Learning Points – Declarer Play – 2 Finesses Too Many II **June 1, 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 are offered 3 finesses. The opponents have not bid. The question is, "Which finesse do you take?" More importantly, WHY?:

North
♠QJ
♥AJ86
♦AJ43
♣J104

6 Hearts
Lead ♥10

South
♠A10
♥KQ5432
♦K62
♣AQ

SLL:
HCP:
Top Tricks:
Losers:
Lead:

Combine your chances

Analysis:
3 Finesses??!!
Can't lose lead more than once

Plan:

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PS – What if NO finesse will work on this hand?

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Here's the complete Analysis and Plan:

South has a fair 32 HCP slam. Others will bid it. The opening lead poses no threat. There are no trump losers, but 1♠ loser, 1♣ loser, and 1 or 2♦ losers. There are 3 finesses in the side suits. Each finesse might eliminate 1 loser, but the probability that all 3 work is small (12.5%). Playing for the drop of the King in a combined holding of 4 or 5 cards is foolish the chances are vanishingly small. Playing for the drop of a Queen in a 7-card holding is better but not by much (16%). You normally attack longer suits 1st, saving shorter suits for later. Longer suits offer more tricks when successful. Here we avoid as many finesses as possible while taking advantage of dropping an honor in 3 rounds while losing no tricks.

North
♠QJ
♥AJ86
♦AJ43
♣J104

6 Hearts
Lead ♥10

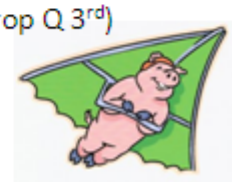
South
♠A10
♥KQ5432
♦K62
♣AQ

SLL:
HCP: 14 + 18
Top Tricks: 10
Losers: 3
Lead: No Threat

Combine your chances

Analysis:
3 Finesses??!!
Can't lose lead more than once ♣ before ♦ offers additional chances

Plan:
Draw trump ending in Dummy
Finesse ♣; If loses, discard ♦ on ♣J
Play A, K, 3 of ♦ ruffing (drop Q 3rd)
If no ♦Q, take ♠ finesse



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Novice	Intermediate	Advanced
Take the ♦ finesse 1st and then guess which black suit to finesse based on how many tricks come from ♦s.	Play ♦s to maximize 3 tricks (♦A then ♦K then low to ♦J). Hope ♦Q falls or split 3-3 and that LHO breaks a black suit when in.	Drop the ♦Q in 3 rounds (36%) without losing a ♦ trick. *How can you do this?*

North
♠QJ
♥8
♦AJ43
♣J

South
♠A10
♥543
♦K62
♣

With many chances to find extra tricks, take each chance in the order that lets you take the most possible at the least risk to your contract. This often means taking the chance 1st that gives us a next chance when it fails. It's often best to delay short suit finesses to the very end. However sometimes a short suit finesse permits a better chance in a longer suit.

South draws trumps (2 or 3 rounds) and takes the ♣ finesse losing to West's ♣K. West returns a small ♣ won by declarer's ♣A. Declarer now has a discard available on the ♣J. By discarding a Diamond, declarer can play ♦K then ♦A, pitch the remaining ♦6 on the now good ♣J and ruff a ♦. This captures the 36% chance that the ♦Q will fall in 3 rounds of the suit. If the ♦Q falls as hoped, declarer drops the ♠Q on the now good ♦J. If not, declarer is in dummy and still has the ♠ finesse to fall back on.

Note: A losing finesse in ♦s risks having to guess prematurely which black suit finesse to take. Defenders like to take declarer's options away before s/he's had a chance to try them in advantageous order. The defender's job is often to force declarer to guess.

Keywords: SLL-APE, Avoid finesses, ruff the 3rd round to drop a Queen, Save short suit finesses to last.

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