

**Intra-Finesse
By Roger Lord**

Dealer: North
Vul: East-West

	North ♠ K109 ♥ A82 ♦ AK743 ♣ 53	
West		East
♠ J62 ♥ KJ6 ♦ 952 ♣ J962		♠ AQ843 ♥ 107 ♦ Q106 ♣ A107
	South ♠ 75 ♥ Q9543 ♦ J8 ♣ KQ84	

North	East	South	West
1 Diamond	1 Spade	Double	2 Spades
Double	Pass	3 Hearts	All Pass

Contract: Three Hearts Opening Lead: Spade Deuce

On this deal, North-South bid to the extent of their cards. North opened one diamond and East overcalled one spade. South, with a scattered eight HCP, did not rate his hand high enough to bid two hearts directly, so despite holding five hearts, he made a negative double. West raised spades to the two level.

Now it was North's turn to double, which their partnership termed "responsive". When opponents have bid a suit and immediately raised, this double is intended for takeout, responding to partner's action, showing extra values and lacking a natural bid that is satisfactory. North's hand is worth more than its numerical 14 HCP, since it contains 3 ½ quick tricks. Now, South was happy to show his five-card suit, and North-South landed in three hearts.

West led the spade deuce, and dummy's nine was taken by East's Queen. East switched to the club 10, and South's king held. From East's first play of the spade queen, it appeared that West held the jack, so declarer finessed dummy's spade ten, forcing East's ace and setting up dummy's king. For lack of anything better, East continued a spade, on which South pitched a club loser.

At this point, what are declarer's chances of making the nine-trick contract? Two spades have been lost, and a club loser is inevitable. Diamonds are covered. The problem is the trump suit.

To succeed, you need hearts to break 3-2 (or 2-3). The odds favor West's having the three-card holding, due to West's possession of two fewer spades than East holds. Furthermore, East has shown up with three key cards—the spade ace and queen and, by inference, the club ace that West did not win at trick two. Therefore, it is clear that West, who bid once voluntarily, has the heart king. If you make the normal suit-combination play of ace first, then low toward the queen, it won't work (as you can see in the diagram) whether you go up with the queen or duck and hope for a doubleton king offside. Thus, at first glance, there are two losers.

Let's try a second glance. Suppose you start trumps by calling for the deuce from the dummy. When East follows with the seven, you cover with the nine, which brings out West's jack. West leads a club to his partner's ace, and East plays a club to your queen. Next, your lead of the heart queen will clean up the suit. West covers with the king and you re-cover with the ace, as East's ten is smothered! Dummy's heart eight will pick up West's six, and you magically have made defenders' second trump trick disappear.

A similar suit-combination was introduced and termed an "intra-finesse" by Gabriel Chagas of Brazil, as the Bols Tip of the Year.

By the way, on the hand as dealt, suppose East follows to the first heart with his ten. You cover with the queen, and West wins his king. Now, when you lead up to dummy, do you finesse the eight, or do you go up with the ace and try to drop East's J-10 doubleton?