

# Slam on an easy finesse

By Marcel Winkel

|            |       |   |     |
|------------|-------|---|-----|
| Ben        |       |   |     |
| ♠          | K84   |   |     |
| ♥          | A65   |   |     |
| ♦          | 73    |   |     |
| ♣          | KQJ73 |   |     |
| W          | N     | E | S   |
|            |       | P | 2NT |
| P          | 6NT   | P | P   |
| P          |       |   |     |
| Winkelmans |       |   |     |
| ♠          | AQ3   |   |     |
| ♥          | Q974  |   |     |
| ♦          | AKJ8  |   |     |
| ♣          | A2    |   |     |

After a short bidding, you become declarer in 6NT. West leads the 6 of Clubs (second highest from rubbish). You play low from dummy and East produces the Club 10 which you win with the Ace.

You cash the Ace of Diamonds (miracles of a bare Queen do exist!) and after that you return a Club to dummy at the third trick, West following with the 4 and East with the 8.

You can now count 5 tricks in Clubs, 3 in Spades, one in Hearts and 2 in Diamonds. These add up to a total of 11 tricks.

There are two chances of a twelfth trick: East can have the King of Hearts or the Queen of Diamonds. What do you play from dummy at trick four?

## Solution:

As with many problems, the best solution is to combine your chances. If you start with a (losing) Diamond finesse, you cannot gain anymore for East to have the King of Hearts. In that case your Queen of hearts can become the twelfth trick, only EW already will have two tricks by then!

The best play therefore is to check the position of the King of Hearts first:

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

- Top Left:** Menu, search, and share icons. A trick score of 14 is shown with a 'D' (Diamond) indicator.
- Top Middle (Ben's Hand):**
  - Spades: K84
  - Hearts: A65
  - Diamonds: 73
  - Clubs: KQJ73
- Top Right (NT Distribution):**

| NT | ♠ | ♥ | ♦ | ♣ |
|----|---|---|---|---|
| N  | 6 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| S  | 6 | 4 | 5 | 5 |
| W  | - | - | - | - |
| E  | - | - | - | - |
- Middle Left (Ben's Hand):**
  - Spades: 75
  - Hearts: J832
  - Diamonds: Q92
  - Clubs: 9654
- Middle Center (Bidding Sequence):**

| W     | N | E | S     |
|-------|---|---|-------|
|       |   |   | P 2NT |
| P 6NT | P | P |       |
| P     |   |   |       |
- Middle Right (Ben's Hand):**
  - Spades: J10962
  - Hearts: K10
  - Diamonds: 10654
  - Clubs: 108
- Bottom Left:** A score of 6NT S and two orange boxes containing the number 0.
- Bottom Middle (Winkelmans' Hand):**
  - Spades: AQ3
  - Hearts: Q974
  - Diamonds: AKJ8
  - Clubs: A2
- Bottom Right:** A 'Minimax' icon and the number 990, along with navigation arrows.

Play a small heart from dummy (not the Ace first) and when East plays small, try the Queen.

If this trick loses to the King, you have another 'iron in the fire'! You can win any return in dummy to try the Diamond finesse now.

Your problems are solved after East rises with the King of Hearts. Note that cashing the Ace of Hearts first, would be a mistake. If West has the King of Hearts behind your Queen, he might cash one or more tricks in that suit, so your second options of finessing the Diamond Queen has disappeared.

Although this play is not hard to find, it was missed on several tables with reasonable players. Taking a finesse is something we have learned as a bridge player early on.

Isn't it therefore a bit strange that later we learn that we need to finesse only as our last resort...?