

## DECLARER PLAY - FINESSING

### *FINESSE*

To promote a secondary card to winning status, the success being dependent on the position of the opponents' higher card(s).

### *BASIC TECHNIQUE*

In seeking to turn the secondary card into a winner we must lead towards that card, not play it. If we play it, an opponent will cover and the purpose of the manoeuvre will have been wasted.

### *ASSUMPTION IN ALL THAT FOLLOWS*

Declarer has as many outside entries as needed to lead from the South hand (else approach needs modifying/simplifying).

### *THE BASIC POSITION*

♠ A Q	We lead a small spade from hand - towards
	♠ Q - and cover whatever card West plays. If West
♠ 3 2	has ♠ K we make two tricks – a 50:50 chance. If we lead
	♠ Q we only ever make one trick. If we lead a spade
	to the ace we are playing to drop the singleton king
	in the East hand – i.e. playing for the suit to break
	8-1, a most unlikely event.

### *THE BASIC POSITION WITH ♠ Q IN THE SOUTH HAND*

♠ A 3	Now we don't have the fluidity of the basic position. Our
	best chance is that the defence open up the suit and that the
	defender on lead leads away from the king of spades. If West
♠ Q 2	leads, we try to run the lead round to our queen, successfully
	if East doesn't play ♠ K. If East is on lead we rise with ♠ Q and
	hope it holds the trick. If the defence don't play the suit we'll
	cash ♠ A hoping for the remote chance of a singleton king falling.

### *THE PREVIOUS SUIT LAYOUT WITH AN EXTRA CARD IN EACH HAND*

♠ A 3 5	Now our flexibility returns and we can play on the suit. We
	can cash ♠ A and play a small spade towards the queen,
	gaining when East has the king. Note that leading ♠ Q gains
♠ Q 2 4	nothing – it will be covered by one or other defender.

Talk 1 Hand (see Workshop Hands)

Talk 2 Hand (see Workshop Hands)

### *SEEKING TO PROMOTE TWO SECONDARY CARDS*

- ♠ K Q 3 2      We lead a small spade towards the king. If the defence has not played ♠A we repeat the process and play a spade towards the queen. If that holds we may even make three spades if the suit breaks 3-3. If we start by leading
- ♠ 4 5 6      ♠K we'll always lose two tricks in the suit and won't ever make three tricks.

### *THE ABOVE POSITION WITH ♠6 RELACED WITH ♠J*

- ♠ K Q 3 2      We start as above and lead a low spade towards the North hand. If the king holds we come back to South and play towards ♠Q. If the ace appears on the second round we congratulate ourselves as we now have three winners.
- ♠ J 4 5      This is the way to play this combination to guard against a 4-2 spade break with West holding the doubleton ace. The ace is said to *beat the air*.

### *SIX CARDS MISSING THE KING AND TEN*

- ♠ A Q 2      We are guaranteed two tricks but might make three. The technical line is to play a low spade and finesse the queen. If that holds we cash ♠A and hope the king drops. A
- ♠ J 5 4      psychological line would be to play ♠J hoping West does not cover when holding the king.

### *SIX CARDS MISSING THE KING*

- ♠ A Q 2      Again we are guaranteed two tricks but might make three. Having the ten of spades makes a very big difference. Here the knave is supported by that card. These two cards together back up dummy's queen. Here we can play ♠J with impunity and run it.
- ♠ J 10 4      We'll always make three spades if West has the king.

## COMMON FINESSES – THE SIMPLE FINESSE REPEATED

♠ A 3 2      We play ♠Q and if it's not covered play ♠J and repeat the process. We're guaranteed two tricks but will make three if the king is with West.

♠ Q J 10

*... which is similar to ...*

♠ A Q J      We play a spade to the knave and, if it holds, come to hand and play a second spade to the queen. Two/three tricks depending on the position of the king.

♠ 4 3 2

## COMMON FINESSES – THE DOUBLE FINESSE

♠ A J 10      We finesse ♠10 and if it loses to ♠K/Q we repeat the process, playing ♠J from dummy. We lose only when East has both the king and queen. If the honours are split or West has both we

♠ 4 3 2      shall make two tricks.

## COMMON FINESSES – THE DEEP FINESSE

♠ A Q 10      We are guaranteed only one winner but could make three if West has both the king and the knave. We play ♠2 to ♠10. If that holds we play a second spade to ♠Q, pretty confident that it will win. Three

♠ 4 3 2      likely tricks. Note that if we first finesse ♠Q we cannot recover to make three tricks. The king and knave of spades are now "equals" and West will play one of them on the second round.

## COMMON FINESSES – THE TWO-WAY FINESSE

♠ A 10 3      We can finesse either defender for the queen. If we can't arrange the play to force the defence to open up the suit (thereby taking away the guess) we may have to toss a coin. We can sometimes

♠ K J 2      get an idea of each defender's distribution and, if that's the case, we can increase our chances of success by playing the hand that has more cards in spades to hold the queen.

## COMMON FINESSES – THE RUFFING FINESSE

♠ A Q J      If we are in a suit contract – and want two tricks in spades - we could take a simple finesse by leading ♠2 and playing the knave. We also have the option of playing East for the king. If that's the case we play

♠ 2      a spade to the ace and play ♠Q. If it's covered we ruff and return to the promoted ♠J. If the queen isn't covered we run it, discarding a loser.

## SUMMARY POINTS

Taking finesses is a legitimate way of increasing your trick taking and getting better scores.

Be sure of your technique of leading *towards* cards you want to promote.

Don't give up on finesses – you are often going against the odds and poor scores will often result.

As your card play technique improves you won't be taking as many finesses because you'll find lines of play that, for example, boost straight 50:50 chances. You'll become adept at putting the opponents on play to make them play to your advantage.