

## Avoiding finesses

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Some folks can't resist a finesse. Of course there are many occasions when a finesse is the only way to gain an extra trick, but good players will always look for alternative lines of play that don't involve having to take a finesse. This deal, from Monday 8 July, is an object lesson in avoiding finesses. You are in 4H after this auction:

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
	1S	2D	2H
P	3C	P	4H

♠AQJT9  
♥5  
♦8653  
♣A63

♠3  
♥AKJ7643  
♦  
♣QJ852

Partner found an interesting 3C rebid! Anyway, you ruff LHO's ♦J lead. Two rounds of hearts drop LHO's queen so you draw the last trump with the jack, discarding diamonds from dummy. Now what?

You can, if you wish, try finesses in both spades and clubs, although the latter is a poor option when missing ♣10. However, even though both finesses work, you will end up with 2 club losers, because as you can see from the full deal below – now in its correct orientation – North has all the missing clubs:

<b>BD: 29</b>	♠K652	<b>Dlr: N</b>
	♥QT	<b>Vul: ALL</b>
	♦J7	
	♣KT974	
♠3		♠AQJT9
♥AKJ7643		♥5
♦		♦8653
♣QJ852		♣A63
	♠874	
	♥982	
	♦AKQT942	
	♣	

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N	T
N	1				9	
S	1				11	11
E	4	6	2		9	
W	4	5	2			

But why not try a better line? All you have to do is play a spade to the ace, then play ♠Q. If South holds this card, you can ruff, then you might try the club finesse – if it works, you discard all your losing clubs on the high spades and make 13 tricks! If, as is actually the case, South doesn't hold ♠K, you simply discard a low club, conceding a trick. Subsequently, you cross to dummy with ♣A to discard your remaining 3 losing clubs, thus making 12 tricks.

On the day, only 2 declarers succeeded in making the 12 tricks that were available on a diamond lead. Bridge Solver suggests that only 11 tricks should be made when West is the declarer, but that requires a club lead, which won't happen in real life.

