

Top or Bottom Swing -- Problem

Board 25
 East Deals ♠ 2
 ♥ A J 8 6 4
 N-S Vul ♦ Q 7 4
 ♣ A K J 8



♠ A 8 3
 ♥ Q
 ♦ A 10 9 5 3 2
 ♣ 6 3 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Dbl	3 ♠	3 NT

All pass
 3 NT by South

[deal rotated for convenience]

Join me at a club matchpoint pairs game on BBO.
 In need of a swing, we shoot out 3 NT. After all, if
 the diamonds run, all we need is two more tricks.
 This, however, is not the dummy we hoped for.

The opponents clear spades, East playing ♠ K-Q-9
 in order, and we win the ace. Now what?

We lead the ♥ Q, West covers the king, and we win
 the ace on dummy. Then the ♦ Q from dummy,
 also covered with the king. Now what?

Top or Bottom Swing -- Continued

Board 25
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 ♥ 8
 N-S Vul ♦ 7 4
 ♣ A K J 8



♠ —
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 10 9 5 3
 ♣ 6 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Dbl	3 ♠	3 NT

All pass
 3 NT by South

<i>Trick</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>
1. W	♠ J	2	<u>K</u>	3
2. E	♠ Q	8	4	♥ 4
3. E	♠ 9	<u>A</u>	5	♥ 6
4. S	♥ Q	K	<u>A</u>	7
5. N	♦ Q	<u>K</u>	2	8
6. E	♥ 10	♣ 2	2	J

We duck! We have to lose a diamond, so lose it to
 the safe hand. Back comes the ♥ 10, we pitch a
 club, ♥ 2, and we win the ♥ J on dummy. Now
 comes the sticky bit.

If we pick up the diamonds, we get five of them,
 two tricks in each round suit, and one spade: 10
 tricks, +430, which will be a cold top. If we finesse
 and lose, the opponents will finish with five spades,
 two diamonds, and maybe a heart: -300 and
 counting, which will earn zero matchpoints. If we
 play for the drop and West shows out, we can no
 longer enjoy the diamonds, so the best we can hope
 for is two down, on a club endplay: at best half a
 matchpoint.

No pressure here! What would you do?

Top or Bottom Swing -- Solution

Board 25

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ —

♥ 8

♦ 7 4

♣ A K J 8

♠ 10 7 6

♥ 5 3

♦ J

♣ 7



♠ —

♥ 9

♦ 6

♣ Q 10 9 5 4

♠ —

♥ —

♦ A 10 9 5 3

♣ 6 3

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
2 ♠	Dbl	3 ♠	3 NT

All pass

3 NT by South

<i>Trick</i>	<i>Lead</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>4th</i>
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6. E	♥ 10	♣ 2	2	<u>J</u>

Playing for the drop, when nothing else is known, is a 52% play, compared to a 50% finesse. However, I knew West had three more spades in hand, and that the 2 ♠ bidder was likely to have a singleton somewhere. I decided not to waste time and finessed, down four. My mistake was in thinking it was just a matter of the odds. There was one thing I could have done better. What was it?

Cash the ♣ A-K before leading a diamond from dummy. After seeing West show out on the second round, lead a diamond to the ace: West would need an unlikely 6=5=1=1 shape for the finesse to work.

Had West followed to the second club, West would have shown 6=2=1=2 shape, with two unknown cards somewhere. The finesse would be the correct play in this case. If it lost, we would probably take no more tricks, but the zero would have been no rounder than the one I earned.