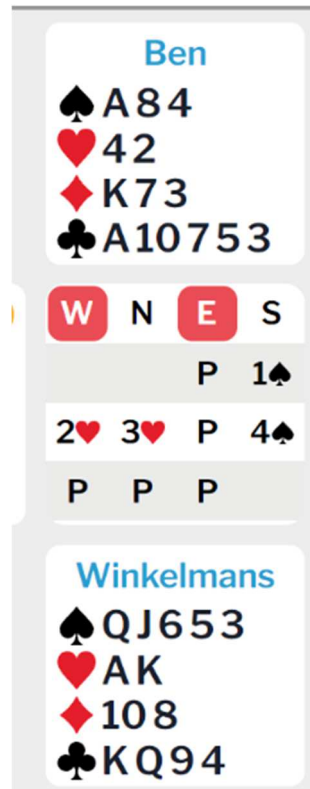


The Automatic Pilot

By Marcel Winkel

As you start learning Bridge, taking a finesse is one of the most exciting things in the game. If the finesse is right, you are happy and when it loses you feel sad and complain about the bad luck you often have. Playing on IntoBridge (Intobridge.com, where you can make an account and play freely) you pick up the South hand and a little later become declarer in 4 Spades.



West leads the Queen of Hearts and you spot at least one loser in trumps and one in Diamonds. Because of the vulnerable overcall by West, the Ace of Diamonds is probably rightly placed.

You take the first trick in hand with the Ace of Hearts and automatically put the Spade Queen on the table. West covers with the King and you win in dummy with the Ace. When East place the Spade 2 you suddenly realize that the Spade 10, 9 and 7 are still outside and you could nearly never play the suit without a loser in the first place (only when East has exactly the bare Spade 10 and 9).

You are punished quite hard as you play a Spade back to your Jack; West throws a Heart and suddenly you swapped your Spade loser into two!

The whole board;

The screenshot shows a bridge game interface with the following elements:

- Top Left:** Menu, search, and share icons. A card display showing a 6 of Diamonds (D) in a red and white layout.
- Top Middle (Ben's Hand):**
 - ♠ A84
 - ♥ 42
 - ♦ K73
 - ♣ A10753
- Top Right (NT Contract Table):**

| NT | ♠ | ♥ | ♦ | ♣ |
|----|---|---|---|---|
| N | 5 | 5 | - | - |
| S | 5 | 5 | - | - |
| W | - | - | 2 | - |
| E | - | - | 2 | - |
- Middle Left (Ben's Hand):**
 - ♠ K
 - ♥ QJ986
 - ♦ AQ65
 - ♣ J86
- Middle (Bidding Table):**

| W | N | E | S |
|----|----|---|----|
| | | P | 1♠ |
| 2♥ | 3♥ | P | 4♠ |
| P | P | P | |
- Middle Right (Ben's Hand):**
 - ♠ 10972
 - ♥ 10753
 - ♦ J942
 - ♣ 2
- Bottom Left:** A 4♠ S contract indicator and two score boxes showing 0.
- Bottom Middle (Winkelmans' Hand):**
 - ♠ QJ653
 - ♥ AK
 - ♦ 108
 - ♣ KQ94
- Bottom Right:** A "Minimax" score of 920 and a blue replay control bar with left and right arrows.

I played this board under the option "ranked players" which means that your result is only compared with one player who is close to you on the ranking ladder. He has the same hand as you at another table. That way you can have a win, a draw, or a defeat. When you have a win you gain points and with a defeat you lose points. If you are playing against somebody who is much lower on the ranking ladder you can even lose a point with a draw...

I recognized the Spade position and played a small Spade to the Ace and was highly rewarded when West showed up with the bare King. At the other table South played on automatic pilot, I believe. He played the Spade Queen in trick 2 and lost the board.

Learned lesson: spot cards do matter, especially in trumps. Don't take a finesse without having a good look first into the combined hands, searching for tens, nines and even eights...

By the way, due to the lucky break in Spades, 6 Clubs in North is the jackpot. On the top right (visible after playing the board) you can see what contract, played, or defended with open cards is makeable by what site.

Also, you can replay the hand afterwards on your own but as well at the opponent's table, to see how they played to get a better or worse result than you.