

## Avoiding One Opponent

One relatively common occurrence when playing a hand is when one of the opponents poses a threat and the other opponent can do you no harm. In that situation, we sometimes have to lose the lead but will be able to choose which opponent we lose the lead too.

We can take advantage of what is known as an avoidance play, endeavouring to make the safe hand win the trick and to keep the danger hand off lead. This is best illustrated with a couple of examples (assume we are dealer each time. Our hand is the lower hand, the top hand is dummy)

♠ A873

♥ 864

♦ AQJT

♣ 42

♠ K652

♥ A73

♦ 42

♣ AQJT

Auction: 1C:2H:X:P:2S:P:4S:AP

Lead: King of Hearts

It looks like we have one Spade loser, two Heart losers and potentially one loser in each minor! The good news is that by finessing a minor, even if it loses, we will have established two winners we can discard some hearts on. We can finesse in Clubs or Diamonds to set up our heart pitches. Does it matter which we try?

Yes! West is the **danger hand**. West began with six hearts and East one. If we finesse into the West hand and lose then they will cash two heart tricks. If we finesse into the East hand and it loses, they don't have any hearts left! Hence, we should win, draw two round of trumps and take a diamond finesse.

♠ KQ82

♥ 53

♦ AQJT5

♣ 42

♠ AJ6

♥ KQ2

♦ 42

♣ AQJT5

Auction: 1N:2H:X:P:2N:P:3N:AP

Lead: Seven of Hearts

We have four Spade winners, one Heart winner and four tricks in either minor plus an ace in the other for nine tricks (ten if the finesse works!). We can finesse in Clubs or Diamonds to develop four tricks. Does it matter which?

Yes! In this case East is the **danger hand**. Why? Because if they get on lead they will play a Heart *through* our Q2 of Hearts. West will then get four Heart tricks and we will go down. If we finesse into the West hand (in clubs) then even if it loses, the defence cannot hurt us. They can't play Hearts without turning our Queen into a tenth trick. We should win, cross to dummy (with three rounds of spades) and then finesse in Clubs.

♠ KJ42

♥ 32

♦ AQJT5

♣ 42

♠ AQ3

♥ K54

♦ 42

♣ AQJT5

Auction: 1N:2C\*:3N:AP

Lead: Ten of Spades

West's Two Clubs bid showed both majors.

We have four Spade winners, no Heart winners, and Four or Five tricks in either minor. We can finesse in either Clubs or Diamonds to establish Four tricks which will bring us to nine and our contract. Does it matter which?

Yes! West had a lousy Spade suit but likely a very good Heart suit. If we let East in they will play a heart through our K54 and we will lose a lot of tricks. East is the **danger hand**.

We should win the opening lead and finesse in clubs.