Learning Points – Declarer Play – 2 Finesses Too Many **May 25, 2010**

By Steve Moese (Mike Purcell, ed.) *Declarer Play* Level: BASIC

Tuesday Night Lecture Series

- **Stop**
- **Look**
- **Listen**
- **Analyze**
- **Plan**
- **Execute**

Planning the play:

1. Before you play, count winners and losers. How many tricks do you need?
2. Review what your opponents said/did not say, and what they led.
3. Look for ways to eliminate losers or create winners.
4. Formulate a plan. We know what our options are (losers and winners, sources of tricks), which defender can hurt you, and what additional information we need to make informed choices. Look for the best opportunity with highest chance of success.

Planning is often dynamic – the direction you choose depends on what you learn along the way. Sometimes the obvious plays are not the best plays. Learning the best play for a given card combination helps. Playing the cards you have for the number of tricks you really need helps even more. Playing within the context of the entire hand is our objective. Check every plan to see if you overlooked an opportunity or threat.

Finding hidden opportunities to gain extra tricks can put us over the top. Every extra chance we find puts us closer to the top of the scoreboard.

Here's hand where you face 2 finesses. The opponents have not bid. The question is, "Which finesse do you take?":

North
♠Q9542
♥A32
♦A32
♣K4

6 Spades
Lead ♣10

South
♠AK1086
♥KJ10
♦KJ7
♣AJ

SLL:
HCP:
Top Tricks:
Losers:
Lead:
Analysis:

Plan:

Choose the 100% Line

Edwin Kantar, Take All Your Chances, p. 86 #53

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These 2 hands have exactly the same shape – we call them MIRROR HANDS. This means that there are no tricks available from ruffs, and no side suit length to develop. What's a declarer to do??

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Here's the complete Analysis and Plan:

North
♠Q9542
♥A32
♦A32
♣K4

6 Spades
Lead ♣10

South
♠AK1086
♥KJ10
♦KJ7
♣AJ

SLL:
HCP: 13 + 20
Top Tricks: 11
Losers: 2
Lead: No Threat

Analysis:
Need 1 of 2 Finesses (75%)
Can't lose lead more than once
How to avoid 2 guesses?

Plan:
Win ♣ and Draw Trump
Win 2nd ♣
Play A, K, J of ♦
Defense must return a helpful card
END PLAY

Hand II

Choose the 100% Line

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South has a pretty good looking slam. 33 HCP means many pairs will bid it. The opening lead poses no threat (*a void in East means West had a 9 card suit – no one keeps silent with a 9 card suit these days*). There are no trump losers and no ♣ losers. However both red suits have a possible loser. At 1st blush the contract appears to depend on finding either red suit Queen. Note that the finesse in ♦s is 1-way only, while the finesse in ♥s can be taken through either hand. It would seem on the surface that the probability of success is about 75% - 1 of 2 independent finesses. Here's how players of different experience might approach this hand…

Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Lead ♥J hoping West will cover the then try the ♦ finesse if necessary.	Take the diamond finesse 1st and place the ♥Q in the opposite hand (split honors).	Take no finesse, and **make the hand 100% of the time.** ***Can you see how?***

North
♠42
♥A32
♦A32
♣

South
♠86
♥KJ10
♦KJ7
♣

Analysis is the hardest part of planning the play. Sometimes our best chances enlists the help of our opponents. Don't take a finesse if you don't have to. When you have two 3-card suits and trumps in both hands, you can get the opponents to help even if they do not want to. Simply **draw trumps** (2 or 3 rounds) and **eliminate the side suit** (here ♣s) to ← arrive at the remaining cards shown here.

Now cash the ♦AK and if the ♦Q does not drop, play the ♦J. The opponent who wins the ♦Q will have to give you a **free finesse** in ♥s, or lead a ♣ or ♦ (they're out of ♠s) allowing you to pitch a ♥ from either hand while you ruff the trick in the other. Either way you lose only 1 trick at most: The free ♥ finesse gives you 3 ♥ tricks. The **ruff-sluff** allows you to cash 2 high ♥s and ruff the 3rd. You've just end-played your opponents for a guaranteed 12 tricks. Well done!

Note: Choosing to throw the opponents in using ♦s is far superior to throwing them in with ♥s. Why? ♥s offer a 2-way finesse. The 1-way ♦ finesse might not work even if it is free. There is a chance you could lose both red Queens if you throw the opponents in with ♥s!

Keywords: SLL-APE, Eliminate Side Suit, Free Finesse, Ruff-Sluff, Throw-In, End-Play, Choosing the Throw-in suit.

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