

A Practice Finesse

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

The humble finesse is the first thing we learn, and we also learn that some finesses win, some lose. Later we learn that some finesses are purely for practice and serve no useful purpose. Here is a case in point.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

	♠ Q J 9 6 5		
	♥ K J 9 7		
	♦ A 2		
	♣ A Q		
♠ 8 4 3	♠ --		
♥ --	♥ Q 6 5 4 3 2		
♦ K J 9 8 3	♦ Q 10 4		
♣ J 9 8 7 5	♣ K 10 6 3		
	♠ A K 10 7 2		
	♥ A 10 8		
	♦ 7 6 5		
	♣ 4 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 NT	Dbl	5 ♣	1 ♠
Pass	6 ♠	All pass	Pass

West's 2NT was the "Unusual Notrump", showing both minors, and North eventually plunged (some would say recklessly) into slam. West leads a club, your job is to make twelve tricks.

A diamond loser is unavoidable, so you must guess the whereabouts of the ♥Q if this slam is to make. And then there is the small matter of the club suit. Do you take the finesse? Surprisingly, it's not necessary. We've already determined that you need to bring in the hearts, and if that is the case then the fourth round of hearts can be used to pitch the club loser.

OK, you hop up with the ♣A, and draw trumps, ending on the board. Who has the ♥Q? Surely East. West's bidding showed both minors (usually 5-5) and later he played three spades. That doesn't leave room for many hearts. So, Declarer runs the ♥J around and West predictably shows out. Another heart finesse, the ♥A is cashed, over to the ♦A, then the club loser goes on the ♥K. Making twelve tricks, losing just a diamond.

Getting the heart suit right did not require rocket science. Realizing that the club finesse was not needed? Not so obvious. The winning train of thought was: I must lose a diamond... so I cannot lose a heart... if I don't lose a heart then I can park the losing club on the fourth round of hearts.