

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

A PRACTICAL CERTAINTY

By: Brian Gunnell

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|-----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| | ♠ 8 ♥ 862 ♦ 7543 ♣ QJT62 | |
| ♠ QJT9 ♥ 43 ♦ KJT ♣ A943 | North West East Declarer | ♠ 765432 ♥ ♦ 986 ♣ K875 |
| | ♠ AK ♥ AKQJT975 ♦ AQ2 ♣ | |

Both Vulnerable

| South | West | North | East |
|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 2♣ | Pass | 2♦ | Pass |
| 2♥ | Pass | 4♥ | Pass |
| 4NT | Pass | 5♣ | Pass |
| 5NT | Pass | 6♥ | All Pass |

2♣ showed a strong hand, 2♦ was weak, 4NT asked for Key Cards (which are the Aces and the King of trumps), 5NT asked for *specific* Kings (not the number of Kings), and 6♥ said “no side-suit King”.

When this deal came up in a team game, both the South players had visions of a grand slam if only North would be obliging enough to hold the ♦K. When that turned out not to be the case, they settled for the small slam. The first Declarer won the opening ♠Q lead, drew the missing trumps, cashed the ♦A (just in case West had the singleton King), crossed to Dummy with a trump, and led up to his ♦Q. That was down one when West produced the King. “Not a bad slam”, announced Declarer, “it just needed a finesse”

The second Declarer also did some finessing, but she brought home her contract with ruffing finesses in Clubs. She won the ♠A, led the Heart *Seven* to Dummy’s Eight, and ran the ♣Q around, pitching a Diamond from hand. West took his Ace and fired back a Spade, but Dummy ruffed Declarer’s winner, and the ♣J was played next. East covered this and Declarer ruffed *high*. Now Dummy’s Heart Six provided an entry to the Club Ten, on which was pitched the ♦Q. Declarer needed three entries to the board for this line of play to work, and had to be careful with those trump spots. In fact, switch the Five and Six of trumps and the contract does not make (for lack of a third Dummy entry).

Why is it better to take the ruffing finesses in Clubs than to rely on the Diamond finesse? The Diamond finesse is a 50% proposition. However, the ruffing finesses require only that East has one or both of the missing high Clubs, which is approximately a 75% chance. In reality, though, it’s a practical certainty as surely West’s opening lead would be a high Club if he held both of them.

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