

Board of the Week 68

By Dick Chapman

Have you ever hoped that a finesse would lose? I was in that position during a recent LRDBC virtual pairs game. Here is the situation:

♠KQJ65		♠A43
♥K5		♥A9
♦QJ65	V:NS	♦A9432
♣53	D:S	♣AJ7

The auction goes 1S-2D-3D-3S-4S. Was there an error? Yes. Both sides underbid the hand. East's 3 spade call was a start of a slam try, and West signed off. But East knows there is a double fit plus has tons of controls. East should check for the king and queen of trump and go from there. The auction could go:

	1♠	2♦	GF
A fit	3♦	3♠	Sets suit
I'm done	4♠	4NT	I'm not
1 key card	5♣	5♦	Do you have the spade queen?
Yes, and this king lower than trump	6♥	6♠	Hope we aren't missing a grand

5 diamonds is not to play. Spades is the suit, so it is the trump queen ask (next step from a 1430 RKC response that doesn't reveal the queen). 6 hearts confirms the spade queen while showing the lowest king that is lower than trump. For newer readers: 5 spades would be "I don't have the trump queen" and 6 spades would be "I have it but I don't have a king lower than our trump suit."

So East should get us to slam. But I, sitting West, bid it wrong as well. I have an interim bid. I can bid 4D, which would say that my 3D call was more than a courtesy, it's (in context) "pretty good diamonds." This might impel East to push on, as any bid other than 4S indicates willingness to cooperate with a slam try.

Ok, we didn't get to slam. But back to the original question. Why am I hoping that a finesse loses? Read on.

I won the opening club lead in dummy (later I find this is the best lead) and drew trump in three rounds ending in hand. Now I have a shot to make 7, but 5 is in the bag. I put the diamond queen on the table and wait for developments.

The development is...wait for it...I had misclicked the club 5! South takes the jack in dummy with the queen and leads the club king. I ruff and now I'm thinking this: "The field will be in slam, so if the diamond finesse is failing, the field is going to be down 1 (losing a diamond and a club)!" Now do you see why I want the

diamond finesse to fail? Now I put the real diamond queen out there.

Of course, this is bridge, and the bridge fairies don't like it when you misclick. They manipulate the cards to make you pay for your mistakes, not profit. The hand:

♠82	North did well to not lead a heart
♥QJ843 ♦K87 ♣1042	
♠KQJ65 ♥K5 ♦QJ65 ♣53	♠A43 ♥A9 ♦A9432 ♣AJ7

♠1097 ♥10762 ♦10 ♣KQ986	Still, it's cold for 13 tricks
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The diamond king was onside and I made 12 tricks, the field making 13. Zero matchpoints. To be fair, making 13 would only be 1 matchpoint (9%) because the field was in slam. But +450 would have been a top if the field is -50. This is what I wanted the layout to be, with a club opening lead:

♠82 ♥QJ843 ♦108 ♣10982	
♠KQJ65 ♥K5 ♦QJ65 ♣53	♠A43 ♥A9 ♦A9432 ♣AJ7

♠1097 ♥10762 ♦K10 ♣KQ64	Both minor kings offside
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This is equally as possible as the actual one, and it produces only 11 tricks if the opening lead is a club. Oh, how I was wanting that diamond finesse to fail!

In LRDBC virtual games, we do not allow undo's for any reason. This seems harsh, but there is a reason: it keeps the sharps from contending that a misplay was a misclick. Do we have anyone in our club who would make such a claim? Of course not, no one would do that. But we still keep it pretty rigid. If you misclick, tell opponents (so as not to inadvertently psyche) but not partner, then live with it. Take your bad board and move on.

How do you avoid a misclick? Either (a) be very, very careful, more careful than I was, or (b) go to Account and then Settings and turn on "Confirm bids" (requires you to click a call then click OK to register that call) and "Confirm cards" (requires you to double click a card to make it play).

See you at the table.