

FINESSE AGAINST THE GRAIN

Take a look at this deal diagram.

	14 ^D		
		N North	W N E S
		♠ AQ2	X 2♠ X 1♠
		♥ 10764	P P P 4♠
		♦ Q53	
		♣ 1092	
W West		E East	
♠ 85		♠ 3	
♥ Q983		♥ AJ2	
♦ K962		♦ AJ1074	
♣ Q54		♣ K876	
		S South	
		♠ KJ109764	
		♥ K5	
		♦ 8	
		♣ AJ3	
		4♠ S	NS: 0 EW: 0

East opens 1♦ and you, as South overcall 1♠. You have a full opener, but even with fewer points, your 7-card spade suit must be mentioned as soon as possible.

West doubles to show exactly four hearts. This is a negative double and an extremely important bidding convention. It allows West to mention a 4-card suit without a lot of points.

Your partner raises your spades and this time, East doubles. This is a takeout double for either of the two minors. If East had heart support he would have simply raised West's "heart" bid.

With your extremely distributional hand you jump to game. West leads a low diamond. How would you plan the play?

It's clear you have to limit your losers to one in each of the non-trump suits. You can't do anything about the diamond suit, but you need to find the ♥A in East and the ♣KQ either split or together in the East. In all, you need to take three trips to the dummy for three successful finesses. There isn't much you can do about the lay of the cards, but you must be very careful about your dummy entries. You only have two sure entries in the spade honors.

Normally, when you need a repeated finesse, you lead the high card (here, the ♣10) so you can remain in that hand for the second finesse. But if you do that in this hand, you will fail. You must lead a low spade to the dummy's ♠J and return the ♣2 to the ♣J! When West wins the ♣Q and returns a diamond, you win and use your second entry, the ♠A, to lead the ♣10. If East plays low, you let the ♣10 ride and take the successful heart finesse. Now your ♣A is good and you collect 7 spades, 1 heart and 2 clubs. If East puts up the ♣K on the

second club lead, you win the ♣A and your ♣9 is good and provides the transportation to execute the heart finesse. Again, the necessary 10 tricks.

If you start clubs with the ♣10 you will not have the required third entry to the dummy. It's a little hard to see that by just looking at the diagram. Try it both ways in the BBO simulation.

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/lne2kn3>
Or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.