

Matters Arising 193

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 22 - 26 July 2024


After 2NT

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

With a combined 26 count one would expect EW to be in game here, yet at four of Thursday's five tables the contract was 3NT or 4H rather than the 4S one would imagine by looking at the hands of board 22.

West opens 1C or 1H according to style - yes both bids are perfectly respectable choices - East replies 1S and West rebids 2NT. East now shows secondary support for partner's suit, and West bids 3S showing secondary support there. East's 3C/3H rebid is game forcing enabling 5-3 major fits to be uncovered.


Thus on this hand a typical sequence would be 1H - 1S - 2NT - 3H - 3S - 4S.

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

The 4-1 spade break puts paid to the chances of both 3NT and 4S. Move a trump from North to South and a club back and both contracts make exactly.

It is undeniably easier for the opposition to overcall if you open a minor rather than a major. Here for example an aggressive North might call 1D over 1C but pass over 1H, and EW have to be able to deal with this. The pre-emptive value of 1H can't be quoted as a benefit of the 1H choice though, for were say the QD also to lie North so that they felt able not only to bid 1D over 1C but also 2D over 1H, then the pre-emptive effect rebounds on to East who has to bid over 2D rather than 1D. What opening 1H does of course is get their major straight into the auction.

Redouble

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

There was some unity on Thursday's board 23 with North opening 1S at every table. Thereafter events quickly diverged with three Easts choosing to double for take-out - how did they intend to cope with a diamond response? - and two passing.

After pass from East the NS auction becomes a false preference one, continuing 2C - 2D - 2S to reach an optimum contract.

Where East doubled two Souths effectively ignored it by bidding 2C, and the auction was back on the normal track. Redouble was the minority choice, showing 9+ points, probably no fit, and dreams of extracting a penalty. West felt obliged to bid 2D (wouldn't you?) and North was happy to double for penalties. East was not happy. Should they bid on or work on the basis of when in a hole stop digging? In practice the choice confronting them was as to how big a bottom they would get, for there are no makeable EW contracts, and even 1 off doubled red would be worse than conceding any NS part-score.

Suppose that North had a different hand and felt unable to double 2D for penalties. They have a choice of pass, which is forcing and saying they fancy a penalty too but can't double diamonds, and bidding, indicating that their hand is unsuited to defence. There should be no question of 2D being passed out undoubled, and both North and South should be aware of this. Equally had East rebid 2H say over the double of 2D then this too shouldn't be passed out by NS. If South feels unable to double then North must double or bid.

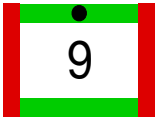
Spot The Finesse

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

On Monday North led 10D after hearing an auction of 1H – 3H – 4H. You are West, and allow the diamond to run to the A in your hand so that you can take the trump finesse. It fails, and South returns partner's suit, leading a small diamond to the 5, 9 and K. Next comes AH, with both defenders following. Over to you to think your thoughts.

A trump has already been lost, with AC surely certain to bag a trick for the defence too. Considering the West hand the third spade and fourth diamond can both be ruffed if necessary, so the only other potential loser is the second spade. And that disappears if there is a successful finesse against the KS in the South hand. Alternatively if the diamonds were originally 3–3 dummy's second spade goes on the fourth diamond and you can ruff two spades rather than a spade and a diamond.

Before the start of play the odds favour finessing in spades over playing for an even break in diamonds.

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

Neither the spade finesse nor the play for an even break in diamonds works, but alert declarers would make the overtrick anyway. North has led 10D and followed up with the 9. Would they not have led the J if they possessed it too? After two rounds of diamonds there is a near marked finesse against South's J so that declarer can make both J and 8, discarding a spade on the fourth diamond.

Bad Breaks

9 3	West opened 1NT on Tuesday's hand
A K Q 10 6 4	19, little suspecting that the auction
--	would take off, with North bidding
A K Q 8 5	4H, East 5D and North 5H.



East led 6C. The 7 from table draws the 9 from West. Plan the play.

Q 10 8 4
J 3 2
J 9 6
10 7 4


The spade losers in hand are clearly going nowhere. Ignoring the enemy action you might be tempted to draw trumps - it takes three rounds - and then bash out the clubs from the top, cursing your luck when they break 4–1 leaving you with a club loser as well as two in spades.

West's 1NT tells us that they have at least two cards in every suit. East's 5D must be based on a stack of diamonds suggesting shortages elsewhere. Particularly in clubs, for why else lead the suit?

Play off A and JH. If both follow then cash clubs from the top, ruffing the fourth one if necessary. If however East shows out in hearts on the first or second round play a second club to which West must follow.

If East follows too then the clubs are 3–2 and will run. Thus draw trumps and enjoy the clubs.

However if East shows out on the second club then West must have started with 4. You can safely play a third top club and ruff a fourth before returning to hand via a diamond ruff to draw the remaining trump(s) and enjoy the fifth club.

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

Playing the second club before drawing the last trump would be correct even if there had been no opposition bidding to guide you. If both defenders follow to the second club you can revert to drawing trumps, if not you give yourself the extra chance that the hand short in clubs is also short in trumps. This is a common theme when dealing with side suits that need a ruff to establish them if they don't break.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (7 tables): Tim Harrison & Richard Brazier

Tuesday F2F (8 tables): Jill & Chris Yates

Tuesday BBO (6½ tables):

Amanda Etherington & Martyn Harris

Thursday am (6 tables):

NS: Janet Ramwell & Monica Dodman

EW: Sheila Wilson & Moira Williams

Thursday BBO (5 tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 32½ tables for the week.

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