

## Tip of the month

This month the tip concerns **elimination play** and the potential for avoiding a finesse guess.

Do you find finessing too enticing to resist? Do you lament that your finesses seem nearly always to fail? Perhaps you finesse too often! Consider the following hand,

	<b>North</b>		<b>Bidding</b>			
	<b>S</b> AJ86		<b>N</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>W</b>
	<b>H</b> A97		1S	-	3D	-
	<b>D</b> A95		3NT	-	4NT*	-
<b>West</b>	<b>C</b> AJ6	<b>East</b>	5C**	-	6S	-
<b>S</b> 1072		<b>S</b> 53	-	-		
<b>H</b> J832		<b>H</b> Q104				
<b>D</b> 8642		<b>D</b> 1073				
<b>C</b> 98		<b>C</b> Q7542				
	<b>South</b>					
	<b>S</b> KQ94					
	<b>H</b> K65					
	<b>D</b> KQJ					
	<b>C</b> K103					

This is a good contract – you have eleven top tricks – **always** count your top tricks when you plan your line of play at trick one. 6NT would require a guess in clubs, but in 6S, on any lead other than a club (which would give you the contract immediately), you draw trumps, cash all the red suit top cards and exit with the third, losing, heart, thereby **eliminating** those suits other than trumps and the ‘problem’ suit. Whichever defender wins this trick, he/she will have the unenviable choice of leading a club (thereby solving the ‘guess’ about CQ) or of leading a red suit allowing you to ruff in one hand and discard a losing club from the other, enabling you then to ruff a club for the twelfth trick.

Of course, if you don’t need such elimination play to make your contract because you can always guess to finesse the right way (it has to be **always** to be on a par with elimination play), then forget the above. If not, you will find that the potential for an elimination play crops up from time to time. Look out for the opportunity to eliminate the other suits (other than trumps and the ‘problem’ suit) whilst still having at least one trump left in each hand after drawing the opponents trumps and a way of losing the lead without going beyond the maximum number of allowable losers.

The hand above was a ‘perfect’ elimination where you were guaranteed to solve your problem. There may also be opportunities for partial eliminations where you can exhaust one opponent of the other suits with a guaranteed way of passing the lead to them, eg after an opening lead of a side suit king you can be confident that your jack will be won by that opponent. These opportunities often arise after a pre-emptive bid by an opponent which marks them with seven cards in that suit thereby limiting the number of cards they can have elsewhere. In addition, if you can pass the lead to the right opponent you can make this play with just Axx opposite KJx in the problem suit.

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**Dec 19**