

Declarer Play Problems - 5

Thursday mini-lesson – 17 September,
2026

1

The Danger Hand

- Continuing our series on declarer play problems, let's look at situations where we need to recognise the *danger* hand
- Look at the following declarer play problem:

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Problem 1

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| ♠73 | ♠KQ5 |
| ♥Q5 | ♥AKJ6 |
| ♦AJT942 | ♦Q3 |
| ♣JT5 | ♣AQ94 |
- You are East and, with a lovely balanced 21 count, you open 2NT
 - Your partner with 8 hcp and a good long suit dutifully raises to 3NT
 - Don't even *think* about looking to play in a ♦ contract with the West hand!

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Problem 1 – Cont.

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| ♠73 | ♠KQ5 |
| ♥Q5 | ♥AKJ6 |
| ♦AJT942 | ♦Q3 |
| ♣JT5 | ♣AQ94 |
- South leads the 6♠ and North plays the J. What next? Your *winner* count shows that you can take seven tricks off the top – one ♠, four ♥s, one ♦, and one ♣
 - You have potential finesses in ♦s and ♣s whereby, even if the finesses lose you can set up four extra ♦ tricks or two extra ♣ tricks
 - Which finesse should you take?

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Problem 1 – Cont.

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| ♠73 | ♠KQ5 |
| ♥Q5 | ♥AKJ6 |
| ♦AJT942 | ♦Q3 |
| ♣JT5 | ♣AQ94 |
- Your eye is obviously attracted to the longer ♦ suit
 - So let's say you win the first ♠ trick and run the Q♦ for a finesse
 - *Retribution for your greed will be swift!* North has the K♦ and leads a ♠ through your remaining ♠K-5 and South, with five spades takes four more - down one
 - North is the *danger* hand!

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Problem 1 – Cont.

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|-------|
| ♠73 | ♠KQ5 |
| ♥Q5 | ♥AKJ6 |
| ♦AJT942 | ♦Q3 |
| ♣JT5 | ♣AQ94 |
- Best is to cross to the Q♥ and lead the J♣ for a finesse
 - Even if this loses, South cannot profitably lead ♠s since your K will stand up as a second stopper and the losing finesse has promoted two additional ♣ tricks to make your contract
 - South is the *non-danger* hand to finesse into

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Problem 2

- The same principle applies when you have a two-way finesse in one suit. Look at the next example

2.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠A84	♠K73
♥76	♥K4
♦KT86	♦AJ93
♣KJ72	♣AQ94

- You are East, the dealer, and you and your partner have a simple 1NT – 3NT auction; South leads the Q♠
- How will you play safely to make your contract?

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Problem 2 – Cont.

2.

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠A84	♠K73
♥76	♥K4
♦KT86	♦AJ93
♣KJ72	♣AQ94

- You have eight top tricks - two ♠s, two ♦s, and four ♣s – and must find a ninth
- You see potential in the ♦ suit so you decide to cash the A♦ then lead the J towards the K-T in dummy to finesse against the Q

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Problem 2 – Cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠A84	♠K73
	♥76	♥K4
	♦KT86	♦AJ93
	♣KJ72	♣AQ94

- You have a 50% chance of the finesse working
- However, I hope you can see that the finesse is into the *danger* hand
- If North wins there will be a likely shift to the ♥ suit through your K and if South has the A♥ you will lose at least five ♥ tricks – two down

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Problem 2 – Cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠A84	♠K73
	♥76	♥K4
	♦KT86	♦AJ93
	♣KJ72	♣AQ94

- You have a two-way finesse in ♦s, the safest play is to finesse into the *non-danger* hand
- After winning the first ♠ trick, play the K♦ then lead the T towards your hand planning to play low if North plays low
- Even if it loses, a ♥ lead from that side of table doesn't hurt you

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Summary

- When one opponent is clearly more dangerous than the other *and* you have a choice of finesses to take, choose the one that will be into the 'safe hand'
- Even if it loses the defender will not be able to do any damage