

THE BITTER TASTE OF SUCCESS

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Most of us wish for our finesses to win. But we mortals must take care lest the gods mock us by granting our wishes. One case in which we want our finesses to lose is fairly routine. Partner has mangled the auction, and we have avoided a normal game or slam contract. We hope the cards punish good bidding, meanwhile playing to ensure our plus score. But the goddess of bridge can be much more subtle; sometimes she taunts us by giving good breaks and winning finesses, allowing us to lose by fulfilling our hopes.

The first time I noticed this sadistic streak I was a happy dummy.

Game All. Dealer North.

♠ 5			
♥ 73			
♦ AQJ9763			
♣ 1072			
♠ KQJ72	N	♠ 10864	
♥ Q64	W	♥ KJ105	
♦ K5	E	♦ 82	
♣ A83	S	♣ KQ6	
		♠ A93	
		♥ A982	
		♦ 104	
		♣ J954	

I opened three diamonds in first seat, and partner's three no-trumps closed the auction. He grabbed the first spade and quickly rattled off nine tricks. This seemed like a good result for us; partner's bold bid had stolen the pot. At the other table, the opposing North

thought his hand too good for a preempt, and West got to open the bidding in fourth seat. Now South's three diamond overcall did not disrupt the East/West auction, and our team-mates got to the normal spade game. Of course, they were down one when their diamond finesse lost. We won 7 IMPs on the board, and could not be too unhappy. But if our finesse had only lost, that is if the diamond king had been interchanged for either of the rounded kings, then we would have won 9 IMPs! So winning the diamond finesse and thereby making three no-trumps cost us 2 IMPs. Not a big deal, but a storm signal...

Game All. Dealer East.

♠ AQ752			
♥ 109			
♦ J1096			
♣ Q6			
♠ K103	N	♠ J86	
♥ KQ642	W	♥ AJ875	
♦ 3	E	♦ Q	
♣ A982	S	♣ KJ43	
		♠ 94	
		♥ 3	
		♦ AK87542	
		♣ 1075	

South	West	North	East
—	—	—	1♥
3♦	4♥	5♦	Dble
All Pass			

After partner's reasonable decision to save (doubtless he hoped to push them one level higher), I played five diamonds

doubled. The opponents cashed a heart and two clubs, and after I drew trumps I took the spade finesse with a queasy feeling. Sure enough, at the other table our team-mates were allowed to play four hearts. With the diamonds 1-1, and the spades splitting well, four hearts was beaten by a ruff. We lost 7 IMPs. If my finesse had only lost, I could have gone down 500, but won 4 IMPs. (I didn't even want to think about the 9 IMPs we would have won if spades had been 4-2 with West holding the king.) This time having my finesse win swung 11 IMPs against me. But my cup had not yet run over...

Game All. Dealer East.

♠ 8			
♥ J9875			
♦ Q73			
♣ 9654			
♠ J76532	N	♠ K109	
♥ 104	W	♥ AQ62	
♦ AK1096	E	♦ J84	
♣ —	S	♣ K82	
		♠ AQ4	
		♥ K3	
		♦ 52	
		♣ AQJ1073	

South	West	North	East
—	—	—	1NT
Dble	2♣	Pass	Pass
3♣	Pass	Pass	3♣
Dble	Pass	4♣	All Pass

At our table, the auction proceeded rationally after East's 12-14 no-trump opener. Partner correctly pulled my double, and I took every finesse in sight to make a calm ten tricks. At the other table, though, there were fireworks.

South	West	North	East
—	—	—	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Dble	2♦	2♥	2♠
3♣	3♠	4♣	Pass
Pass	4♠	Pass	Pass
Dble	All Pass		

North/South apparently were confused as to their methods, but everyone bid sensibly if aggressively. Our team-mates were proud of their contract, and the opponents were proud of their result. We lost a mere 3 IMPs on the board, but if only I could have gone down. Interchange the heart and diamond aces, and we win 12. (I didn't even want to think about the interchange of the pointed suit kings.)

Perhaps it's not the goddess's fault. Maybe it's my accursed team-mates. For all the while my finesses have been winning, theirs have been losing. Maybe I can find some better team-mates, players who can win finesses the way I do...