

Learning Points – One Finesse Too many

by Steve Moese (Mike Purcell ed.)

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Declarer Play LEVEL: Basic

Tuesday Evening September 22, 2009 International Fund Open Pairs, Mike Lipp, Director, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 .

East Deals None Vul MPs	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		Steve
♠ QJ10643 ♥ Q8 ♦ AK ♣ AQ7	N W 18 E S	♠ A72 ♥ J1092 ♦ 942 ♣ KJ6	
Mike	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	EW: 4♠, 4N NS: 2♦	

Match Points put a high premium on overtricks. Many times declarer will put the contract to gain one additional trick. Here's a devilish hand few got right because they took 1 finesse too many.

The Bidding

South's weak 2 in diamonds removes some bidding space, but doesn't preempt West much. West starts the bidding sequence with a Double intending to show a strong hand. East contributes a jump in hearts to show 9-11 HCP and 4+ hearts. Given the original pass, East cannot have a much stronger hand.

East	South	West	North
Pass	2♦	Dbl	Pass
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		
North Leads ♦J			

West's simple new suit bid shows a hand worth 17+ HCP and at least 5 spades. West implies low interest in hearts by not raising immediately. East has an easy raise to game, having shown the full value of the hand on the 1st response.

The Play

West can count 2 losers in ♥s and one loser in ♠s. West can also count 10 winners: 5 in trumps and 5 in the minors. The lead of the ♦J is suspicious. Winning the ♦A, declarer tables the ♠Q. When West ducks, declarer calls for the dummy's ♠A!! A 2nd ♠ clears the suit and South wins the ♠K. Declarer claims 10 tricks. 4♠ making 4 is worth +420 and 6 of 7 Match Points.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
MPs	6	6	2	2	2	6	2	2
Score	420	420	-50	-50	-50	420	-50	-50

The score tells all – either you finessed for the ♠K or you didn't. Top or bottom. 3 declarers didn't, 5 did. Was West lucky? Did declarer peek? Or did my partner know something 5 other declarer's didn't see?

East Deals None Vul MPs	♠ 86 ♥ A653 ♦ J ♣ 985432		Steve
♠ QJ10643 ♥ Q8 ♦ AK ♣ AQ7	N W 18 E S	♠ A72 ♥ J1092 ♦ 942 ♣ KJ6	
Mike	♠ K9 ♥ K74 ♦ Q1087653 ♣ 10	EW: 4♠, 4N NS: 2♦	

Post Mortem

Before playing to trick 1, try to reconstruct South's hand. We know South has 5-11 HCP and 6 or 7 diamonds. Missing the AK and J of diamonds, South is marked with points in the outside suit. Since North did not lead the ♥A or ♥K, we can conclude these honors are split. The lead of the ♦J is either a singleton or a doubleton.

One more fact: North failed to cover the ♠Q. West assumed South held that card. Once you give the ♠K to South, then you need to eliminate North's trumps ASAP or risk losing a ♦ ruff (the defense has transportation in ♥). So West judged South held 8 or 9 HCP and 6 or 7 diamonds. Yes, South didn't need the ♠K

for the opening weak 2 bid. However opening at the 2 level on 5 HCP with only 2 HCP in your suit is risky. Most won't.

Learning Points

1. Take the time to reconstruct opponent's hands. When someone makes a weak two their holding can be easy to decipher.
2. Beware – if you hold 5 or 6 cards in a suit opponents have bid a weak 2 in, be ready for the lead to be from shortness and plan accordingly.
3. Most players will cover an honor when declarer offers a finesse. Sometimes not covering suggests their partner holds that key card.

Key Words: Competitive Bidding, Reading Cards, Estimating opponent's hands