

World Wide Pairs by Derrick Browne

For almost a quarter of a century, the World Wide Bridge Contest has been held annually in June (except for a one year interregnum). In recent years, the event has had the added interest of “instant” scoring over the internet.

As World Bridge Federation President José Damiani comments, “This event represents a slightly lighter side to bridge, where you play at your own club, amongst friends, while still competing with players all over the world.”

Thus you don’t have to be a champion to score reasonably well. Karen Smith, who achieved the top Australian score, observed that knowing how to handle something as basic – and common – as finessing can help you to a good score. Test yourself on these combinations from the event; in each case you are declarer with the suit shown; assume the holding on the left is West, and the holding on the right is East:

(1) D AKT94 D 7532

You lead the A and the Q falls from North; do you finesse or play for the drop?

(2) C AKJ98 C T643

(3) S AJ852 S 976?

(1) When an honour falls, it is twice as likely to be a singleton than to be from a doubleton of two touching honours. Accordingly, you should finesse to the 10 (or 9) on the second round of the suit.

(2) When deciding whether to finesse against a queen, the rule is “8 ever, 9 never”. Here you have nine cards in the suit so do not finesse – just bang down the ace and king (unless there is some particular reason to break from the rule).

(3) With the third combination, you could finesse to the jack but that only succeeds if South has both the king and queen of spades. Better is to run the S9, hoping South has the S10 and a higher honour.

Board 21 of the event caused some interest:

	NORTH	
	S Q632	
	H A98	
	D J	
	C A8653	
WEST		EAST
S KT874		S J95
H 62		H K75
D 865		D 7432
C K72		C JT9
	SOUTH	
	S A	
	H QJT43	
	D AKQT9	
	C Q4	

Assuming that South opens 1H, North has a tough responding problem. Counting shortage, the hand is a little strong for a limit raise of 3H. If North bids more strongly, South will push to slam, as happened at about 20% of tables.

There is a possible loser in hearts, and one in clubs. How should declarer tackle these suits?

Say that West leads a spade, won by the ace. Declarer must try the heart finesse, losing as the cards lie. If East leads back a spade, declarer ruffs and draws trumps; what next?

If the CQ is led from South, West can put the king on, “covering an honour with an honour” to prevent the queen from winning. Is there another way?

Declarer simply rattles off all the red suit winners. West comes down to the SK and the CK-7 but must then make a fatal discard. The SK must be kept (else dummy’s SQ becomes a winner) so West discards the low club. This, however, bares the king, which then falls under dummy’s ace, so declarer’s CQ wins the last trick. To break up this squeeze, East needed to switch to a club when in with the HK.