

Board 3
 South Deals
 None Vul

Finesses

<p>♠ Q J 10 9 ♥ Q 10 7 2 ♦ 3 ♣ K 10 9 8</p>		<p>♠ 5 3 ♥ A 8 6 ♦ A 8 5 2 ♣ Q J 7 3</p>	<p>♠ 8 6 4 2 ♥ J 5 ♦ Q J 10 9 6 ♣ 5 2</p>								
<p>♠ A K 7 ♥ K 9 4 3 ♦ K 7 4 ♣ A 6 4</p>	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><i>West</i></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><i>North</i></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><i>East</i></td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;"><i>South</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">3 NT</td> <td style="text-align: center;">All pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1 NT</td> </tr> </table>			<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	Pass	3 NT	All pass	1 NT
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Pass	3 NT	All pass	1 NT								

To Finesse or Not to Finesse... or to Finesse Twice!

1. In NT contracts, Declarer needs to count winners to make the plan. Off the top, there are 2 ♠ winners, 2 ♥ winners, 1 ♣ winner and 2 ♦s. 2 more tricks are needed to make the contract - and they should come from the ♣ suit. Exceedingly lucky would be a 3/3 break in the ♣ suit -- but that's just a 32% chance. Is there a better way?

2. The Opening Lead from West is the ♠ Q, which you will win in your hand. You might look at that ♣ QJ73 in dummy, and be tempted to cross to dummy and run the Queen. And while this would promote 1 trick for your side, there are 2 problems: (1) you need 3 tricks from the ♣ suit, not 2, and (2) when you lose to the ♣ K on your left, you will have just promoted the ♣ 10. And unfortunately, you don't OWN the ♣ 10. You did their work for them :(

3. Holding 7 or 8 cards between the two hands, but missing the K and the 10, do not take a finesse with the Q. We always play the Ace first, in case there is a singleton K, and then we lead towards the QJ. This caters for a 4/1 split with LHO. If your RHO has the missing 4 cards we will always lose 2 tricks.

When you lead toward your ♣ Q, if West ducks, you need to insert the ♣ Q. And when it wins, you know West has the ♣ A. So go back to your hand, and lead another small ♣ toward the ♣ J. Whether or not West covers this now, you've got your 3 ♣ tricks and will now make the contract.

And if the ♣ K is with East, it doesn't matter how you play it. Nobody can make the contract then!

Jacoby Transfers and Play of the Hand

Board 6
East Deals
Both Vul

	♠ Q 9 6		
	♥ 9 8 2		
	♦ K Q 2		
	♣ 10 9 8 3		
♠ 7 4 2	♠ A K 8 5	N	♥ A K 8 5
♥ K J 7 4 3	♥ Q 10 5	W	♥ Q 10 5
♦ 8 5	♦ A 7 4	S	♦ A 7 4
♣ A 7 6	♣ K J 4	E	♣ K J 4
	♠ J 10 3		
	♥ A 6		
	♦ J 10 9 6 3		
	♣ Q 5 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 NT	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
2 NT	Pass	4 ♥	All pass

When you open some amount of NT, RESPONDER is ALWAYS in charge!

1. The auction can be translated like this, from responder's side, the CAPTAIN:

- a. 2 ♦ - partner, please bid 2 ♥
- b. East bids 2 ♥ as instructed
- c. 2 NT - partner, I have 5 ♥s and 8-9 points. If we have a fit, please rebid in our suit, according to our combined points. Bid 3 ♥ if you have a minimum, and bid 4 ♥ if you have a max 17 points. If you have a minimum and no fit, please pass. With a maximum and no fit, please bid 3 NT, as we have the values to be in game!

2. Declarer looks at the losers in a suit contract, and it looks like 1 in each suit. The dummy will be the master hand, since it has the long trumps. Setting up the dummy will mean pulling trumps first. Once that's accomplished, Declarer might be tempted to try a ♣ finesse. That's just a 50/50 shot. Is there a better way?

3. There are two bites to this apple! First, let's try "suit establishment." If the ♠s break evenly, (3/3), you can discard a losing ♣ on the 4th ♠ in your hand. And if the ♠s don't behave, you could still resort to trying the ♣ finesse. As Eddie Kantar said, Take All Your Chances!

Minor Suit Bidding - Which Game?

Board 9

North Deals

None Vul

♠ A 10 3		♠ 8 7 4 2			
♥ A 10 5		♥ J 8 7 3			
♦ A 8 4 3		♦ —			
♣ Q 7 2		♣ A 10 8 6 5			
♠ Q J 9 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K 6
N					
W E					
S					
♥ K Q 9		♥ 6 4 2			
♦ Q 9 6		♦ K J 10 7 5 2			
♣ J 9 4		♣ K 3			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♦	Pass	3 ♦
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

We have a Long Minor... should we be in 5 ♦ or in 3 NT?

1. The South hand has 10 HCP, and the hand is very attractive when partner opens 1 ♦. Around 97% of the time, a 1 ♦ opener shows 4+ pieces. So chances are good that NS have a 10-card ♦ suit. Still, in case the contract winds up in NT, South should make an invitational bid in the suit. (This call will also alert partner that South has no 4-card major.)

2. North accepts the invitation to game. Holding stoppers in each suit, and a balanced hand, North's game choice is 3 NT. 3 NT gives the game bonus just like 5 ♦ does, but 3 NT only requires 9 tricks instead of 11.

3. The opening lead by East is the ♣ 6, won by the ♣ K in dummy. North counts 2 ♠ winners, 1 ♥ winner, 1 ♣ winner and hopefully 6 ♦ winners. (That's counting on a friendly ♦ break.)

4. Next, as a safety play, play the ♦ K (in case the Q♦ is a singleton somewhere), and then play toward your hand, striving to keep RHO off the lead. West is the dangerous opponent, as they can lead through North's ♣ holding and take 4 ♣ tricks. When LHO discards on the first ♦ trick, Declarer breathes a sigh of relief. The West hand is finessable and the plan comes to fruition. 3 NT will make an overtrick, while 5 ♦ will fail. In 5 ♦, there are 3 losers - a ♣ and 2 ♥s.

5. When you have enough values for game, and you find a minor suit fit, apply "TNT" to the situation: THINK NO TRUMP!

Board 12
 West Deals
 None Vul

Eliminating Losers

♠ Q 9 7 5 3	♠ A K	♠ J 10 8 2			
♥ A J	♥ K 8 7 5 2	♥ 10 6			
♦ 10 9 6 2	♦ A 3	♦ K Q J 5			
♣ K 9	♣ 10 8 6 5	♣ A Q J			
<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #006400; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>			N	W E	S
N					
W E					
S					
♠ 6 4	♠ 6 4	♠ 6 4			
♥ Q 9 4 3	♥ Q 9 4 3	♥ Q 9 4 3			
♦ 8 7 4	♦ 8 7 4	♦ 8 7 4			
♣ 7 4 3 2	♣ 7 4 3 2	♣ 7 4 3 2			

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

Takeout Doubles: opening values, with at least 3 pieces in all other suits.

1. When East makes the Takeout Double, and South passes, West is required to respond (even with 0 points!). In this case, West not only knows there is a ♠ fit, but also that EW may have game. West knows that East has the equivalent of an opening hand, and if it's a little bit higher than that, there's a game to be bid. So West jumps the response to 2 ♠ to invite East to game. (East does the math, and with that doubleton in ♥s, upgrades to 15 points + West's 10 = game.)

2. Declarer counts losers: 2 ♠ losers, 1 ♥ loser, and 1 ♦ loser. Too many... what's the plan? Good Declarers always pull trumps, right?

*** NO - NOT WHEN YOU DON'T CONTROL THE TRUMP SUIT! ***

The opening lead is the ♥ 5. You're going to win the ♥ A, but if you start drawing trumps now, they will get in and take another ♥ immediately. And you'll still have 1 ♦ and 2 ♠s to lose. Where can we find a place to park a "fast loser?"

3. Look for suits that are uneven, and hold the top cards. In this hand, you have 2 ♣s on one side and 3 ♣s in the other side. You must win the ♥ A and play your ♣s right away. Discard the ♥ J on the third ♣ honor in the East hand. THEN they can't hurt you when they gain the lead in trumps.

4. What if one of the defenders has a doubleton ♣ and ruffs the third ♣ honor in East? If that's the case, there is no way to make this contract. And you'll have a 50% hand when every other West in the room is down one :)