

Last Week's Leaders returns next issue. Here are the New Life Masters from the Cincinnati Flying Pig: **Kathryn Scott, Carol Macksey, Ron Stevenson, Todd Barker, Bruce Abel, Darryl Bennett, Mike Remondino, Mary Murphy**

	CBA	Date/PM	Who	Topic
CBA Seminars	0-30	19 May	Mike	Slam Bidding
	Sat	12:30	Purcell	
	99er	22 May	Steve	Slam Bidding
	Tue	6:30	Moese	
	NLM	11 Jun	Steve	Support Doubles
	Mon	6:30	Moese	

CBA NLM Games – Play Often!

Mon NLM 7 PM CBA Wed Homestyle 11:00 AM CBA
Tues 99er 7 PM CBA **Wed 199er 6:30 PM NKY BC**
Thurs NLM 7 PM CBA **1st Fri 99er 10:00 AM NKY BC**

0-30 Sat 1 PM CBA (Lecture at 12:30 PM)

Area Tournaments

May 18 - 20 Lexington, KY S
May 22 – 28 **Independence OH** R
Jun 4 – 12 **Toledo OH** R

For Details go to <http://www.acbl.org/tournament-calendar/>

CBA Mentor Program. Sign up to get a Mentor who will help you work on any aspect of your game that you want. This is a great way to meet more experienced players and get advice and friendly support. Your mentor will play a minimum of 4-5 games with you during the summer. Check out the links on the CBA website or click [Mentor Program](#)

Combining Your Chances

by Steve Moese
When we begin a Bridge hand first we take 90 seconds to review the bidding and what each opponent has told us (silence carries meaning) and we review the Dummy. We count winners and losers and look to create a plan for making the hand. This planning process takes into account who is the danger hand, and whether we need more information before settling on the final line of play. To analyze the hand well, a player needs a basic understanding of probability and suit-splits, how honors will fall when ruffing out a suit, and effective lines of play for various suit combinations. While it seems like a tall order it really isn't. Suits split as follows: Missing an even # of cards the suits split oddly and missing an odd # cards they split evenly (see top of next column). Probability is based on simple counting. A simple finesse is a 50% chance. Needing 2 finesses makes success 25% likely. Needing 3 makes it 12.5%. Each finesse halves our chance to win.

Understanding how suits split helps find better chances:

# Cards Missing	Split	0	1	2	3	4	Honor	H	Hx	Hxx
2	48		52					52	48	
3	22		78					26	52	22
4	10		50	40				12	41	37
5	4		28	68				6	27	41
6	1.5	14.5		48	36			2.4	16	36
7	0.5	7	30.5		62			1	9	27
8	0.2	2.8	17		47	33		0.4	4	18

Our table shows that a 3-2 split is a 68% proposition while a 2-2 split is only 36% (in fact a 3-1 split is 48% or 33% more likely). This can impact how we choose to play a suit like:

Start by noting the cards we are missing. How many tricks do we need from this suit? 6 tricks are impossible and 5 tricks require either opponent to hold exactly KQ. 4 tricks requires some thinking. Absent information about opponent's hands, we know the missing cards are more likely to split 4-2 or 2-4 than 3-3. In fact a 3-3 split offers no winning chance if both honors are off side, a winning finesse if they are both onside, and NO DIFFERENCE if they are split. Indeed a 3-3 split should not help us decide the best play. Against a 4-2 or 2-4 split, we see that split honors are more common 16 cases to 12 or about 57%. **The odds on play is to play small to the Ace and duck a small card next!**

AJ10542

3

Missing KQ9876
Total possible cases: $2^6=64$
3-3, 5-1, 6-0 not matter
Must manage 4-2
6 Tricks: Impossible
5 Tricks: Must have KQ doubleton
4 Tricks: Must have Hx (or any 3-3)
K987-Q6 Q987-K6 KQ98-76 KQ87-96
K986-Q7 Q986-K7 KQ97-86 KQ86-97
K976-Q8 Q976-K8 KQ96-87 KQ76-98
K876-Q9 Q876-K9
16 Cases 12 Cases
(Plus 2 cases: 9876-KQ)
Playing for Hx wins 18 cases/30
Playing for HHxx onside wins 6 cases/30
Lead to A then play small

Even knowing how to play a suit combination, the best play is always defined by what the hand requires. Often there are ways to combine chances so we improve our chance to make our contract.

Finesse-aholic Alert – do not think that taking every finesse in sight is good bridge. It isn't. Many finesses in any hand are PRACTICE FINESSES – they do not win you more tricks when successful, but they do reduce your chance of success because you take unnecessary risk.

How do you decide what finesses to take?

- 1) **Avoid the Danger Hand** – if the finesse loses be sure the safe opponent is on lead.
- 2) **Choose the play that keeps all other options alive.**

- 3) Pay attention to distribution and High Card Points (in view of their bidding). **Information about their hands changes the success odds** when we know the info to be reliable.

Here is an example how combining chances improves the likelihood we can make our contract. You bid to 3N and EW cash the next 4 ♥s. What is the best play? Should you finesse ♣s? Should you finesse ♦s? Which suit should you play first? The opponents have taken the first 4 tricks so you cannot lose any more. **The best play is to cash the top diamonds looking for the ♦J to fall** singleton, doubleton or tripleton and failing that, to take the ♣ finesse. Who should you finesse in ♣s? The opponent with longer ♣s of course – you are counting aren't you?

♠ A7
♥ 432
♦ KQ1032
♣ KJ8
N W E S
♠ K32
♥ Q76
♦ A7
♣ A10953

Looking back at our table we see that missing 6 cards the ♦J will fall in 3 rounds $2.4 + 16 + 32 = 54.4\%$ of the time. So more than half the time you will have 5 ♦ tricks to go along with your 2 spade and 2 ♣ tricks.

If ♦s do not behave as we want, there's always the ♣ finesse to rely on. We cannot count ♣s (we do not own enough winners to make an opponent show out) but we can count ♦s (and we know the hearts were 4-4). The ♣ finesse will not be much better than a coin flip.

Overall we expect a chance of success as follows:

$$54.4\% \text{ [the odds diamonds run]} + 50\% \text{ [the odds the club finesse works]} (45.6\%) \text{ [the odds the diamonds do not run]} = 77.2\%$$

... A far cry better than just taking the ♣ finesse alone (50%).

♠ AJ654
♥ AQ
♦ 32
♣ J832
N W E S
♠ K32
♥ 8
♦ A95
♣ AKQ1095

Here we play 6♣ and the opponents threaten our contract with the ♦Q lead. We have possible losers in all suits except ♣s. We have only 10 tricks off the top and need to find 2 more. The ♠ finesse offers the same 50% chance as the ♥ finesse. **However the ♥ finesse lets us combine chances and develop ♠s.** Cash 2 top ♠ tricks, (33% chance the ♠Q falls in 2 rounds). Take the ♥ finesse and pitch the ♠ loser on the ♥A then ruff out the ♠Q (74% of the time it falls by the 3rd round of ♠s). $33\% \text{ ♠Q falls in 2 rounds} + 50\% (67\% \text{ when it doesn't}) = 67\%!!!$ Much better than the ♠ finesse alone (50%).

♠ K7
♥ AQ103
♦ AQ832
♣ KJ
N W E S
♠ 4
♥ KJ642
♦ 87
♣ A10952

Here's a hand most would get wrong – the temptation to finesse the minors is great, but that's not our best chance! Here we are in 6♥ and the opponents lead a trump (trump are 2-2). There are 3 finesses how many will we take? **Take the ♠ finesse first.** If LHO pops the ♠A then the ♦7 disappears on dummy's ♠K. If not, then the ♦ finesse is still there. Clubs are an excellent example of a PRACTICE FINESSE – even if you guess the ♣Q, we can get rid of enough spades but not enough ♦s – so you must take BOTH finesses a 25% chance. Finessing in ♣s offers us a better than 60% chance of success.

For more detail see the lecture notes from the Flying Pig Regional how to [Combine Your Chances](#).

We recommend these fine books:



Eddie Kantar

Take All Your Chances
Take All Your Chances II
Take All Your Tricks

Eric Rodwell

The Rodwell Files: Secrets of a Bridge Champion

Hugh Kelsey & Michael Glauert

Bridge Odds for Practical Players

Jeff Rubens

Expert Bridge Simplified

Comments? Questions? Contact Steve Moese at moese.sa@pg.com

Mike Purcell's 0-20 Page will return next issue.