

Cashing Honours Before Finessing

Masterclass, February 2024

India Natt

Finessing reminder

AJ2

K43

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Finesses require a “tenace”: two cards (often honours) with a gap in-between (the A and J form a tenace here).

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Finesses require a “tenace”: two cards (often honours) with a gap in-between (the A and J form a tenace here).

When taking a finesse, start from the hand with the weaker holding in the suit and play towards the tenace: here, that means playing the 3 or 4 towards the AJ.

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You can improve on the 50% chance and turn it into 51%!

If you cash the K first, your tenace is not impacted, which means you can still take the finesse afterwards.

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By doing this, you avoid losing to a singleton Q with your RHO.

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- It may give you time to discover a bad break.

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Maybe you are not planning to finesse but you find out the honour is onside when the other opponent shows out.

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If you cash the K first, your tenace is not impacted, which means you can choose to take the finesse afterwards if RHO shows out.

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You are not planning to finesse as the suit is usually 2-1.

If you cash the K first, your tenace is not impacted, which means you can choose to take the finesse afterwards if RHO shows out.

♥ AJ872

♦ 2

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♦ 2

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By doing this, you find out that the finesse is necessary.

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If it doesn't fall, you can switch to taking a finesse in the hope that it is onside.

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Maybe you are not planning to finesse but you find out the honour is onside when the other opponent shows out.

- It may give you time to decide whether to finesse based on other clues.

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Maybe you are not planning to finesse but you find out the honour is onside when the other opponent shows out.

- It may give you time to decide whether to finesse based on other clues.

Maybe you are not planning to finesse but you see a suspicious card from the other opponent that resembles a singleton.

But cashing an honour first is not always best!

When should you not cash an honour first?

- When you do not have enough cards on the weaker side to both cash and finesse.

Finessing immediately

AKJ

2

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This gives up on the 50% chance of the Q being onside and you are back to hoping that it is singleton or doubleton: very unlikely when you are missing 9 cards in the suit!

When should you not cash an honour first?

- When you do not have enough cards on the weaker side to both cash and finesse.
- When you are missing two intermediates and therefore need two higher honours intact to preserve two tenaces.

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If you cash the A first, even if LHO has both honours, he can now insert one to force you to play your K (“splitting”) – your tenace is now gone and the other honour will take a trick.

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If you cash the A first, even if LHO has both honours, he can now insert one to force you to play your K (“splitting”) – your tenace is now gone and the other honour will take a trick.

If you do not cash first, splitting does not help LHO: you can simply win and cross back to take a second finesse.

When should you not cash an honour first?

- When you do not have enough cards on the weaker side to both cash and finesse.
- When you are missing two intermediates and therefore need two higher honours intact to preserve two tenaces.
- When you do not have the entries to do everything on a given hand, even if the suit combination is normally best solved by cashing first and then finessing.

Finessing immediately

Contract: 4♠

Lead: ♣Q

Dummy: ♠ T9643 ♥ AKJ ♦ 754 ♣ K8

Your hand: ♠ KQJ852 ♥ 64 ♦ JT98 ♣ A

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Your hand: ♠ KQJ852 ♥ 64 ♦ JT98 ♣ A

You have 4 losers: 1 ♠ and 3 ♦. You cannot avoid losing to the ♠A, so you need to discard 2 ♦ to reduce your ♦ losers to 2.

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One can go on the ♣K but the other must go on a third ♥ winner.

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The normal play is to cash the ♥A before crossing to hand to finesse; but your entry to hand is gone!

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Dummy: ♠ T9643 ♥ AKJ ♦ 754 ♣ K8

Your hand: ♠ KQJ852 ♥ 64 ♦ JT98 ♣ A

You have 4 losers: 1 ♠ and 3 ♦. You cannot avoid losing to the ♠A, so you need to discard 2 ♦ to reduce your ♦ losers to 2.

One can go on the ♣K but the other must go on a third ♥ winner.

The normal play is to cash the ♥A before crossing to hand to finesse; but your entry to hand is gone!

You therefore need to take an immediate ♥ finesse.

Sometimes, you have to choose which
honour to cash... but how do you choose?

Which honour to cash

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Even when you are not expecting to need to finesse, it is still good practice to cash the honour opposite your tenace first: a bad break may cause you to change your mind and finesse after all.

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AQ7543

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However, if LHO holds J986, you will be alerted on the first round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

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Ordinarily, you would not be expecting to take a finesse here.

However, if LHO holds J986, you will be alerted on the first round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

Start by cashing the A or Q first, keeping your KT tenace intact.

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However, if LHO holds J986, you will be alerted on the first round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

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However, if LHO holds J986, you will be alerted on the first round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

Start by cashing the A or Q first, keeping your KT tenace intact.

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AQ7543

Then, if RHO shows out, you can finesse against the J on the second round of the suit.

Which honour to cash

- The one opposite the tenace.

This keeps the tenace intact.

Even when you are not expecting to need to finesse, it is still good practice to cash the honour opposite your tenace first: a bad break may cause you to change your mind and finesse after all.

- The one on the side with two higher honours rather than one.

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Even when you are not expecting to need to finesse, it is still good practice to cash the honour opposite your tenace first: a bad break may cause you to change your mind and finesse after all.

- The one on the side with two higher honours rather than one.

This keeps your tenace intact while giving you an extra round of the suit to look at – you may be alerted to a bad break.

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QT62

AK43

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Ordinarily, you would not be expecting to take a finesse here.

However, if LHO holds Jxxx, you will be alerted on the second round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

Start by cashing both the A and K first, keeping your QT tenace intact.

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Ordinarily, you would not be expecting to take a finesse here.

However, if LHO holds Jxxx, you will be alerted on the second round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

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However, if LHO holds Jxxx, you will be alerted on the second round of the suit, as RHO will show out.

Start by cashing both the A and K first, keeping your QT tenace intact.

QT62

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Then, if RHO shows out on the first or second round, you can finesse against the J on the third round of the suit.

Now head to the

Cashing Honours Before Finessing tournament
and try the practice hands!