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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

5th October 2011

Dealer : North Vul : N-S	NORTH ♠ A 10 6 2 ♥ 10 2 ♦ K Q J 10 9 5 2 ♣ Void	
WEST ♠ Q 8 7 5 ♥ K 8 4 3 ♦ 6 ♣ K J 7 2		EAST ♠ 4 ♥ A J 9 5 ♦ 8 4 3 ♣ A Q 8 5 4
	SOUTH ♠ K J 9 3 ♥ Q 7 6 ♦ A 7 ♣ 10 9 6 3	

South	West	North	East
--	--	1 Diamond	Pass
1 Spade	Pass	3 Spade	Pass
3 NT	Pass	4 Spade	All Pass

Opening lead: Three of ♥

To take a finesse for a queen is no great shakes. But what about first taking it against one opponent and, when it works, taking it against the other? It is a rare situation, but it does crop up occasionally.

North had a difficult bid to make on the second round, and the aggressive raise to three spades was probably as good a choice as any. The final contract was excellent.

West led a low heart to partner's ace and East correctly returned the jack to pin dummy's ten. Declarer's queen lost to the king and another heart forced declarer to ruff on the table. The ace of spades was cashed and the ten was continued. When East discarded, declarer followed low from hand. West allowed the ten to hold and declarer had lost control of the hand, eventually going down three tricks.

Suppose that after ruffing the third heart, declarer immediately leads a low spade to the nine. If West wins, declarer has no problem, so West must hold up. Now declarer has available a safety play that guarantees the contract – he leads a low spade to the ten, taking the finesse the other way! If East wins, declarer can capture any return, if necessary ruffing in dummy, come to hand with the ace of diamonds to draw the last trump and claim the rest of the tricks with good diamonds and the last trump.

If East shows out, as is the case here, all is still well. Declarer cashes the ace of spades, returns to hand with the ace of diamonds to draw the last trump and then runs the diamonds to emerge with an overtrick. Verily, a true two-way finesse!

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