

One Peek Is Worth Two Finesses by Roger Lord

You are South, declarer. Don't spoil the fun by peeking at the East-West cards.

Dealer: East
Vul: Both

	North		
	♠AQ53		
	♥763		
	♦K92		
	♣532		
West		East	
♠J1062		♠87	
♥9842		♥AQJ	
♦Q73		♦8654	
♣76		♣AQJ9	
	South		
	♠K94		
	♥K105		
	♦AJ10		
	♣K1084		

East	South	West	North
1 Club	Pass	Pass	Double
Pass	3 Notrump	All Pass	

Opening Lead: Club Seven

When East's opening bid was passed, North, reluctant to give up to a measly one club, backed in with a double. South promoted his club position and intermediate cards and gambled the three notrump game.

West led the club seven. East inserted the jack, overtaken by South's king. South crossed to dummy's spade queen and, envisioning the club holding, led toward his 1084. East rose with the queen and attacked hearts, his queen taken by South's king.

Declarer counted potential tricks: one club, one heart, three diamonds with a guessed finesse, and four spades on a 3-3 break. When he tried the spade king and ace, he found that West's holding had been J1062, East's the 87 doubleton (East sluffed a diamond). Not giving up, declarer led a third club through East, who took his ace, setting up South's 10, while West sluffed a heart. East cashed his ace-jack of hearts, West following, and now the heart threat was ended. East exited with his club to South's 10.

At trick 11, declarer faced a two-way guess for the diamond queen. Who had it, and why?

To aid his guess, South counted East for two spades, three hearts, four clubs, and therefore four diamonds, which allotted three diamonds to West. The odds seemed to favor East's holding the queen by four to three, and besides, East opened the bidding. Accordingly, he played the diamond king and then low to the jack—losing to the queen.

To succeed at bridge play and defense, you must count, but don't rest on your laurels—count something else as well. In today's deal, what about points? East has played the heart AQJ and the club AQJ, for a total of 14 HCP. Furthermore, East was dealt a balanced hand, with 2-3-4-4 distribution. Now we can see it—the diamond queen, if in the East hand, would compute to 16 HCP, right in the center of a standard opening one notrump range of 15-17. No opening one notrump by East equals no queen of diamonds.