

Matters Arising 199

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC2 - 6 Sept 2024

Blind Spot

We all have our blind spots within the game. One of the most common is letting partner win a trick simply because they can. This happens both as declarer and as defender.

	K Q 7	Four of the five tables
	8 6 5	saw this blind spot afflict
	K 7 5	West on Tuesday's board
	A 8 6 2	23. South opened 1NT
9 8		and ended in 2NT or 3NT
K J 9 7 3	23	depending on the
8 6 3		partnership's assessments
Q 9 3		of their hands.

West led 7H, and on sight of dummy knows that declarer and partner between them have 5 hearts. East rose with the Ace and returned the Q. Given their 1NT opening there is no surprise that South followed to both, so that is 4 of the originally unseen 5 hearts accounted for. West ducked, which was rather a shame as South had the last heart. East was unable to continue the suit and declarer gathered at least nine tricks. Yet West knows that by overtaking with the K and continuing the J the defence has 5 heart tricks. Ouch.

	K Q 7	
	8 6 5	
	K 7 5	
	A 8 6 2	
9 8		J 10 6 4 2
K J 9 7 3	23	A Q
8 6 3		J 4 2
Q 9 3		J 5 4
	A 5 3	
	10 4 2	
	A Q 10 9	
	K 10 7	

It would be nice to report that the fifth West got it right, but they were never given the chance, for their partner played the Q at T1, ensuring the suit was blocked. Another ouch.

Assuming spot cards on the table with AQx the play of the Q is usually right, for it prevents declarer from holding off with the K if they have it, as holding off would risk no tricks in the suit if West has underled the A. Else the *third hand plays high* maxim is likely to be the best guide when dummy has nothing of value in the suit., high meaning as high as possible.

Red Queens

8	23	Q J 4 2
A K 8 6 5 3		J 10 9
K J 8		10 9 5 2
A K 9		Q 3

Monday's board 23 caused declarer problems, with only two of six rounding up 10 tricks, resulting in lots of minus scores for those in game.

Suppose West declares on a club lead. Declarer can certainly see 10 possible tricks: 3 clubs, at least 5 trumps, and two diamonds by force. Equally there seem to be 4 potential losers: two Aces and two red Queens.

There are two main ways of playing trumps in an attempt to avoid a loser there: playing South for the Q by finessing, and playing for the Q to fall under the AK. The former is a straight 50% chance, though this can be improved by playing off one top honour first before taking the finesse. The latter depends on trumps 2-2 (40%) or 3-1 with a singleton Q (¼ of 50%), giving chances a little over 50%. Thus before play the odds slightly favour the drop, though it doesn't take much of a hint that the finesse should work for this to become the preferred line.

What of diamonds? Unless the Q is singleton or the defence make some strange play the only way to avoid losing to the Q is for South to hold it and declarer to finesse. That requires an entry to table, with the only certain one being in clubs. However a single finesse may not be enough for if either defender wins the first diamond with the A then declarer will need a second attempt at the finesse to pick up the Q.

Abandoning the idea of playing to drop the QH the suggested line is: win T1 with QC and run JH. If this holds then trumps can be cleared without loss barring North starting with Qxxx. With no trump loss, declarer is less worried about conceding two diamonds. If however North wins with QH then they have created 2 trump entries to table, each of which can be used to lead a diamond. Thus declarer gets to finesse twice in diamonds.

	A 10 6 3	
	Q 4 2	
	7 4	
	J 10 7 5	
8		Q J 4 2
A K 8 6 5 3	23	J 10 9
K J 8	●	10 9 5 2
A K 9		Q 3
	K 9 7 5	
	7	
	A Q 6 3	
	8 6 4 2	

North does indeed win the first trump.

Note the importance of using both the created trump entries to lead diamonds, for if after a club continuation declarer plays two further rounds of trumps before leading a diamond from table, South can rise with the A and exit with another club, forcing declarer to concede to the QD later.

Around The Club

This weeks winners were

Monday (8½ tables): Roger & Debbie Wilkinson

Tuesday F2F (9 tables teams):

Sabina & Bernard Houssin

Ralph Rogerson & Bob Churchward

Tuesday BBO (5 tables): Ray & Irene Gregory

Thursday am (6 tables):

NS: Chris Needham & Shirley Wilson

EW: David Airey & Jennifer Whalley

Thursday BBO (4½ tables):

Alan Wearmouth & Martyn Harris

Total 33 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