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Page 40, Phillip Alder, Card Play 101 – Eight ever...

Alder presents two eight-card suits in his discussion of finessing against a missing queen:

Dummy (North)
♠ A J 3 2

Declarer (You)
♠ K 6 5 4

Playing the king and then finessing against the queen will win four tricks about 60% of the time as the finesse works half the time, and you add about 10% to that when the queen is doubleton onside, or singleton offside (why you played the king first).

Dummy (North)
♥ A 4 3 2

Declarer (You)
♥ K J 10 9

Now, you have a choice on which way to finesse against the queen. The correct play is to lead the jack from your hand. Many players will reflexively cover with the queen if they have it. Some will stop and think whether they should cover (they should have made that decision before you led the suit). In either of those cases, you will make four tricks. Usually if Lefty doesn't cover or show discomfort, you win the Ace and finesse Righty for the queen.

Alder makes a key point at the end of his article. When you end up declaring after one of the opponents has opened the bidding, count how many points your side has and add it to about the 13 HCP the opener is likely to have. Sometimes that will tell you that opener's partner has no honors or maybe only one. It's not a percentage play to finesse against a broke opponent for an honor he can't possibly have.

Page 42, Robert Todd, Reasoning with Robert – The least worst fib

Todd discusses making the best available bid when all possible bids are flawed.

Partner should have four spades on this auction. With five spades, partner would bid 1S. 2S by you would show four spades, although it is often bid with three spades and good ruffing values. 1NT by you would show a heart stop.

Hand 1: 1S is the better bid as you have a nice holding in spades, and not even half a stop in hearts.

Hand 2: 1 NT is the better bid. The difference is now your spades are weak and you have a half stop in hearts.

<i>You</i>	<i>LHO</i>	<i>Partner</i>	<i>RHO</i>
1♣	1♥	Dbl	Pass
?			
<i>Hand 1</i>			
♠K Q 2	♥9 5 3	♦J 5 3	♣A K 4 3
<i>Hand 2</i>			
♠10 9 2	♥J 4 3	♦K Q J	♣A Q 7 4

On this auction the opponents have overcalled at the two-level and partner has made a negative double asking for the minors.

Hand 3: Your minors are weak, but the spades are quite good. The best you can do is bid 2S although that usually shows six spades.

Hand 4: Your minors are still weak, but now your spades are weak, too. Even though you are likely to go down, 2N is the best bid; anything else is worse. And you do have a heart stop.

Hand 5: Now you have only half a heart stop and your spades are horrible. The best you can do is bid the three-card club suit to the KQ. This situation is similar to Hand 1, when you bid the three-card spade suit to the KQ.

Todd provides additional deals where the key is to make a bid that shows your strength. Don't make bids that understate your strength as partner could pass and you'll miss a possible game.

You	LHO	Partner	RHO
1♠	2♥	Dbl	Pass
?			
Hand 3			
♠K Q 10 3 2	♥9 4 3	♦A Q	♣Q 5 4
Hand 4			
♠Q 10 6 3 2	♥Q J 3	♦A Q	♣Q 8 4
Hand 5			
♠10 6 5 3 2	♥J 4 3	♦A K	♣K Q 4

Page 52, Challenge of the Month

	♠ K Q J		
	♥ A Q 8 5		
	♦ 6 3		
	♣ A K 8 4		
♠ A 2	N W — O — E S	♠ 6 4	
♥ K 10 7 3		♥ 9 6 4 2	
♦ A K 9 8 7 5		♦ Q J 2	
♣ Q		♣ 9 5 3 2	
	♠ 10 9 8 7 5 3		
	♥ J		
	♦ 10 4		
	♣ J 10 7 6		
West	North	East	South
1♦	Dbl	Pass	3♠ ⁽¹⁾
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

(1) Preemptive, weak

West deals, N/S are vulnerable, IMPs scoring.

West leads the DA from AK. East plays the DQ, which promises the DJ or a singleton. West then shifts to the CQ.

It is likely that the CQ is a singleton. You're looking at eight clubs and West is leading an unsupported queen.

If you play trump next, West will rise with the ace, reach East with the DJ and ruff a club. Down 1.

As East didn't respond in the bidding, and is showing the QJ of diamonds, it is likely all the other missing high cards are with West.

You need to find a way to pitch your second diamond so that East can't get in. Since you are in dummy, you cannot finesse the hearts, even though you know where the king is. Play the HA and then the HQ, pitching the diamond from your hand.

Now you can play trump, as West can't reach East to get a club ruff. This is known as a "scissors coup" as it cuts the communications between the defenders.