



The Finesse Part II

MY last article was about the simple finesse. This article continues the theme but extends the idea – a sort of ‘finesses with knobs on’. Let’s start by taking a look at a couple of very simple positions. Firstly we have the double finesse:



Here North has a sort of double tenace (an honour holding with two ‘holes’ in it or maybe you can think of it as a fork with three prongs). How should South play this combination? Well, the best play is to lead from the South hand and, when West plays a low card, play the ♣10. Now, three things may happen: the ♣10 may win the trick (which will happen if West has both the ♣K and ♣J), it may lose to the ♣K (which will happen if West has just the ♣J) or it may lose to the ♣J.

In the first case South must return to hand with another suit and play another card to the ♣Q, making three tricks in the suit. In the second case (where the ♣10 has forced the ♣K) there are two tricks in the suit set up in the dummy and no further finesse is necessary. In the third case South has to return to hand and play another club to the ♣Q, hoping that West has the ♣K.

It is worth noting that South will make three tricks about 25% of the time (when

West has both the ♣K and the ♣J) exactly two tricks 50% of the time (when the missing honours are split) and will make only the ♣A when East has both missing honours. For practical purposes, therefore, South will make at least two tricks about 75% of the time.

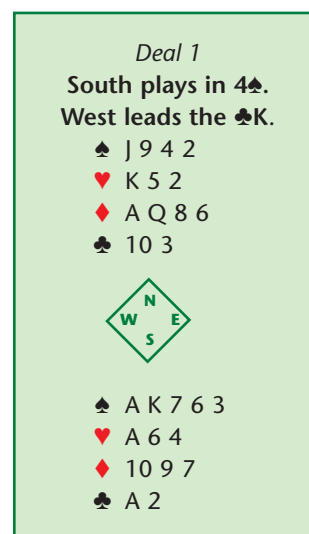
The following combination is similar but goes under the name of ‘combination finesse’:



You might like to think of the North holding as being an extended tenace as it doesn’t really conform to the exact definition of an ordinary tenace. Now, what are South’s chances in this suit? Well, the play is the same as for the double finesse, a crucial difference being that there is no chance of making three tricks. South can manufacture two tricks (no more) from this combination and this can be achieved 75% of the time by taking two finesses. To achieve this, South leads low to the ♣10 and expects it to lose. Once it has done so he then regains the lead in the South hand and finesses the ♣J, hoping and expecting it to win. If East has the ♣K-Q then South will lose two tricks, of course, but that would be unlucky. If West has the ♣K-Q then either the ♣10 will win or – perhaps

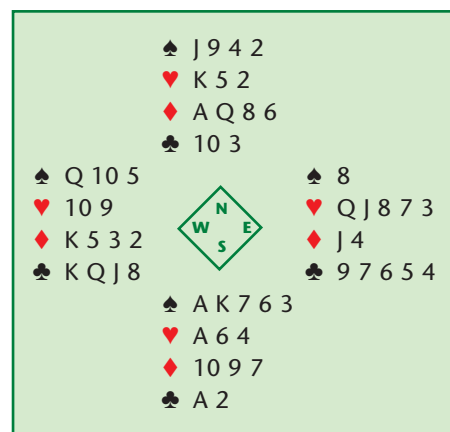
more likely – West will split his honours and no further finesse will be necessary.

It’s time to look at a simple deal:



South plays in 4♠ and West starts off with the ♣K. South wins with the ♣A and tries his luck with the ♣A-K, finding out that they are 3-1 and that West has a trump trick. What now?

Well, there is a possible heart loser and the diamonds to tackle. The best play is to run the ♦10 and if that loses, to run the ♦9 later. With luck the diamonds will become established for a heart discard and South will hold his losers to one spade, one diamond and one club. The full deal:



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As the cards lie, there is no defence. The ♦10 loses to the ♦J but the next diamond finesse succeeds and South can set up a discard for his third heart.

Here is another example, with a slight twist:

Deal 2
South plays in 3NT.
West leads the ♠Q.

♠	7 5 2
♥	K 9 4
♦	A J 10 7 3
♣	5 3

♠	A K
♥	A Q 5
♦	9 6 2
♣	Q J 7 6 2

You propel yourself into 3NT and West leads the ♠Q. Counting your tricks you see that you have two spades, three hearts and no clubs, meaning that you need four diamond tricks to swell the total to nine. Well, it's obvious (by which I mean that I hope it's obvious) that you have to take the combination diamond finesse. Be careful, though – exactly how should you play?

You win the spade lead and play a diamond – but which diamond? You are, of course, intending to finesse the diamond

into East, so should you lead a small one, or should you make use of the curse of Scotland (for the uninitiated, that's the ♦9)?

If you lead the ♦9 you will regret it. The full deal:

♠	7 5 2		♠	8 6 4 3
♥	K 9 4		♥	J 10 3
♦	A J 10 7 3		♦	K 8 5 4
♣	5 3		♣	K 10

♠	Q J 10 9		♠	A K
♥	8 7 6 2		♥	A Q 5
♦	Q		♦	9 6 2
♣	A 9 8 4		♣	Q J 7 6 2

The ♦9 is covered (perforce) by the ♦Q and ♦A and now East's ♦8 comes into the game. After this start you cannot make four diamond tricks and – anyway – the defenders will establish enough tricks to defeat you before you can get any more than two diamonds going.

A small diamond lead from South wins the day on this layout. You need split diamond honours (or both with West) but you don't need a 3-2 break. Now, class, pay attention, it's time for homework. What if West had held ♦K-8-5-4 and East the singleton ♦Q? Can you see that leading the ♦2 on the first round would still have worked? However – what would the follow-up in the suit have been? □

CAPTION COMPETITION



*It was only one down,
but they were vulnerable . . .*

THE winner of our February competition, with the caption above, is Graham Tenneson, Ashwell, Rutland who will receive an elegant bridge mug from our sponsors, Bridge and Golf Gifts Direct (see page 12). Other excellent captions were: *I don't know how he went off – looked frigid to me!* (Philip Wraight, Staveley); *She only had a small heart . . .* (Margaret Gibbon, Farnham); *We are all vulnerable now* (Gwen Beele, Willand, Devon); *Sad to think we will not be around for the Spring Congress!* (Bill Roberts, Thornton-Cleveleys); *The poor chap got caught in a backwash squeeze* (Michael Hill, London); *He didn't make it through the final heat* (Stephen Kennedy, Bexhill-on-Sea); *I tried to warn him about playing in the local heat, but would he listen?* (Steven Saskein, Stanmore); and *If you can't stand the heat, stay off the committee!* (Catherine Thorp, Ryde).

The cartoon for our new competition is below. Please send your bridgy captions (multiple entries accepted) to Caption Competition, English Bridge, 23 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR or by e-mail to elena@ebu.co.uk not later than 20th April 2014. *Don't forget to include your full postal address!*



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