

## AVOIDING THE FINESSE

J63  
1043  
AK952  
AJ

KQ109  
K62  
7  
97653

87542  
J985  
-----  
10842

A  
AQ7  
QJ108643  
KQ

\*  
**2D is called an inverted minor raise which this pair was playing. It shows 5 card support for partner's minor, no 4 card major and 10 or more points. It is a good convention.**  
**\*\* Key Card Blackwood**  
**\*\*\* 3 or 0 key cards**  
**\*\*\*\* No kings (as I already included the King of trump in the 4NT answer)**

**OPENING LEAD:**  
Spade King

S	W	N	E
1D	P	2D*	P
4NT**	P	5D***	P
5NT	P	6C****	P
6D			

South is in 6D. It looks as though he will need to take the Heart finesse and pray that it wins, in order to make the contract.

Wait! Whenever you are in a contract that depends on a finesse, stop and think..."Can I do a Strip and Throw In?"

Since Finesses only work 50% of the time, try to avoid this technique if there is a better way.

Win Spade Ace. Draw one round of trump ending in dummy.

Lead a spade and trump in declarer's hand. STRIP the C suit. That means: Play two rounds of Clubs. If there was an extra C in South hand, you would have to ruff the third C in dummy. If there was a third C in dummy, you would have to ruff in Declarer's hand.

End in dummy with C Ace. Lead Spade J. DO NOT TRUMP IT as this is the way to throw West in. Instead of trumping it, discard H 7. West is known to have S Q as he led the S K, guaranteeing ownership of the S Q.

When West gets in, what can he now do?

If he leads a H, it is right in to the jaws of the H AQ. This will give you what we call a "free finesse".

If he leads a C or a S, you will sluff a H from your hand and ruff it in the dummy. This is known as a sluff and a ruff. This is a declarer's dream come true.

This play is called an END play as it happens near the END of a hand usually.

Think of the hand as having FOUR suits:

TRUMP SUIT: Draw as many trump as necessary.

STRIP SUIT: Strip this suit(s) completely.

DO NOT TOUCH SUIT: Determine which suit is the DO NOT TOUCH suit. In this case, it is the Heart suit.

EXIT SUIT: Determine which suit is the Exit Suit. Use this suit to throw in the opponent.

Remember that finesses only work 50% of the time. If you can use a better technique, do it!



## PLANNING THE PLAY

A7  
865  
Q7654  
AJ9

**Contract: 6S**  
**Opening lead: C King**

KQJ9542  
AKQ3  
8  
10

You have one H loser and one Diamond loser. Now what?

We get so hot under the collar when partner puts us into contracts we think we shouldn't be in. Instead of steaming, channel your energies to see if you can find a way to make this contract.

Hearts are a possibility. If the missing Hearts break 3-3, then all is right with the world. The odds of this happening are 36%. They will break 4-2 48% of the time.  
Is there another way?

Because we only assign points to Aces, Kings, Queens and Jacks, we sometimes fail to notice that we own a 10. Have a closer look at the Club suit.

West led the Club K and you own the Ace, the Jack AND the 10 (in your hand) AND the 9. Thus your J and 9 in dummy (after you play your Ace) are of equal value.

Win Club Ace and lead the Club Jack. If east covers with the Q (UNLIKELY since West led the Club K), you ruff it and dummy's C9 is now good.

When East instead plays a small Club, you discard the Diamond 8. West Wins C Queen but now your C 9 is a good card. Whatever West leads back, you win and play S King and then small S to S Ace in dummy. Play C 9 and discard the H 3.

This play is called a ruffing finesse. Lead a high card...if it is covered, ruff it and then the next door neighbour card is high. If it is not covered, then discard a loser and now the neighbouring card once again is still high.

Now draw any outstanding trump and play your happy Heart suit. Life is good! **AND NOW FOR ONE MORE!**

7653  
742  
KQ32  
97

Count your losers and make a plan. Take up to 2 mins after the dummy comes down to make that plan. I still do and I have been playing for 41 years.

You have a loser in Spades and a loser in Hearts. What will you do? In dummy, there are two delicious cards: Diamonds: K and Q and you as declarer have the Ace. BUT how on earth will you get to the dummy to make that discard?

**Contract: 6C**

AK8  
AK3

**Opening lead:**  
**Spade Q**

A  
AKQJ85

When you find yourself short of dummy entries, always look to the trump suit and it will often save you. In Clubs, you have the 9, the 8 and the 7.

You are only missing one card and that is the 10. It is NOT going to fall singleton for you. Dream on. You are going to have to give a trump away to charity. This is particularly painful when you own the AKQJ but you have to create an entry to dummy.

Win the opening lead and play the Diamond Ace, unblocking the suit. Lead the C 5 to dummy's 7. If W plays low, you still MUST play the C 7 from dummy, not the 9. Whatever the opponents lead back, you win the trick and lead the C8 to dummy's C9. Play the D K and Q, discarding a S and a H from declarer's hand.

## HAND EVALUATION



**A**

A32  
K32  
Q32  
J432

**B**

A109  
K109  
Q109  
J1098

**C**

432  
AKQJ  
432  
432

**D**

76543  
87654  
AK  
K

**E**

----  
AKQJ1098765432  
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**F**

AK1098  
K10987  
109  
10

The six hands above all contain 10 HCP. This article is not about whether to open the bidding or not. It is only about which hand you prefer to have as a declarer. We need to start looking more carefully at our hands to see whether we like the hand we are dealt or don't like it, instead of falling in love with every hand we pick up.

**Hand A:** We have scattered values. We will take one trick for sure and maybe we can get a trick with the H King but who knows?

**Hand B:** Here we have "texture". 10's and 9's add a great deal to the quality of a hand and give you much greater trick taking potential.

**Hand C:** If trumps are all gone, then we can take 4 tricks for sure in the Heart suit or in NT if you get in.

**Hand D:** Your high cards are in your short suits. That is never good. You want your honour cards to be located in your long suits. With this hand, you may only take 2 tricks. Contrast this hand with Hand F. Now you have your honours in your long suit and also you have 10's and 9's added to the mix. A MUCH happier hand.

**Hand E** is of course the happiest hand of all but please don't be fussing about how to bid this as you will never hold these cards!!

Many students have great difficulty with the concept of hand evaluation. I believe that it is right to count distribution even as an opening bidder. Some count short suits (3 for a void, 2 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton), some count long suits (1 point for

5th card in long suit and 1 extra point for 6th etc:) Both methods are correct. Just choose one or the other, not both.

If your partner wishes to use one method and you use another; that does not matter either. I believe that bridge teachers tell us to not count distribution until we have found a fit because they worry that students are incapable of revaluing when partner bids a suit in which you have shortness (shortness is a singleton, doubleton or a void).

Students who are taught to only count long suit distribution are then taught the Rule of 20. This is a different way of counting distribution, that's all.

If you have Axxx Axxx Axxx x the short suit counters have 14 points so will open with 1 D. Long suit counters may worry that they do not have the required 13 points to open the bidding.

Thus, along came the RULE of 20. If you find yourself close to an opening bid but feel you don't have enough points to open, use the Rule of 20. Count your HCP and then add the length of the two longest suits. If this totals 20, then you have permission to open the bidding. (This is the same as counting distribution.)

NOTE: You should not use the Rule of 20 to give you permission to open the bidding when you have a hand such as this:

Qx KJx QJxx QJxx This assortment of junk will tally 20 with Rule of 20 but doubleton Queens or Jacks are a sorry sight and do not deserve much respect. We call Queens and Jacks "Quacks!" This should not be an opening bid.

Here's what you REALLY have to remember: The value of your hand is in a constant state of flux. **Once partner starts bidding, your hand is like a flower: it either blossoms or grows or it wilts and dies.**

e.g. If you have a short suit in your hand and partner now names that suit, you are depressed. Your hand has wilted. It is NEVER good to have a shortage in partner's suit. We are constantly searching for FITS, not MISFITS. If partner bids spades and you have a small spade singleton in your hand, subtract two points from your hand, even if you are a long suit counter and did not add any to this to start with. Your hand has gone downhill. It is devalued.

S 3  
H AJ65432  
D AK4  
C 76

Counting points on this hand totals 15, regardless of which method you are using (long suit or short suit method). This time both methods tally to the same number but it will often differ a bit by a few points here or there. Never enough to worry about at all.

If we open with 1H and partner bids 1S, this hand has now dropped in value and we only have 13. We should now bid 2H as our rebid as this is now a minimum hand.

## BUT

if instead partner has bid 2H after our 1H opener, then our hand now grows up. We must add 1 extra point for the 5th card in the suit which has been supported and TWO extra points for each remaining card. Long suit counters must do that also even though they already counted three length points to start with. (Yes, they are double dipping.) YOUR hand has INCREASED in value, now that you know you are going to be declarer. If you do not do this, then you remain with the same old 15 points and will have to pass partner's 2H bid that showed 6-9 points. How can this be right?

This was the invention of Charles Goren, many years ago and will never fail you in getting you to games and slams. I truly believe it is the best hand re-valuing method. In the above example, we now have 20 points (after adding the extra 5 points) and after partner has raised us to 2H (showing 6-9 points) we should now bid 4H.

NOTE: Short suit counters should never count extra for distribution for value for doubleton Qx and Jx or singleton K or singleton Q or singleton J. Those holdings just get the high card points (except with singleton J where they get 2 points or it would be worth less than a singleton 3 which would seem wrong).

If the opponents have bid a suit in which you have a singleton K or Q, count nothing for these cards, they are most unlikely to win any tricks.

### DUMMY POINTS:

When you are going to become dummy, if you have **THREE card support for partner, then short suit points are worth 3-2-1 (3 for a void, 2 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton).**

When you are going to become dummy, if you have **FOUR (or more) card support for partner, then short suit points are worth 5-3-1 (5 for a void, 3 for a singleton and 1 for a doubleton).**

As soon as you are going to become dummy, if you are a long suit counter, then long suit points go away and short suit points come in.

Too much time and energy is spent fussing over hand evaluation, unfortunately. This is the only time that we do not have to be on the same wave length as partner. Let partner do it one way and you do it another and all will go well. **BUT ALWAYS REMEMBER to revalue your hand.**

## Declarer Play in No Trump by Eddie Kantar

Dealer: North  
Vul: EW

K3  
AKQ2  
AK5  
A642

8654  
J9  
Q10  
KJ1095

Q972  
10864  
J932  
Q

AJ10  
765  
8764  
873

North	East	South	West
2C	P	2D	P
2NT	P	3NT	P

Opening lead: Spade 2

North opens 2C and rebids 2NT to show 22-24 HCP, balanced. Many play a 2D response to a strong 2C opening as 'waiting'. Waiting to hear what partner has in mind. When North bids 2NT, South responds as if North has opened 2NT keeping in mind that North has 22-23 HCP.

Lead Commentary: As East, keeping in mind that South did not use Stayman, the inference is that dummy does not have a four card major. Therefore, it is normal to lead from the stronger major, spades.

Defensive Commentary: As West, assuming the S10 (or SJ) is played from dummy, play the S6, standard count. The idea is this: When you can't beat dummy's card (the queen or lower) at least tell partner how many small cards you have. With four cards (an even number) play second highest if you can afford to. If you can't, play the third highest card. Just don't play your lowest card! If you do, you will be telling partner you have an odd number of cards. If anything goes wrong after that, it will be on your head!

Play Commentary: As North, there are many reasons to take the first trick with the SK retaining the option of leading low to the jack. The lead of a low card strongly suggests an honor which must be the queen. Furthermore, if West had the SQ, it would have been played at trick one as West would think East had the king from the lead of a low card. As North, you may need three spade tricks. If you win the first spade with the ten, the suit is blocked and you may have a hard (read-impossible) time getting to dummy's ace. As it happens, both diamonds and hearts fail to break 3-3, so you need three spades tricks, the reason why winning the first trick with the king was crucial.

When a low card is led in an unbid suit against notrump, both declarer and third hand assume that the opening leader has at least one honor card in the suit and play accordingly. When giving 'standard' count, low-high shows an odd number, high-low, an even number.

*Ed Note: Normally you only give count (as a defender) when declarer is leading a suit. The one other time to give count is when dummy plays a high card and you, in third seat, cannot beat that card (if it is a Q or lower in dummy). Then you give count.*

## **BERMUDA REGIONAL BRIDGE TOURNAMENT: JANUARY 2017**

**by SUE JAFFE**

The Bermuda tournament is coming up in January 2017 and I'm taking a group again this year - the tournament dates are Saturday January 22-29th. As the Canadian flights are Sunday we're going Sunday through Sunday, which means we get all the tournament games only missing the charity game on Saturday night.

**Dates: Sunday January 22, to Sunday January 29th, 2017.**

**HOTEL: Fairmont Southampton - Room rates for double occupancy are listed below - taxes extra. Also they will also have their usual Golf special for the tournament week.**

**Moderate/Fairmont: \$199US**

**Deluxe Lighthouse: \$229US**

**Deluxe Sea View: \$269US**

**Fairmont Gold Lighthouse: \$329US**

**Fairmont Gold Sea View: \$369US**

You can see the details of all their rooms at

[www.fairmont.com/southampton-bermuda/accommodations/guest-rooms/](http://www.fairmont.com/southampton-bermuda/accommodations/guest-rooms/)

Most of the restaurants in the hotel and in the surrounding area run special dinner menus during the tournament week.

**GROUND TRANSPORTATION OPTION:** As usual I have arranged transportation to and from the airport. You can book this in addition to your room if you want to. I am using the same company this year for the hotel transfers, as they have continued to do a great job for the last 5 years, and much less expensive than the options - and please note anyone coming in on different flights from Canada or the US can also take advantage of the group rate and have a pre-arranged pick-up at the airport.

The group has a great time, why don't you think about coming to one of the best North American Tournaments.

Questions??? email me or call - [suejaffe@rogers.com](mailto:suejaffe@rogers.com)

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