



Adventures in Bridge

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Finesses and More – Not as Simple as They Appear!

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The Finesse

- One of the first declarer play skills we learn because it is relatively easy to execute.
- Natural for players to assume this makes a finesse a good line of play.
- To be successful we need a card to be “onside” (with the player we want to have it).
- Even “unsuccessful” finesses can set up tricks
[xx AQJT]
- Finesses are overrated!
- Expert players think of a finesse as a “fallback plan”, something they try only if everything else fails or they cannot find any better line of play.
- “8 Ever, 9 Sometimes!” – Rules are made to be broken
The *Principle of Empty Space*.

Types of Finesses

- Simple – both honors in the same hand.
[xx AQ]
- Separated – lead an honor from one hand. Need more honors.
[QJ Ax]
- (Variation on a finesse) – lead up to an honor.
[Axx Qxx] [xx Kx]
- Double Finesse
[xxx AQT]
- Combinations of these.
[Q9x AT8]
- Intra-finesse
[Q9xx A8xx]
- Ruffing Finesse
[AQJT x]
- Triple Finesse
[xxx AQ98]
- “Unnecessary” Finesse – not to win an extra trick but to create an entry.

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Problems with a Finesse

- A finesse is binary – either wins an extra trick or loses a trick. If we cannot afford to lose a trick then this may be the end of our chances to make the contract.
- Even if a finesse sets up tricks for us by failing, for example AQJT, it may give the opponents a chance to get in and do something to hurt us – get a ruff, knockout an entry, attack a dangerous suit, etc.
- Transportation is needed to execute a finesse. Sometimes we spurn a finesse (just play from the top or for the honor to drop) because it is too dangerous to get to the position to take the finesse.

Combine Your Changes

- Expert players are always looking for ways to not choose between option A and B. Best to find a line of play that will allow you to make your contract if A or B works (ideally, even C or D....)
- *Do not take a finesse that you know is going to fail!!*

Restricted Choice

- A difficult math problem – “The Monty Hall Problem”
- Changing Probabilities -- Did the opponents have a choice or not?