

Thinking bridge

By Eddie Kantar @ NABC Spring 2019 Memphis-6

♠ A J 4
♥ J 10
♦ A K J 10
♣ Q 10 9 8
♠ K 10 3 2
♥ K Q
♦ 6 5
♣ A K J 7 6

After you open 1♣ and bid 1♠ over partner's 1♦ response, partner invites slam in clubs, starting with a fourth-suit 2♥ bid, and then supporting clubs after you leap to 3NT. You check for key cards, and after finding two aces, you trot out 6♣, the final contract.

The opening lead is the ♥9. East wins the ace and returns a heart. Clubs are 2-2. Plan the play.

Your contract depends upon one of two finesses. If either finesse works, you don't need the other, but the sad news is that if the finesse you take loses, down you go. Life can be so cruel.

There is a way to increase your chances when dealing with two suits, each missing a queen, a contract-making finesse available in either suit. This is the technique to follow after drawing trumps: Play the A-K of the longer suit, spades, and if the queen doesn't drop, take a finesse in the shorter suit, diamonds. If the diamond finesse works, re-enter your hand and repeat it, of course.

Note: It does not help you to play the ♦A K and then lead the jack. Even if it is covered, you only get one spade discard on the ♦10. That play only wins when the ♦Q is either singleton or doubleton (less than 10%). You are much more likely to find the ♠Q singleton or doubleton (close to 20%), the reason for testing spades before taking the diamond finesse.

Warning: This theme (two missing queens) or variations of it will come up again. Forewarned is forearmed.

Tip: When you decide to play the ace-king of a suit that contains both the 10 and the jack, a suit you have no intention of finessing, try leading the jack as part of this plan. You'll be pleasantly surprised how often the jack is covered

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♥ 9 8 7 6		♥ A 5 4 3 2
♦ Q 7 3 2		♦ 9 8 4
♣ 5 4		♣ 3 2
	♠ K 10 3 2	
	♥ K Q	
	♦ 6 5	
	♣ A K J 7 6	