

Better Bridge

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One of the first bits the neophyte learns is how to finesse, and he takes to it eagerly. The expert, on the other hand, looks for a line of play that offers better odds and falls back on the finesse as a last resort.

A simple finesse will work half the time. If you need one of two finesses to succeed the odds improve to 75 per cent. Such would be your chances if you could afford one loser but not two, say, holding a plain suit of A987 opposite J1065.

Today's hand has a familiar ring. It was played at rubber bridge at the famed Crockfords Club in London as reported in the May, 1973, issue of Bridge World magazine. The hand appeared in an article by Ricardo Maria Argerich of Argentina titled "Unusual Finesses."

You are South, declarer at six diamonds and West opens the queen of spades. The contract is sound requiring you to but to find the queen of trumps.

How would you play? Would you finesse in diamonds, and if so, which way?

The spade lead threatens the loss of a spade trick if, in drawing trumps, a trick must be conceded to the queen. Therefore, care must be taken to give up the trump trick — if indeed necessary —

early while dummy retains a diamond to control declarer's spade loser(s).

At the table declarer led a low diamond from dummy at trick two and inserted the nine. West, however, foresaw declarer's problem and ducked smoothly. To win would permit declarer to draw trumps and pitch all his losers on dummy's clubs.

Declarer was not taken in. Although the finesse had succeeded he still was willing to give up a trick to the queen. Therefore, he led the ten of diamonds and passed it when West followed low. When the ten held it was a simple matter to draw trumps and claim all the tricks.

South was rewarded for his skill. Had West paused perceptibly before ducking the diamond offering declarer would have known to repeat the finesse the other way. But West did not hesitate. Declarer, of course, fully expected the second finesse to lose.

West's defense was proper. Against a less astute declarer the duck would have beaten the slam. When the first finesse succeeds and West follows to the second lead most declarers, in their greed, would go up with dummy's ~~ace~~ Now there is no way to save the slam. The defenders must win at least one spade trick and the queen of diamonds.

Which way to finesse? Both ways of course.

North
S A
H 10 7 3
D K 6 3
C K J 10 7 6 5

	West		East
S	Q J 10 9 2	S	K 7 6 4
H	Q 6 4	H	J 9 8 5
D	Q 8 7 5	D	4
C	4	C	9 8 3 2

South
S 8 5 3
H A K 2
D A J 10 9 2
C A Q

South was the dealer. Neither side vulnerable.

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	1 D
Pass	2 C	Pass	2 H
Pass	3 D	Pass	4 C
Pass	4 S	Pass	6 D
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the queen of spades.

King

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