

Play & Learn



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Educated guesses

Cover the East–West hands and plan the play. West leads the ♥K.

Dir: West ♠ A K 7 3
 Vul: None ♥ 3
 ♦ A 7 4 3
 ♣ K 6 4 3

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
3♥	Dbl	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

The contract is in notrump, so your plan begins with counting winners. South sees two spades, one heart, one diamond and two clubs off the top. There is a possibility of five tricks in clubs, but how do you play the suit?

Last month, we discussed the finesse drop test, which suggests you mentally split the missing cards as evenly as possible between your opponents. A 2–2 club split would suggest playing for the ♣Q to drop. Was that your plan? If it was, you forgot an important condition of the FDT: the assumption that you have no clues to help you locate the missing honor.

On this deal, the auction helps. West's 3♥ tends to show a seven-card suit, leaving only six other cards in his hand. East has two hearts and 11 other cards and so probably has the greater club length. A specific missing card is more likely to be in the hand with greater length, which suggests


finessing clubs rather than playing for the drop. You confirm your view of the distribution by playing low twice in hearts before taking the ace. Then play to the ♣K and follow with a low club from dummy. When East plays the ♣10, play the jack. The finesse works and you have nine tricks.

Cover the East–West hands and plan South's play in 4♠ after East opens 1♥. West leads the ♥10. East wins the queen and continues with the top two hearts.


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

This is a suit contract, so count losers: two hearts and two clubs. One loser must be avoided. Did you try the club finesse? If you did, you weren't paying attention. East opened the bidding as dealer and turned up with five hearts headed by the A–K–Q. East needs more than that to open the bidding, and the only high cards you haven't seen are the ♣K and ♣J. East is a favorite to have the ♣K to come up with an opening hand. Are you doomed? Not necessarily. Pull trumps and you will find that East started with three spades. Now play three rounds of diamonds. East follows to those also. You now know 11 of

East's cards. Your winning line of play should be clear: Play a club to the ace and a low club — or duck a club and then play the ace. Either play works. Searching for information before deciding on a play can pay off. □



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