

**A Practice Finesse
By Roger Lord**

Dealer: South
Vul: North-South

	North		
	♠ 853		
	♥ Q2		
	♦ AQJ		
	♣ AQ832		
West		East	
♠ AQ		♠ K10962	
♥ 8		♥ 9653	
♦ K108754		♦ 62	
♣ J1096		♣ K4	
	South		
	♠ J74		
	♥ AKJ1074		
	♦ 93		
	♣ 75		

South	West	North	East
2 Hearts	3 Diamonds	4 Hearts	All Pass

Contract: Four Hearts Opening Lead: Spade Ace

You are South, declarer at four hearts. Don't look at the East-West cards. The bidding was straightforward. In first or second seat, North-South had agreed to open a weak two-bid with a good suit only. Consequently, queen-deuce of hearts was more than adequate for a jump raise.

Overcalling with a skimpy diamond suit, West was lucky his side was not vulnerable. Against best defense, three diamonds doubled would have gone down two, for 300. North decided not to double, opting to go for a vulnerable game.

West led the spade ace and continued with the queen. He felt that the shorter suit offered a greater chance for multiple tricks. East overtook the queen with the king, temporarily setting up South's jack, then led a third round of spades, which West ruffed. At trick four, West fired the jack of clubs. At this point, would you finesse the club queen? Why or why not? Some may reply "because it is there," as in "Deliverance" or Mt. Everest.

This finesse would be labeled sardonically a "practice finesse." The club queen might hold, but it is not an essential play for the contract. It cannot gain, but it might lose.

You can avoid a club loser by going up with the ace and taking two diamond finesses, then using the diamond ace to pitch a little club. For the contract to succeed, the diamond finesses must work. If you finesse the club queen, even if it wins, it doesn't matter—you still need the diamond finesses.

Once you win the club ace at trick four, don't forget to plan ahead. Suppose you draw trumps now and finesse diamonds later. You would be hung up in the dummy, with no means of getting back to your hand other than by ruffing a diamond, which would destroy the extra diamond trick. Finesse the diamond first, then use your hearts both to draw trumps and to reenter your hand for the second diamond finesse.