

Matters Arising 192

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 15 - 19 Jul 2024

Stayman

A K Q 7 9 7 6 A 9 4 2 4 2	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">11</div>	6 4 3 2 Q 10 5 4 J 10 6 3 K
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Opening 1NT when wide open in two suits is undesirable, and there is an argument for opening this West hand from Thursdays play 1S. The intent is to raise a heart response and bid 2D over a 2C one even though it is normal for a 2D rebid to promise 5 spades in this auction. Nevertheless most players employing a weak NT will elect to open 1NT.

East really doesn't wish to play in 1NT.

One of the lesser known uses for Stayman is on this sort of hand. East bids 2C with intent to pass West's rebid, even if it is in diamonds. Occasionally West will have a 3-3-2-5 distribution and you end up in a 4-2 diamond fit, but this risk seems a fair price to pay for the chance of finding a major or diamond fit.

A K Q 7 9 7 6 A 9 4 2 4 2	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">11</div>	10 8 J 8 3 K 7 5 A Q 9 7 6 6 4 3 2 Q 10 5 4 J 10 6 3 K J 9 5 A K 2 Q 8 J 10 8 5 3
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Even with the enemy clubs split 5-5 and North underleading their Ace at T1 West still cannot make 1NT. 2S should prove straightforward - for example making 4 spades, 3 diamonds and a club ruff. Indeed there is a possibility of a ninth in hearts.

There are however some variations of Stayman which include a 2NT rebid by opener, and these do require a minimum of 11 points as you could end up in 2NT.

This does not apply to normal Stayman where the only requirement is the ability to cope with each of the possible opener rebids of 2D/H/S, and pass is one way of coping.

Ruff

J 8 6 Q 10 8 4 K J 9 8 10 5	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">22</div>	West was cast as the villain of the piece on this hand from Tuesday. North insisted on playing in 4H and partner led 6C, won by declarer with the A. Next came AK and a third heart, with partner showing out. West now knows that declarer started with 7 trumps, and that they, West, still have the master trump after winning the third round. That then is 2 defensive trump tricks. It looks like partner must have at least one A to beat the contract, so West tries a diamond. Partner wins and returns one, ruffed by declarer.
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Now comes QC, JC overtaken by the King on table so that more clubs can be led. Not wanting to waste their master trump on clubs, West discards. In due course North rids themselves of 2 spades and partner's A never scores.

J 8 6 Q 10 8 4 K J 9 8 10 5	<div style="border: 2px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">22</div>	9 2 A K J 9 7 5 3 3 A Q J A 10 7 6 2 A 10 7 6 4 9 6 4 K Q 5 4 3 -- Q 5 2 K 8 7 3 2
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West knows fairly early on that declarer has 8 red cards, so at most 5 black ones. If they have AS there is nothing to be done, but if they don't they mustn't be allowed to discard losing spades on clubs - there are enough clubs on table to take care of all 5 black cards that declarer is known to have. Ruffing the 3rd club, which West knows is declarer's last when partner follows, and switching to a spade has to be right.

Unfortunately defenders can be very reluctant to use a master trump to ruff, and this allows declarer to dispose of losers. Indeed half the field were allowed to make 10 tricks even though declarer is destined to lose 2 Aces and 2 trumps without help from the defence.

What Must Be

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

There were various ways for West to make an overtrick in 6D against the 10D lead on this hand from Monday's play.


For example, run the lead to hand and take the free finesse in spades. Free because even if it fails the trick lost comes back by discarding a club on AS later. When this holds play a second trump to hand, getting confirmation that as suspected the lead was singleton. However all your trumps are high - they cannot be beaten by the outstanding one, so we don't draw it. Now AK H and a heart ruff, AS (discard club), club to A, ruff another heart. A club ruff gets West to hand so that they can draw last trump and West's hand is high.

Digression.

Suppose that in an excess of enthusiasm West bid 7NT and received the safe diamond lead. Can you see a possible distribution of the NS hands that allows the contract to make?

Back to 6D.

In fact hearts are 3-3 and hence are established after a single ruff. Consequently the last trump can be drawn after the sole necessary heart ruff.


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

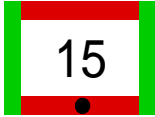
To make 7NT requires 5 diamond, 5 heart and 3 black tricks. For the three black tricks you need either a singleton KC or KS inside. The latter is clearly the better bet.

To make 5 heart tricks requires Q 10 (x) in the South hand. Lead JH and if not covered run it. If it is covered win, return to table to lead the other heart with intent to finesse against the 10.

The cards lie favourably - a classic case of what must be must be for anyone in 7NT.

An Unusual Unusual No Trump

	9 4	East was looking at this
	--	minor suited hand on
	K Q 9 8 3	Thursday when North
	K Q 9 4 3 2	opened 4H in front of
		them. Pass and 5C are
		obvious options, but 4NT looks best. This is a variation
		of the well known Unusual No Trump convention
		showing both minors, and may as well be employed in
		this situation as it seems highly unlikely that you will
		want to use 4NT either to play or as Blackwood over
		this opening.

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

4H makes for the loss of a spade, a trump and a diamond. so the 9 tricks available in diamonds and 10 in clubs make both minors good sacrifices at the 5 level.

The use of 4NT as a 2-suiter can be extended to be either the two lowest or the two highest ranking suits. Over a 4S opening say (or indeed other 4S bids) 4NT could show either the minors or the reds (2 highest suits). Partner picks their preferred minor, and if this is clubs when the 4NT caller possesses both red suits, 5D comes next. Partner knows they now need to choose a red suit.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (8 tables): Russell White & Jeremy Harris

Tuesday F2F (7½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Tuesday BBO (6½ tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday am (5 tables): Bernard & Sabina Houssin

Thursday BBO (4½ tables):

Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell

Total 31½ tables for the week.

Martyn Harris

spadeilike on BBO