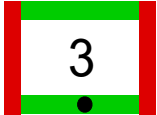


# Matters Arising 200

being some thoughts prompted by hands played at Kendal BC 9 - 13 Sept 2024

## Break or Finesse

K 4 3 K 10 6 4 2 J 9 8 2 4		A J 10 A Q 5 K Q 5 A K 10 8
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Monday, and you are East playing in 6H or 6NT on the lead of QC. Over to you.

Thank your thoughts? Read on.

Assuming the defenders hearts are split 3-2 we can count 2 spades, 5 hearts and 2 clubs on top, with 2 diamonds available by force too. There is a chance that QJ C are doubleton allowing the 10C to score, but realistically the 12th trick will come either from a successful guess of the 2-way spade finesse or from diamonds where a 3-3 break, doubleton 10 or winning finesse against the 10 would yield the extra trick.

Aside on the hearts. These will of course be tackled by playing off A and Q first so that if North has a singleton there will be a marked finesse against South's J.

There may be a temptation to concentrate ones efforts on divining the location of the QS, but even then the principle of *first set up your tricks, then cash them* will direct one's attention to the diamonds. In an ideal world you would want to lead twice towards the KQ D to allow for North having a doubleton A - they would then use it on spot cards and K, Q, J would all score. However this requires three entries to table: two to lead small towards hand and one to enjoy the long diamond. This is possible in 6H as AS, KH and club ruffs all provide entries, but in NT only KH and AS are entries.

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

If North holds off twice with their AD a third round risks finding them with A 10. Declarer now might prefer to take their chances in spades instead as surely it won't be South doing the holding off .

## Can You Catch?

We are all fond of our brilliant bids and plays no matter how rarely they occur, but the basis of any good score is avoiding mistakes and taking advantage of enemy ones. If the enemy decide to throw you a good score, catch it.

K 8 2 K Q 9 4 A Q 9 K Q J	Time to invent a story around Thursday's board 22.
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Q 7 3 A 10 8 2 10 6 3 9 8 2	East opened 1NT, though this was brushed aside in a manner that left South declaring in 4H on the lead of the 5S to East's A and a trump back.  Barring a bad trump break you should now be expecting to make. Why?
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Dummy and declarer have a combined 26 count, so there really isn't room for West to have AC given East's 1NT opening. Consequently even if East has KJ D you can avoid losing two diamond tricks alongside the two black aces. Just don't try early finesses.

Draw trumps in 3 rounds and attack clubs. When in with the A East cannot lead a diamond around to table as that gives up any hope of a second defensive diamond trick, so has to exit with a black card.

Now cash the remaining black winners ending in hand with QS and lead a diamond to the 9. East can win but is endplayed. A black card concedes a ruff and discard, and a diamond gives declarer 2 diamond tricks. Either way the result is the same - just one diamond trick to the defence.

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

East went wrong at T1. There is no hurry to grab AS. Thoughts that South might have singleton Q can be dispelled by applying the rule of 11 to the assumed 4th best lead. Subtract the 5 from 11 to learn there are 6

cards higher than the 5 not in West's hand. East can see two on table and two in their own hand. That means declarer has two larger ones too, and hence at least a doubleton spade. Hold off with AS and declarer needs the endplay to reduce 5 losers (2 spades, 2 diamonds, AC) to four and hence one off.

### Three Suits

Theories as to how to handle 4-4-4-1 hands abound, with each one's adherents convinced they are right. Not that deviating from them will necessarily lead to disaster. It does seem sensible though to avoid opening such hands 1S regardless of where the singleton is.

If you did open 1S then partner will be replying 1NT on any 6-9 point hand lacking spade support, and some of those will inevitably involve fits that won't be found unless you are good enough to continue over 1NT. A definite echo of why we open 1H when holding 4-4 in the majors.

Further if you do open 1S with 12-14 points and partner responds in your singleton you have no rebid that does not seriously mislead partner as to your strength and/or shape. And even if you feel able to introduce a new suit after any strength of opening, this would undermine the very useful principle that a new suit after opening 1S promises 5 spades.

The inevitable conclusion is that any theory that requires you to take the relative quality of the suits into account should be handled very carefully, as sometimes these would point at a 1S opening.

This still leaves three theories worthy of consideration, and all are in use:

- 1 Open the suit below the singleton, with a singleton club open 1H,
- 2 Open the suit below a red singleton, and the middle suit with a black one,
- 3 Open the lowest ranking suit.

Let's examine how each of these would have handled the EW hands on Thursday's board 11, and some variations on it.

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

Theory 1: West opens 1H, and with a 7 loser 14 count East can choose between an immediate 4H, a Jacoby 2NT, a 4C splinter or 1S to start a delayed game raise, according to style.

Theory 2: West opens 1D, East replies 1S. Now comes 2C, 2H (4th suit forcing), 3H (in case responder does have hearts), 4H (they do!).

Theory 3: West opens 1C, East replies 1S. West rebids 2C - a red suit bid at this point would be a reverse showing extra values, and West is not strong enough for 1NT either. East rebids 3H and West raises to 4H.

That 2C rebid in theory 3 may be a rather alarming prospect, and might lead to playing in a 4-2 fit if East is 5-3-3-2 in shape, though if East has a second 4 card suit they will surely bid it. A 4-2 fit when 4-3 ones are available is hardly a good advertisement but ...

... consider theory 2 with a weakened version of the East hand, swapping a couple of honours with 5s:

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

The auction starts 1D - 1S - 2C. Now East lacks the strength to bid 2H fourth suit forcing, so has to settle for giving preference to 2D. The 4-4 major fit is missed. Theory 1 still finds the fit immediately, and theory 3 finds it on the second round when East rebids 2H, but ...

... now move the fourth heart into diamonds:

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

Theory 2 finds the diamond fit immediately though East will start by responding 1S in case there is a fit here too. Theory 3 is happy: 1C - 1S - 2C - 2D.

Theory 1? 1H - 1S - 2C - 2H, missing the diamond fit as East lacks the strength to go 2D fourth suit forcing.

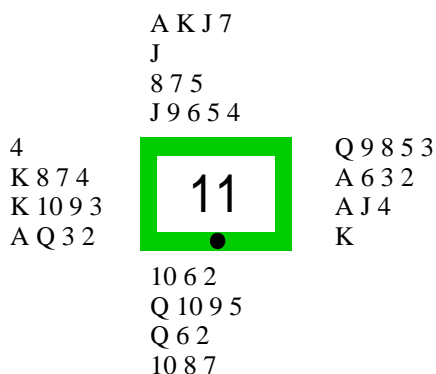
Things could be even more embarrassing for East with a 5-4-2-2 shape if they find themselves choosing between their doubletons on 11a (theory 2) or 11b (theory 1).

Thus all three theories could land you in a 4-2 fit if partner has exactly the wrong hand.

Two footnotes on theory 3, it probably being the least familiar.

- 1) Opening a low ranking suit makes it particularly easy for the opposition to overcall. You will need to be comfortable with negative doubles.
- 2) It is the only one of the three theories that allows

your system to say that if you open a major and rebid in a new suit then you always have at least 5 cards in the major.



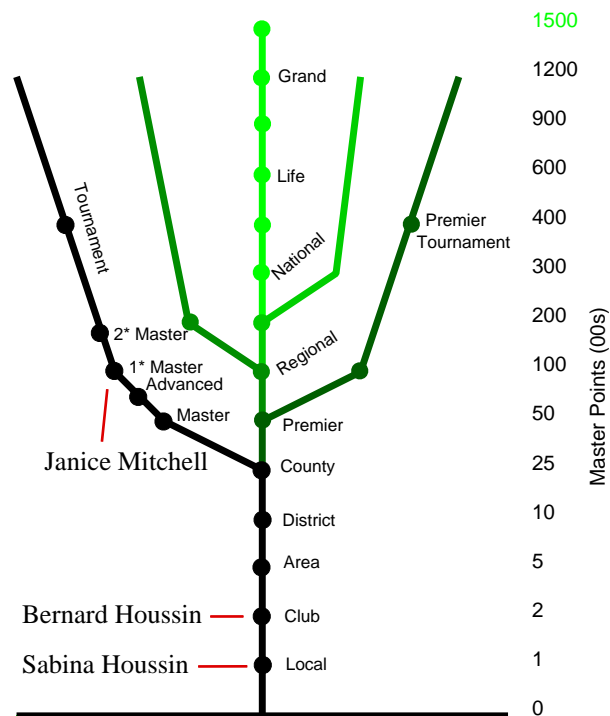
The full deal for hand 11 is above. Analysis says both 4H and 3NT make exactly, so 4H is where you should want to be. Those who prefer 3NT to the 4-4 fit should come off second best.

## Around The Club

This weeks winners were  
 Monday (7½ tables): Mike & Sally-Ann Rothwell  
 Tuesday F2F (7 tables):  
     NS: Roger & Debbie Wilkinson  
     EW: Helen Finch & Moira Williams  
 Tuesday BBO (5½ tables):  
     Ina Gray & Mary Anne Peden  
 Thursday am (5 tables): Jill & Chris Yates  
 Thursday BBO (6 tables):  
     Dudley Hargreaves & Andrew Smith

Total 30 tables for the week.

Three members secured Master Point Promotions during August: Janice Mitchell to 1\* Master, Bernard Houssin to Club Master and Sabina Houssin to Local Master. Well done all.



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