

MULTI-FINESSES

By Roger Lord

This deal was played in the recent St. Louis Regional, in a two-session open pairs with matchpoint scoring. Take over as South and cover the East-West cards. Note East's takeout double.

Dealer:South	North	
VUL:Both	♠ Q10	
Scoring:Matchpoints	♥ J82	
	♦ K642	
	♣ KJ52	
West		East
♠ J5		♠ K93
♥ 9643		♥ K1075
♦ 10973		♦ AQ5
♣ A64		♣ Q73
	South	
	♠ A87642	
	♥ AQ	
	♦ J8	
	♣ 1098	

West	North	East	South
			1 Spade
Pass	1NT	Double	2 Spades
All Pass			

Opening Lead: Diamond 10

On the diamond 10 opening lead, you play low, in essence finessing your jack against the missing queen. East wins the queen, cashes the ace and returns the diamond five, as West follows with the three and the seven, forcing dummy's king. When you show out on the third diamond, what do you discard?

Most declarers would discard the heart queen reflexively. This would be a sure way to eliminate the potential heart loser, after which they would tackle trumps and go after clubs.

A superior line in a pairs game is to pitch a club and next finesse the heart queen. Remember East's direct takeout double, which tends to indicate four (or more) hearts with an honor. Furthermore, ask yourself why East continued diamonds rather than switch to a heart. Probably he feared giving up a heart trick to declarer's possible A Q x.

The heart queen holds, and you turn your attention to trumps. You lead a low spade toward the dummy's Q 10. When West follows with the five, you finesse the 10, which forces the king. In making that guess, it is helpful to realize that West might have flown up with the king had he held K x in front of dummy.

Back comes a heart to your ace, you draw West's spade jack with dummy's queen, ruff a heart to your hand and extract East's last trump with your ace. You're down to two trumps and the club 10 9.

You lead a club, West follows, and you're faced with yet another finesse. East has shown up with 12 HCP. Over your two spades passed to East, if he held the club ace as well, might he not have ventured a second double? Besides, if you play the king and it holds, your play at trick three will look great to your partner and you.

The recap sheet ratified South's multi-finessing efforts, as plus 140 for nine tricks scored 15 out of 17 matchpoints.