

Matters Arising

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 8 - 12 July 2024

Miscellany

8 6	19	J 7 4
9 8 7 3 2		K Q 10
9 4 3		K 10 8 6 5
K 8 3		J 5
	K 10 5	
	5 4	
	Q J 7 2	
	Q 10 7 4	

Few NS pairs had problems in reaching 4S on this hand from Monday's session. If East is silent the auction could be 1S – 1NT – 3C – 3S – 4S, though South might prefer 2S on the first round or bid game themselves on the second.

Life is a little harder if East overcalls 2D, though South may still bid 2S which has the desired effect. Even if South passes North will re-open, probably with 3C or double as many would be prepared to re-open 2S on a hand significantly weaker than this. Double might sound as if it promises hearts, but a failure by South to make a negative double over 2D means they won't be overly enthusiastic about that suit - if they have it they will be very weak, and North can retreat to 2S over 2H.

East has an unenviable choice of leads. The KH was the common choice, giving North the option of ducking in an attempt to execute the Bath Coup - winning both the A and J when the KQ are sat over them through persuading East to continue the suit. The doubleton heart on table does mean though that declarer only has one heart loser regardless of whether the Bath Coup is played.

Declarer can make the contract for the loss of a heart and a club, but the lead of the JC - top of a doubleton - puts paid to the defence's club trick allowing declarer to make 12 as those who selected the lead discovered.

A spade could cost a trick if partner has the Q, whilst who wants to lead away from those diamonds, particularly with a strong hand known to be sitting on your right?

Left to their own devices declarer needs to pick up the club suit for one loser in order to make 11 tricks. Assuming a 3–2 break declarer will want to tackle the suit by running the Q, and if this falls to the K East, then running the 10, so that there is only one loser

whenever West has at least one of missing honours.

This is superior to playing the A and then small towards Q 10 with its subsequent awkward guess if East can follow small on the second round.

The probability gap between the lines is narrowed by the possibility of a 4–1 break, whilst itchy fingers by West holding Kxx in the second line could have an indeterminate effect on the chances in that case.

Note that the first line requires possession of the 9 in declarer's hand or on the table to justify its use.

To execute the first line declarer needs two entries to table - a heart ruff and KS will do.

In practice both lines work and 11 tricks should accrue.

After The Finesse

We all like doing something different that results in a good score that we can put down to our brilliance. The reality though is that bridge largely involves dealing competently with the hands you are given, avoiding the mistakes that effectively donate gifts to the opposition.

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

On Tuesday's hand 11 you are East in 4H on the lead of 2C. The contract is by no means a gimme, for there is an obvious potential loser in each black suit, one in diamonds if the K is offside, and a trump too if they don't break and the J is in the long hand.

You are somewhat suspicious of the lead, for North had called 1S over West's 1D opening bid, but are not sure what it means. You call for the K from table, which North covers with the A before returning the 7. Discarding your losing spade is a possibility, but on a good day with hearts behaving and KD onside you can make 12 tricks by ruffing this club, so you do, with the 4. South over-ruffs with the 6 and switches to a spade. North apparently started with 6 clubs and at least 5 spades. The hearts can't be behaving, and if South has the J you must lose to it either naturally or by promotion.

You leave table by ruffing a club high and start on trumps. The J drops from North on the first round, so you draw the remaining ones. On the next page is the position as you are about to draw South's fifth and final trump:

--		8
--		9 5
A Q J 8 3	11	9 6 4
6	●	--

Does it matter what you discard on it?

It is tempting to keep the diamonds as you want to run them, and so discard the club. However after you have taken the diamond finesse how do you intend to get back to hand to repeat it? Via a club ruff is the answer. Retaining the club provides part of the necessary communications between the hand.

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

North had shown at least 5 spades by their overcall, and 6 clubs and a heart in the play. They have at most one diamond. If the club is discarded in the position in the previous diagram a successful finesse in diamonds can be taken, after which there is nothing better to do than cash AD, concede to the KD and watch whilst the defence cash a spade for one down.

The club forms part of an important entry to hand allowing the finesse to be repeated to secure 3 diamond tricks. On the lie of the cards there is a bonus - North has the singleton 10D. As this falls on the first round declarer can subsequently lead 9D to take a running finesse, securing 4 diamond tricks on the last of which a spade is discarded. The contract makes +1

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.

Martyn Harris
spadeilike on BBO

Around The Club

Before listing this week's winners I should congratulate Patricia White on the much more significant achievement of completing the third leg of her long distance challenge, this one being over a mere 55 km. In so doing she has raised more than £2000 for the Stroke Association. Brilliant on both counts. There is a picture on the club site of her nearing Grisedale Hause above Grisedale Tarn, which at a little shy of 2000 feet was I believe the highest point on the course.

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Richard Brazier & Tim Harrison

Tuesday F2F (6½ tables):

Bob Churchward & David Airey

Tuesday BBO (5 tables): Ray & Irene Gregory

Thursday am (7 tables):

NS: Bernard Houssin & tutor

EW: David Airey & Jennifer Whalley

Thursday BBO (3 tables): Catherine & Roger Preston

Total 28½ tables for the week.

There are four Master Point promotions to report from June: Joyce White to 2* Grand Master, Phillip Burley to 2* Master, Shaffin Jaffer to Club Master and Gwen Wiles to Local Master. Well done all.

