

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 10 8 5 2	♠ A K J 7 3	♠ 6 4									
♥ J 10 3 2	♥ 8	♥ K Q 9 6 5 4									
♦ Q 9 5	♦ K J 6 4	♦ 8 3									
♣ K 8	♣ Q 10 4	♣ 7 5 3									
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	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 9										
	♥ A 7										
	♦ A 10 7 2										
	♣ A J 9 6 2										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♥	Dbl	1 NT
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

Auction Commentary: Do not be concerned about having two doubletons when you open 1 NT, especially if they are the majors. You didn't want to play in a minor anyway. Partner shows spades by bidding hearts, and East doubles because he wants partner to lead a heart. 2 ♥ is an artificial bid, and doubling any artificial bid is lead-directing.

When opener's RHO doubles the transfer bid, opener should pass unless they have 3 or more of partner's suit - (only accept the transfer if there is a fit). Partner gets another bid, and hopefully they are awake. If partner passes, he/she is going to have to play it, anyway!

When responder bids a new suit, that is game forcing. With honor doubleton, we can bid 3 ♠. Don't jump to four; remember, we are forced to game, and partner may have higher ambitions. If partner moves toward slam, we will want to consider playing in diamonds with the (at least) 4-4 fit. Partner, perhaps a bit pessimistic, simply raises to game.

Opening Lead: ♥ J

Play Commentary: So long as we remember that the hand with the long trumps is NOT the hand we want to take ruffs in, all will be well. Win the opening lead and draw 4 rounds of trump. We need to play clubs no matter what, so take that finesse. It loses, but the clubs are now good, and we have 12 tricks. If we take the diamond finesse and it loses, they will play another heart, forcing us to use our last trump. Now, a losing club finesse would finish us, so we have to be content with 10 tricks.

Takeaway: A finesse in diamonds here is known as a "practice finesse:" a finesse that does not increase the number of tricks we can take but that will have dire consequences if it loses. We should see that once the clubs are set up, we can pitch two diamonds on them. The diamond finesse, therefore, is of no value.

Board 5

North Deals
N-S Vul

	♠ A Q 8										
	♥ A K Q 3										
	♦ Q 10 5										
	♣ 6 3 2										
♠ 10 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 4 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 9 2		♥ 8 7 5 4									
♦ K 3		♦ 7 6 2									
♣ K J 10 8 7		♣ 9 5									
	♠ 9 7 6 5										
	♥ 6										
	♦ A J 9 8 4										
	♣ A Q 4										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
	1 NT	Pass	2 ♣								
Dbl	2 ♥	Pass	3 NT								
All pass											

Auction Commentary: West has excellent clubs and would like East to lead them. West can get that message across the table (legally) by doubling the (artificial) 2 ♣ Stayman bid. This is very nearly a command for East to lead a club, so the suit must be very strong. East will only lead something else if they hold a KQJT of their own. South jumps to 3 NT over 2 ♥ to show that they don't have 4 hearts, that they do have 4 spades, AND they have a club stopper.

Opening Lead: ♣ 9. Always lead the top of a doubleton in partner's suit. Partner didn't bid clubs, but they definitely told East that clubs was their suit.

Play Commentary: North can count 3 hearts, one club, one spade, and at least 4 diamonds. If declarer plays the ♣ Q or the low club from dummy, the defense will be able to set up the club suit, and if the ♦ K is wrong (it will always be wrong if you make a mistake) the defense will take 5 tricks before you can take 9. What to do?

Well, we've already eliminated the other two clubs, right? Win the ♣ A, cross to the ♥ A, and run the ♦ Q. If it loses to the ♦ K in the West hand, the ♣ Q is protected, so the defense can't run their clubs. West will likely return a spade. Don't hurt your hand banging the ♠ A on the table and taking your nine tricks.

Takeaway: Think about the whole hand. It may be right to spurn finesses in order to keep key stoppers protected. Especially in no trump contracts, we have to consider which is the danger hand. Here, we finessed into West, making them the danger hand. Therefore, we needed to win the first club trick, to keep the ♣ Q protected. If we had instead been finessing into East, we would have ducked, making sure they were out of clubs if they won the ♦ K.

Board 8

West Deals
None Vul

♠ A K Q J 9 6	♠ 10 2	♠ 5 4 3									
♥ 9 6	♥ 10 7 4 3 2	♥ A J									
♦ 8 7 5	♦ 4 2	♦ A Q J 10 9									
♣ A 2	♣ 10 9 8 3	♣ K J 7									
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	N										
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	S										
	♠ 8 7										
	♥ K Q 8 5										
	♦ K 6 3										
	♣ Q 6 5 4										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♥	Dbl
6 ♠	All pass		

Auction Commentary: When the opponents are having an auction that is heading toward slam, it's important to be alive to the possibility of making a lead directing double. 2 ♦ set up a game force, but West still jumped to 3 ♠, showing a self-sufficient suit and setting trumps. Partner will almost certainly be on lead. East cue-bids 4 ♥, showing the Ace. *(Some would double the 4 ♥ bid now -- not wanting partner to have to guess later, especially when we could have doubled hearts and didn't.)* As it is, we did luckily get another chance, so we doubled 5 ♥ to ask partner to lead them. Despite the double, West knows they have all of the Aces, so they gamble on the slam.

Opening Lead: ♥ 7

Play Commentary: Sometimes you go down. You need the diamonds, so you take the finesse after drawing two rounds of trump. Unlucky.

Takeaway: Partners are not mind readers. We have to help them whenever we can. Lead directing doubles are one way to help.