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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch 17th September 2010

Both vulnerable. South deals.

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

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 Spade	Pass	4 NT	Pass
5 Diamond	Pass	5 NT	Pass
6 Heart	Pass	6 Spade	All Pass

Opening lead: Eight of ♦

Experts hate to guess, and being faced with a two-way finesse in a suit might be the most distasteful situation of all. Note how bridge great B. Jay Becker solved this problem in a deal from a team match at the Spring Nationals more than 60 years ago.

South's opening bid dates the hand — these days five-card majors are played universally. North's bid of five no trump was not so much an inquiry for kings as to confirm for partner possession of all the aces, allowing South to bid the grand slam with the right hand.

West led a diamond and South was delighted with the contract. A successful finesse in either hearts or clubs would land the slam. But the club finesse could be taken through either defender, and there was no way for declarer to get a clue as to how the suit was divided. Becker found a simple way out of the quandary — he refused to take the club finesse!

After winning the opening lead in dummy, declarer drew trumps in three rounds, ending in hand. Declarer's remaining diamond was ruffed on the table. Then came the ace and king of clubs, both defenders following. When the queen dropped, 12 tricks were there for the taking.

What if the queen had not appeared? Declarer intended continuing with a third round of clubs. If West held her majesty, the defender would be endplayed, forced to yield either a ruff-sluff or a lead into South's heart tenace. If East held her majesty, declarer could still fall back on the heart finesse only after having explored two extra chances first, at no cost.

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