready to take the marked finesse without having to use up an entry elsewhere (which on another occasion you might not even have).

Mishandling the suit didn't always lead to disaster on the night, but this standard play is well worth knowing.

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

Changing the suit a little to $Q 9 \times \times$ and it becomes a game of guess who might have Jxxx. To guard against West holding Jxxx cash the AK ready to reveal a marked finesse against them if necessary. If East is the more likely to be harbouring trouble play off A and Q.

Beware The Courtesy NT

East on Thursday's board 22 was very happy to see their hand and contentedly opened 1S. 1NT was West's reply. Now what? Three of the four East's in this position chose 3S, an invitational bid showing a 6 card suit. Fine, until dummy reveals a so courtesy NT response - a bid made on a non-NT type hand by responder not good enough to go to the 2 level.

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

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Q 9 8
Q J 9 6 5 4 3
Q J 10



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

J 10 3 2
A 4 2
A 7 2
A 7 5

With two hearts to lose and a trick in each other suit 3S is already past the limit of the hand, though of course friendly defence might allow declarer to escape.

Whenever partner replies 1NT, other than to 1C, there is always the possibility they hate your suit, and that possibility is strongest over 1S as there is no suit they can bid at the one level. Consequently even repeating your suit at the 2 level promises six. Here I suggest the choice of rebid is between 2C and 2S.

2C allows partner with a courtesy response to show either red suit at the two level, and with a standard NT response to give (sometimes false) preference to spades so that East can make another try if they wish. However 2C may also lead to partner passing with three clubs and a singleton spade, a holding which you would probably prefer to play in spades.

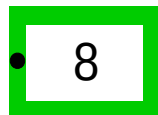
Over 2S if partner has made a courtesy response they will have to decide whether to pass or show their suit at the 3 level, whilst if they have a standard response they may not find a raise to 3S when such would be useful.

On this hand both 2S and 3D make so they should be on for a plus score over both 2C and 2S regardless in the latter case of whether West passes or bids 3D. East needs to trust the 3D bid and pass though.

Four Wests couldn't overcome their reluctance to bid 1NT and so bid their diamonds immediately. Now East's 3S rebid is understandable, as they will have been expecting something better in the West hand.

All The Finesses

A Q 9 8 6 2
A J 7
6
A J 3



K J 7
K 5 4 3
7 5 4
10 9 8

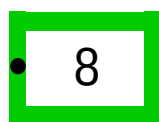
Six spades, AK H and AC comes to 9 tricks. Diamond ruffs don't count extra as they simply change natural trump tricks into ruffed ones. What options are there for a 10th trick?

The heart finesse is one, and a 3-3 heart break is another, provided we can arrange to reach the long heart. Such arrangements will surely mean trumps 2-2, for we won't want to risk a heart ruff so will be drawing trumps before such a play in that suit.

The club suit provides chances too. Indeed it provides the best chances, for provided you don't tackle it from hand you can always make an extra trick there whenever West has at least one of the missing honours. Simply finesse twice.

Finessing twice means getting to the South hand twice, and since ideally we would like to use KH as entry for the heart finesse after trumps have gone that means two trump entries. After ruffing the second diamond play A and another trump to table. Do not play a third round, even if the trumps don't break. Now run 10C, covering with the A only if West produces an honour. Ruff the diamond continuation, or win the trump switch on table. A heart or club from East of course does our work for us. Back to table with the third trump if not done by East, and repeat the club finesse. With a heart finesse still to come we should make unless East has all of QH and KQ C.

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



It is worth noting that we are not worried about the possibility of West ruffing a club, for if they can do so they will simply be ruffing a trick we would otherwise be destined to lose to their partner.

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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