

50 % - Is That Good Enough?

Barbara Seagram – Bridge Teacher

Would you buy a used car from a salesman who told you that your brakes would only work 50% of the time? Wouldn't you rather walk? Or at least find some other way to get there?

As all of know, finesses only work 50% of the time, but we tend to be finesse-aholics. Let's try an alternative. If you should find yourself in a contract that depends on a finesse, Think of the strip and throw-in (otherwise known as an end-play, because it tends to happen near the end of the hand).

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

Opening lead: ♦J

You are South and you arrive in the contract of six hearts. Counting your losers, you find one spade loser, no heart losers, no diamond losers and one potential loser in clubs. West has led the jack of diamonds. At times like this, you now need to do your stretching exercises, lean to the left, lean to the right, to see which of your opponents has the queen of clubs. (Just kidding! :&). If they are holding their cards close to their chests, do you now fall back on guessing which way to take the club finesse? In clubs, you have a "two-way finesse" i.e., a choice of how to finesse. This is in contrast to a situation where you may have the club K32 opposite the AJ4; now you have no choice as to how to finesse. Since your finesse will only work 50% of the time, let's see if we can increase your chances of making this hand to 100%.

You win the diamond jack with let's say the ace and now you draw trump (only as many as necessary, in this case two rounds). You now strip the diamond suit (play it in its entirety). Resolve to NOT lead the club suit yourself. Now play the spade ace and give away a spade to charity. West wins the spade trick. What would you like him to lead now? For that matter, if East wins the spade trick, he has the same problem. If either opponent leads a spade or a diamond, you sluff a club from your hand and ruff in dummy. If they lead a club, you play low from the next hand and you will automatically win three club tricks. This is the "end" position:

	♠ — ♥ K 8 6 ♦ — ♣ K 10 7	
♠ K ♥ — ♦ 10 ♣ Q 4 3 2		♠ Q 8 6 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 9 8 6
	♠ — ♥ J 7 5 ♦ — ♣ A J 5	

What you have done here is to put your opponents into an impossible situation. Whatever they do now will be wrong.

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