

What Finesse? -- Problem

**Board 9**  
West Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ A  
♥ A 7 5 4  
♦ K Q 7 4 2  
♣ K 7 2



♠ K 6 2  
♥ J 9 6 3  
♦ A J 9  
♣ 10 9 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	All pass	
4NT by South			
Lead: ♠ 5			

Right or wrong, South bid 3 NT to offer a choice of games on this hand. Partner, however, misread this as showing serious slam interest. Since North's 3♥ bid was non-forcing, South knows there is no slam, and declares 4 NT. So far, so bad.

How would you play this hand?

**Board 9**  
West Deals  
N-S Vul

What Finesse? -- Solution

<p>♠ Q 9 8 5 3 ♥ K 8 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ A 8 5</p>		<p>♠ A ♥ A 7 5 4 ♦ K Q 7 4 2 ♣ K 7 2</p>	<p>♠ J 10 7 4 ♥ Q 10 ♦ 10 5 3 ♣ Q J 6 4</p>
<p>♠ K 6 2 ♥ J 9 6 3 ♦ A J 9 ♣ 10 9 3</p>			

NS 4♥; NS 3N; NS 5♦; NS 2♣; EW 1♠; Par +600

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4NT	All pass	
4NT by South			
Lead: ♠ 5			

If we lose the lead twice, the opponents will run the spade suit. To make 4 NT, we need to take five diamonds, two spades and three hearts, for ten tricks (no time for a club). Hearts can produce three tricks for seven specific holdings in the East hand. There are two lines of play, the second of which has two branches:

(1) ♥ K-10-8-2, Q-10-8-2, 10-8-2 or K-Q -- Start with the ♥ A, dropping an honor. Lead a heart from dummy; if East plays low, cover that card. Do it again, if hearts are 4-1. No thinking after deciding on the ♥ A! With 32 possible layouts, this line works  $4/32 = 12.5\%$  of the time -- better than nothing.

(2) ♥ K-10, Q-10, 10-8, 10-8-2 or K-Q (also 10-2, if the ♥ 8 and 7 are swapped.) -- Start with a small heart from dummy. If East plays the king or queen, play small, of course. Otherwise, cover the ten or insert the nine.

- (a) Win the spade return and lead the high heart from hand, pinning the 10 or 8 in the East hand.
- (b) Win the spade return and lead the ace of hearts, dropping the king or queen.

The play in line (2) is called an *intrafinesse*. I played this way, and correctly judged to drop East's ♥ Q on the second round.

East must play the ten from ♥ 10-8, hard to find at the table, to give declarer a losing option. After that play, we go down with plan (a). If East instead plays the eight, the intrafinesse exposes the ten in that hand, so only plan (b) could possibly work. East must play the eight or ten from ♥ 10-8-2 to give us the losing option of plan (b); after the ♥ 2 and the intrafinesse disclosing the ♥ 10, only plan (a) could work. There are also guesses when East wins the first heart from ♥ K-10, Q-10 or KQ.

Chances for executing a successful intrafinesse are rare, and for the pleasure it gave me, I'm glad I took it. It offers the chance to make against more specific holdings, but requires judgment on many of them. Line (1) works against fewer specific holdings, but is automatic and likely to be a better chance.

Note that a club lead defeats 4 NT, and holds 4♥ to four, even with the intrafinesse.

Heavy Traffic -- Problem

**Board 5**  
 North Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ K 4 3  
 ♥ A  
 ♦ K 5  
 ♣ A K J 8 5 3 2



West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>	<i>Sandy Drum</i>	<i>Tim Hill</i>	<i>Charlie Drum</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♣	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
?			

Unwilling to double with a singleton heart, I chose a heavy 2 ♣ overcall. (Do you agree, or would you start a strong sequence with a takeout double?)

When 2 ♠ comes back around, what would you call in my seat?

**Board 5**  
 North Deals  
 N-S Vul

Heavy Traffic -- Solution

♠ K 4 3	♠ Q J 5	♠ 10 9
♥ A	♥ Q 10 6 2	♥ 9 7 5 3
♦ K 5	♦ 6 4 3	♦ J 10 7 2
♣ A K J 8 5 3 2	♣ Q 9 7	♣ 10 6 4
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin: 5px;">           N            W     E            S         </div>	
	♠ A 8 7 6 2	
	♥ K J 8 4	
	♦ A Q 9 8	
	♣ —	

S 4♠; S 4♥; N 3♠; N 3♥; EW 3♣; NS 2♦; Par +300; EW 5♣×-2

West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>	<i>Sandy Drum</i>	<i>Tim Hill</i>	<i>Charlie Drum</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♣	2 ♠	Pass	Pass
3 NT	All pass		
3 NT by West			
Lead: ♠ Q			
Down 3 — EW -150			

Partner will be just about broke. Furthermore, 2 NT here is not natural; that bid shows primary clubs and secondary diamonds. Even more unwilling to make a takeout double, I decided to try 3 NT.

After the spade lead and finding dummy with three clubs, I thought I had made a great bid. When you're hot you're hot, and when you're not, you're not! Note that even if clubs run, I probably would go down on a heart lead. 3 ♣ might have been a better bid. Since they can make 4 ♠, perhaps I should have passed!

Let's turn the focus to my opponents, who both did well. First, Sandy knew I was planning to make my game on a long club suit and side stoppers. Looking at those spades and the ♣ Q, she knew I was going down for sure. Yet she did not double, fearing I would run to 4 ♣ and make it (or go down less). Her pass was in keeping with my rule, "Don't double the only thing you can beat." Others say, "Pigs wind up on the wrong end of the cleaver."

When 3 NT came around to Charlie, he thought for a while, and then also passed. This was another fine choice.