

## The Danger Hand

There are two common situations:

- One player has winners ready to be cashed.
- You have a vulnerable honour. This is usually a king but sometime a queen.

### *Finessing into Safety*

<p>West</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ A 4 3 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ K J 4 3 ♣ Q 7 5 2</p> </div>	<p>West: 1♦ East: 1♥ West: 1NT East: 3NT</p> <p>North leads K♠</p>	<p>East</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ 6 2 ♥ A 7 4 2 ♦ A T 8 7 ♣ A K 6</p> </div>
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There are eight sure tricks (1+2+2+3). Diamonds will provide one or two tricks depending on the finesse. As we learned last week, we should hold up the ace of spades until the third round by which time all of South's spades will be gone.

North is now the danger hand with two winning spades. Therefore, the diamonds should be finessed towards South. Play the three to the ten. It doesn't matter whether the finesse succeeds or not. The contract is safe.

### *Vulnerable Honour*

<p>West</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ K 7 4 ♥ K 5 ♦ A J 5 4 ♣ K Q 7 2</p> </div>	<p>West: 1NT East: 3NT</p> <p>North leads 5♠</p>	<p>East</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ A Q 6 ♥ 6 4 3 ♦ K T 9 3 ♣ A 8 4</p> </div>
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There are eight sure tricks (3+0+2+3). Diamonds will provide one or two tricks depending on the finesse. Hearts is the danger suit. If South leads a heart and North has the ace, the defence will take at least four heart tricks. So, South is the danger hand and the diamond finesse should be taken towards North.

Win the first trick with the ace of spades. Play the ten of diamonds and the four from hand. If the finesse loses, no harm is done. A heart lead from North will make the king a winner.

## Deal 1

North		South
♠ K 5 3	North: 1♦	♠ A Q 4 2
♥ A 9	East: 3♥	♥ 8 5
♦ K J 9 4	South: Double	♦ A T 8
♣ K 7 5 4	North: 3NT	♣ A 8 3 2
	East leads K♥	

After North's somewhat hopeful 3NT, there are eight sure tricks (3+1+2+2). Given a favourable distribution, clubs would provide another trick. Better are the diamonds which guarantee the ninth trick whatever the distribution.

The danger suit is hearts. From the bidding, it is very likely that East will have seven hearts and West, two. So, holding up until the second heart should exhaust West of the suit.

The danger hand is now East with five potential heart tricks. So, the diamond finesse should be taken towards West by playing the nine from hand and the eight from dummy.

## Deal 2

West		East
♠ 7 5	East: 1♣	♠ Q 4 3
♥ A Q 5 4	South: 1♠	♥ K 6 3
♦ A 9 6 4	West: Double	♦ K Q 7
♣ A J 9	East: 1NT	♣ K T 8 4
	West: 3NT	
	South leads A♠	

An even more optimistic 3NT. There are eight sure tricks (0+3+3+2). The club suit will provide one or two more. Spades are the weak suit with South having at least five from the bidding.

The bidding and opening lead strongly suggests that South has both the king and jack of spades. That makes North the danger hand. A spade lead from North would trap East's queen and give the defence five spade tricks.

When South switches to a heart, win with the ace and finesse clubs towards the safe hand, South. Even if the finesse loses, South will not be able to continue spades without setting up East's queen. It is best to start with the nine of clubs and the four. If the finesse is successful, follow up with the jack and eight.

### The Opening Lead Creates a Danger

<p>West</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ K J 3 ♥ A Q J T ♦ A 4 3 ♣ J 5 2</p> </div>	<p>West: 1NT East: 3NT</p> <p>North leads 5♠</p>	<p>East</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ 8 7 ♥ 7 4 2 ♦ K Q 7 ♣ A K T 9 3</p> </div>
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There are only six sure tricks (0+1+3+2). The opening lead provides one more. Either diamonds or hearts will provide at least two tricks depending on the finesse.

Until the opening lead, West's hand looked solid. However, South's queen forced out declarer's king and now the jack is vulnerable. South is the danger hand. A spade lead from South will beat the contract.

So, it is best to ignore the attractive club suit and finesse hearts towards North. Should the finesse be successful, it can be repeated using two diamonds and a club for the required entries.

### Lose to the Safe Hand Last

<p>West</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ A 9 3 ♥ K T 9 ♦ Q J T 6 ♣ K T 9</p> </div>	<p>West: 1♦ East: 1♥ West: 1NT East: 3NT</p> <p>North leads 5♠</p>	<p>East</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; background-color: #e0f0e0;"> <p>♠ K 7 ♥ Q J 4 2 ♦ A 9 7 3 ♣ A 4 3</p> </div>
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There are just five sure tricks (2+0+1+2). Hearts can provide three more as can diamonds. Since tricks will be needed in both red suits, the lead may be lost twice.

The danger suit is spades. Although there are two stoppers, duck the first spade because the lead may be lost twice. After winning the second spade, a decision must be made about which suit to tackle first. The plan should be to lose to South when South has no more spades. Either defender can have the ace of hearts but we can play diamonds so that only South can win a diamond.

If diamonds are played first and the finesse loses, South will play another spade. If North then happens to have the ace of hearts, the contract will go down.

Therefore, work on hearts first. When either defender takes their ace, they will play a third spade. But now, South will have no spades left so diamonds can be finessed into the safe hand.

### Deal 3

North		South
♠ 5 2	South: 1NT	♠ K J 3
♥ A J 9 8 4	North: 2♦	♥ Q T
♦ A K 5	South: 2♥	♦ Q J 6 4
♣ T 8 3	North: 3NT	♣ A Q J 4
	West leads 6♠	

There are six sure tricks (0+1+4+1). The opening lead provides one more. It looks like hearts will readily provide the other tricks we need.

Unfortunately, when East's ten of spades forces out our jack, the king of spades has become extremely vulnerable. East is now the danger hand – a spade lead from there will be extremely damaging.

So, ignore the lovely heart suit and set up two club tricks by finessing into the safe hand.

### Deal 4

West		East
♠ A K 6 2	West: 1NT	♠ Q 4
♥ J T 8	East: 2♣	♥ A 9 7 6
♦ K 6 4	West: 2♠	♦ A 7 5 3 2
♣ A Q 5	East: 3NT	♣ 8 4
	North leads 5♥	

There are seven sure tricks (3+1+2+1). There are several sources of extra tricks: the club finesse or a double finesse of hearts or setting up the long diamonds. The club finesse provides only one trick while either hearts or diamonds can provide two.

Before coming to a decision, it is worth considering the opening lead. If that were really the fourth highest, the rule of eleven tells us there should be six higher hearts outstanding. Between declarer and dummy, there are seven so something fishy is going on here! Maybe North has just got it wrong or maybe North has led from a short suit trying to find partner's strength.

At first sight, there is no obvious danger suit but wait! Suppose South were to get the lead and play a club. If now we finesse and lose to the king, another club will drive out our last club stopper. At this point, we will be down unless we have already established our winners.

Therefore, it is imperative that we set up our tricks before South gets the lead. The doubt about the heart suit means that diamonds is the suit to go for. Win the opening lead with the ace of hearts and give up a diamond. The defence may cash a couple of heart tricks but when we regain the lead, there are nine tricks for the taking.

## Deals 1 to 4, The Full Hands

<p>N S ♠ K53 Pts Fr %          N S ♥ A9          H D ♦ KJ94          C ♣ K754</p> <p>♠ JT98 1 ♠ 76          ♥ T3 ♥ KQJ7642          ♦ 753 N/- ♦ Q62          ♣ QJT6 ♣ 9</p> <p>♠ AQ42          ♥ 85          ♦ AT8          ♣ A832</p> <p>Opt res: NS 3N; 460</p>	<p>♠ 982 Pts Fr %          ♥ T987          ♦ J3          ♣ Q752</p> <p>♠ 75 ♠ Q43          ♥ AQ54 ♥ K63          ♦ A964 E/NS ♦ KQ7          ♣ AJ9 ♣ KT84</p> <p>E W ♠ AKJT6          N S ♥ J2          H D ♦ T852          C ♣ 63</p> <p>Opt res: E 3N; -460</p>	<p>N S ♠ 52 Pts Fr %          N S ♥ AJ984          H D ♦ AK5          C ♣ T83</p> <p>♠ AQ764 3 ♠ T98          ♥ 732 ♥ K65          ♦ T87 S/EW ♦ 932          ♣ K5 ♣ 9762</p> <p>♠ KJ3          ♥ QT          ♦ QJ64          ♣ AQJ4</p> <p>Opt res: S 4H; 420</p>	<p>♠ 98753 Pts Fr %          ♥ 54          ♦ T8          ♣ K762</p> <p>♠ AK62 ♠ Q4          ♥ JT8 ♥ A976          ♦ K64 W/All ♦ A7532          ♣ AQ3 ♣ 84</p> <p>E W ♠ JT          N S ♥ KQ32          H D ♦ QJ9          C ♣ JT95</p> <p>Opt res: EW 3N; -600</p>
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## Week Three, Board 18

	North	
	♠ K 9 7 ♥ 9 7 6 2 ♦ 6 ♣ Q T 5 4 2	
West		East
♠ Q J 5 ♥ T 4 ♦ K T 9 7 5 2 ♣ 8 6		♠ A 6 2 ♥ A J 8 5 ♦ A 8 ♣ A K 7 3
	South	
	♠ T 8 4 3 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ Q J 4 3 ♣ J 9	

This hand from last week's session highlighted many of the features we have been discussing. East is playing in 3NT and South leads the ♠3. In the session, no declarer made their contract. What went wrong?

There are six sure tricks and diamonds should provide the rest.

At trick one, it is instinctive for declarer to play ♠J from dummy followed by North's king and East's ace. No doubt, declarer then started work on the diamonds by playing the ace and the king only to discover the bad break.

To allow for the possibility of South having four diamonds, declarer should cash the ace and then lead the eight. Assuming South plays low, play the nine instead of the king from dummy. When this holds, declarer can cash the king and give South his diamond trick. The ♠J will be the entry for the last two diamonds and the contract will make.

But, should the contract have made? When dummy goes down and the ♠J is played, North needs to think about the hand. The diamonds are clearly a threatening suit but the ♠Q looks like the only entry. Therefore, North should hold up the king and play low at trick one. After declarer has set up the diamonds, North can stop declarer getting to dummy by covering the queen of spades with the king. So, the contract shouldn't make. Or should it?

At trick one, declarer also needs to think about entries in dummy. To guarantee an entry, declarer should play the ♠5 from dummy and win the trick with the ace. Now, ♠QJ remain in dummy with two small spades in hand. This combination will ensure an entry into dummy once the diamonds have been set up.

So much to think about at trick one!