

## Matters Arising 90

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 1 - 5 Aug 2022

### Pairs

At pairs making the contract is rarely declarer's sole concern for it is not a simple case of make equals good score, fail equals bad. Making can be a bad score if others make more tricks in the same contract, whilst failing can be good if the defeat costs less than the opponents could have scored by declaring themselves. At pairs then one must always be prepared to set one's own targets.

This is Thursday's board 2 with West declaring 3NT.

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

The odds favour a 3-2 diamond break for 4 tricks there, and we can increase our chances further by playing off KQ first so that if North started with Jxxx there is a marked finesse for 4 tricks despite the bad break.

In hearts the odds just favour the 10 coming down in three. ie that either the suit breaks 3-3 or the 10 is doubleton. If this happens then there are 4 heart tricks.

Add in 2 spade tricks, AC and a possible club finesse, and there could be 12 tricks. Our target is to get as close to a dozen as possible.

One declarer received the lead of the 2D and inserted the 8 from table. When this held the possibility of a diamond loser disappeared, but when declarer followed up by leading a small club to the Q so did the chances of 12 tricks.

A common opening lead was 9S, with South's J forcing out a high honour from declarer. It is true that some players make such strange leads that even their partner has no chance of reading them let alone declarer, but it has to be said that this play looks like the top of nothing - one of the options for leading from three small cards which some people prefer to second from rubbish or MUD. As such it is a good news lead for declarer as it suggests that a later spade finesse against the Q will succeed. Nevertheless one declarer after sensibly attacking hearts, and seeing the A win from South on the second round with the 10 falling on the same trick, still rose with their other high honour when South continued with a spade.

One might now expect the play to continue with West cashing all their red winners ending in hand, leaving themselves with 10S and QC and table with AJ C. Now they make the last two tricks if North covers QC or if South has been forced to bare their KC in order to retain

QS. However it didn't go like that, and declarer only made 11 tricks.

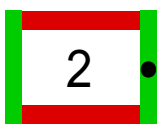
A third declarer set up their hearts, but used up all their entries to hand and then crossed to table before taking their heart winners and so never came to them.

Scoring considerations don't only affect the play in pairs. For one partnership the bidding went

1H - 2C - 3D - 5D

Twelve tricks later they were the proud possessors of an outright bottom, or would have done had one pair not had an accident and stopped short of game.

There is a strong case for West arguing that with their majors and partner's presumed at least partial control in clubs NT must make more than 9 tricks so 5D= will be at best poor. Consequently they should bid 6D not because they necessarily think it has particularly good chances of making but because it is now the only way of escaping a bad score. Indeed because of the aforementioned accident bidding 6D would have turned 2 match points into 16 (a top) at the risk of turning 2 into 0 had the slam failed. Without the accident the slam turns a bottom into a top at the risk of turning a bottom into a bigger bottom. At teams it would be foolish to bid a slam on the off-chance it makes, but at pairs when you realise you have missed the NT boat it can make sense.

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

## Five Tricks

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

South declaring in hearts reached the position above after six tricks on one of this week's hands. However neither defender had yet shown out of any suit so declarer was in the dark as to which cards lay where.

In an attempt to retain control of trumps South continued with 6H, won by West's 9 whilst East made the obvious discard of their useless club. South was now fated to make just their JH as the defence shoved winning diamonds and spades at them. That is one trick for declarer out of the last 7.

Suppose instead South had cashed JH and when the suit didn't break switched to clubs. West can ruff in, but South immediately regains the lead by ruffing whatever West returns, and the clubs now run without interruption. Declarer loses just one of the last 7 tricks, so makes 6 of them. A five trick difference for leading the wrong trump.

Suppose though that South didn't hold the master trump, so switch the J and 9 say. Now South has a choice. They can lead a trump which wins 6 or 1 of the remaining tricks depending on whether hearts are 1-1 or 2-0, or playing clubs from the top, guaranteeing 5 tricks with the defence making two ruffs. That decision may depend on the contract.

The above is an extreme example of a common theme - when declarer does not have full control running a good side suit forces the defence to score their trump(s) as ruffs and allows declarer to survive their inability to draw trumps safely.

[ For the technically minded playing a trump from the diagrammed position also squeezes dummy - a diamond discard establishes West's long diamond and a spade one establishes East's long spade. Indeed a club lead does the same. In practice the squeeze only matters if declarer plays in such a way as to allow the defence lots of tricks, else the defence will simply have more winners to discard on declarer's clubs.]

## Mixed Measures


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

Over half of Thursday's 9 table field bid this hand with 1H - 3H - 4H, with East opening. There are 2 spades and a diamond to lose on top, meaning that declarer could lose neither a second diamond nor a trump if they were to succeed. Not a good contract then, and when AD turned up off side the contract was doomed. Indeed many declarers were unable to negotiate a bad trump break with the 9 dropping singleton from South, and went 2 or even 3 down.

Looking at the hands it appears that these pairs bid the West hand according to the losing trick count and the East one on high card points. Thus West with 8 losers made a raise to three despite only holding the point for a single raise, and East raised on the basis of 16 points despite their 7 losers saying pass. Thus had both players used the same valuation tool they would have stopped short of game, but with each choosing the more optimistic measure for their holding they were reliant on receiving more than their fair share of luck for their final contract to succeed.

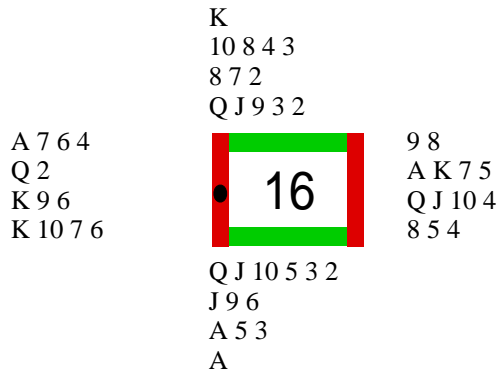
There will always be a temptation when using the losing trick count to upgrade the assessment when holding a relatively large number of points. The balancing act to this is to downgrade those low point count hands that contain no ace.

## Beware The LOL

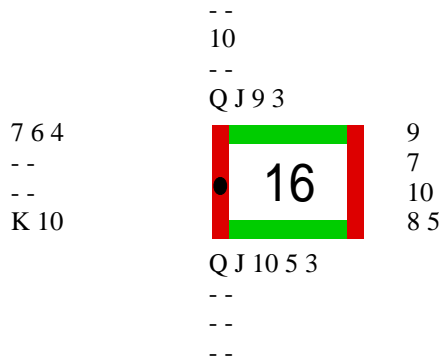
West opened 1NT, but K		
South overcalled and 10 8 4 3		
declared in spades on 8 7 2		
this hand from Q J 9 3 2		
Thursday.		
At most tables the		9 8
defence started with the		A K 7 5
lead of QH with the 2		Q J 10 4
following when the Q		8 5 4
held. Naturally East wins. Now what?		

Presumably the lead was doubleton for with QJx partner would have continued with the J not the 2. Partner might have 5 spades in their 1NT opener, but it seems more reasonable to assume that declarer has at least 6. As far as the minors are concerned whatever winners partner has in clubs will presumably not go away, but declarer might ditch diamond losers if they have say KC and AS and we allow partners A to be removed quickly. Thus a diamond switch is called for.

South wins with the A, banks the AC and plays a low trump, won by West's A. West now cashes KD and plays a third round and East is back on lead. Next comes a third heart trick and then the 7H which promotes a trump for their partner. Declarer is restricted to 6 tricks, with the defence scoring 3 hearts, 2 diamonds, AS and a trump promotion.



Why the diamonds before the third and fourth hearts? A lead of East's remaining low heart before the diamonds are won would allow declarer to discard a losing diamond while West uses up a trump to beat table's 10H. This loser on loser play saves declarer a trick. Not taking the third heart honour is more subtle - taking it would allow declarer in possession of AS to make the loser on loser play themselves by crossing to KS. As it happens declarer doesn't have AS so taking the third heart wouldn't have mattered.



The trump promotion

When East finally gets around to leading their 4th heart after three rounds of each red suit, one of trumps and AC it effects a trump promotion for partner as a small ruff can be over-ruffed, while a high ruff establishes West's 7 for later. The last diamond at this stage would have the same effect.

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