

# Matters Arising 197

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 19 - 23 Aug 2024

## Too Easy?

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

**23**

K Q 9  
A 9 8  
A K 7 2  
A K Q

Whether in 3NT or 6NT Thursday declarers were confident of success with an apparent easy ride to 12 tricks via 3 tricks in spades, 2 in hearts, 4 in diamonds and 3 in clubs.

Those tricks are not all off the top though, for the JD is missing. This won't matter if the diamonds split in the most probable 3-2 manner.

Suppose though that one defender holds Jxxx in diamonds. Declarer can handle Jxxx West by finessing against the J, but usually not against Jxxx East. Thus declarer plays off AK D first so that if East shows out the finesse against West's Knave is marked.

	A 10 5	
	K 4 3	
	Q 10 8 3	
	J 10 3	
8 6 3 2	<b>23</b>	J 7 4
Q J 2		10 7 6 5
J 9 6 5		4
9 8		7 6 5 4 2
	K Q 9	
	A 9 8	
	A K 7 2	
	A K Q	

Unfortunately an early play of the Q scuppers the chance of handling the 4-1 break here, though it would have provided protection against East having all 5 missing diamonds. Not much consolation.

... but usually not against Jxxx East I wrote above. Where does that "usually" come from? If West's singleton was the 9 then A followed by Q would reveal a marked finesse against East's Jack.

This creates an interesting opportunity for a false card from West. Suppose on the first round of diamonds they drop the 9 under the A? Should declarer now continue with the K or Q?

## A Curious Undertrick

J 10 3  
Q 10 4  
9 5  
Q 10 9 8 2

K 8  
J 8 7 6 2  
K 10 7  
A 4 3

**7**

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

A Q 5  
9 5  
Q J 8 6 3  
K 7 6

On Monday this hand was played 6 times by South in 1NT, always on a heart lead.

Presumably declarer won in hand and tackled clubs, with there being a significant fork in the course of play after the defence take their first club trick.

One possibility is that the defence switches back to hearts. Declarer is now in control, knocking out the other club honour whilst still possessing QH and AD. They come to 3 clubs, 3 hearts and a diamond.

The obvious alternative is that the defence switch to diamonds, knocking out declarer's A whilst the defence retains a club stop. Now the defence comes to 4 diamonds, 3 spades and 2 clubs for 3 down.

On the night the most common result was one down, which happened 4 times, with just one declarer making and one going three down. Curious!

	K 8	
	J 8 7 6 2	
	K 10 7	
	A 4 3	
	<b>7</b>	
	A Q 5	
	9 5	
	Q J 8 6 3	
	K 7 6	

Suppose East overcalls 2D (natural) and plays there. South starts with a top heart and switches to a small trump running to the 9 and J. Nine tricks look easy - 4 trumps and 5 black suit tricks. Can you find a tenth?

Take the 3 spade winners, discarding a club, so that you can follow up with two club winners and a club ruff in the short hand. You lose just 2 hearts and AD.

With 9D safely out of harm's way, you could also look to establish a heart trick by returning a heart at T3 and subsequently ruffing hearts high until the defence run out of them.

## Slam Plan

A 4 2  
A K 3  
A K Q 10 7 4  
6



Q J 9 8 6  
Q 4  
6  
A K J 8 4

There were plenty of slams to choose from on this hand from Tuesday, with three pairs opting for 6NT by North. Only one of these succeeded though. Can you do better?

Plan the play on the lead of a heart.

There are 9 tricks on top - 1 spade, 2 clubs and 3 in each red suit, so 3 more are needed.

Those diamonds look nice. Perhaps we should run them, for if the suit is 3-3 the three extra tricks come immediately, as indeed they would if the suit is 4-2 with the J in the short hand. In percentage terms that is 35 (for the 3-3) and a third of 49 (if 4-2 the J will be in the short hand 1/3 of the time) giving approximately a 52% overall chance. If the suit is 4-2 but it is necessary to give up a trick to the J we only get 2 of the three extra tricks needed, though another could come from a successful finesse in a black suit. Thus we can add on another 1/2 of 2/3 of 49% taking our chances up to the region of 68%.

Pretty good, but the report says "could do better".

The spade suit has a couple of significant holes, but close inspection reveals that it too could be the provider the three extra tricks, for if the suit is 3-2 there are lots of ways of playing it for at most one loser. That's 68% without considering additional possibilities.

Suppose you try running the QS and it holds.

You have to play AS next, for if you lose to the KS on the second round of the suit, a club switch undermines communications so that the spade suit can't both be unblocked and the long ones reached.

The AS would of course reveal whether the suit is 3-2 or 4-1, and if East has 4 the suit is still on to be played for one loser. Thus we can add 1/2 of the 4-1 breaks to our chances - that's another 14%. Indeed we can add more than that, for a singleton 10 East would also allow 4 spade tricks, with the 10 falling under the Q. The spades alone have an 85% chance of bringing in the 3 extra tricks, and if they fail we can still fall back on diamonds.

Clearly we should tackle spades.

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

With the spades 3-2 even if declarer wins QH at T1 and tackles diamonds from the top immediately, they can still get back on track for 12 tricks when the bad diamond split is revealed by then playing A and another spade, provided of course that declarer retains the QD for later.

Those tackling spades at trick 2 will make 13 tricks - if West ducks QS declarer has to play the A next as previously mentioned, whilst if West covers it seems natural to finesse against the 10 on the way back.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (10 tables, teams):

Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell  
Robin Rose & John Maclachlan

Tuesday F2F (5½ tables): Gwen Wiles & Sarah Bullock

Tuesday BBO (6 tables): John & Wendy Ellwood

Thursday am (6 tables):

NS: David Crowe & Tutor  
EW: Jane Curzon & Tutor

Thursday BBO (4½ tables): John & Wendy Ellwood

Total 32 tables for the week.

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