

End Plays – Part II

Improve Your Declarer Play

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Last month we looked at four endplays in [Endplays Part I](#). Expert players often execute endplays as they occur more frequently than squeezes. Endplays are typically much better than a finesse. Let's explore four hand types where you are declarer as South. Try looking at only the North and South cards, and plan your play.

Duck Elimination

This is an unusual endplay.

	North	
	♠AQJ82	
	♥A83	
	♦653	
	♣109	
West		East
♠65		♠7
♥KQ107		♥96542
♦KJ2		♦10987
♣Q532		♣J76
	South	
	♠K10943	
	♥J	
	♦AQ4	
	♣AK84	

West leads ♥K against your 6♣. You and your partner were very ambitious, and the contract looks to be in jeopardy. After winning the first trick, play the ♠A. Now ruff a heart, return to dummy with a spade, and eliminate the last heart. Pull the last trump in dummy. Finally lead the ♣10 and let it ride if not covered. West must now give up a ruff and sluff or a trick in a minor.

Endplay Technique

This deal uses the endplay approach to avoid a finesse.

	North	
	♠A72	
	♥AQ10	
	♦543	
	♣10984	
West		East
♠KQ98		♠J1065
♥6		♥54
♦KJ8		♦10976

♣AKQ73

♣652

South

♠43

♥KJ98732

♦AQ2

♣J

West leads the ♣A against 4♥ and seeing the J switches to a high spade. If the ♦K is offside you can't take the finesse. Win the ♦A and lead the ♣10 pitching a spade. When West tries another spade, pull two rounds of trump ending in dummy. Next lead the ♣9 pitching a diamond. Now you can get to dummy with the ♥10 to pitch the ♦Q on the ♣8.

Although there was no suit elimination, leading clubs kept East off lead. This double loser on loser play is very effective.

Stepping Stone

A Stepping Stone is an entry the opponent must give you to an unreachable a trick.

North

♠63

♥J73

♦542

♣KQJ74

West

♠10954

♥K10862

♦9

♣1096

East

♠7

♥94

♦KQJ1063

♣8532

South

♠AKQJ82

♥AQ5

♦A87

♣A

East preempts in diamonds, but you reach 6♠. You win the diamond lead, which you read as a singleton. It looks like the contract is doomed, but there is a ray of sunshine. You could pull four rounds of trump, cash the ♣A, and lead the ♥Q. But West can duck to deny you the entry to dummy. The correct solution is to play three top spades and duck a spade to West, who is now forced to give you an entry to the clubs. This assumes West has the ♥K, but that's a good chance.

Without the diamond preempt, this line of play would not be considered,

Endplays

continued from p. 19

Nine Never

With no opposing bidding, experts play to drop (58%) the Q holding nine cards in a suit, eschewing the finesse (56%).

North

♠972

♥K103

	♦AK2	
	♣J973	
West		East
♠AK106		♠Q853
♥5		♥Q76
♦J9653		♦Q108
♣K105		♣Q84
	South	
	♠J4	
	♥AJ9842	
	♦74	
	♣A62	

West cashes the first two spades against your 3♥. It looks like you have two club losers, so you need to find the ♥Q. You ruff the third spade. Before asking partner why s/he opened this nine loser hand, maybe you can make it. Eliminate the diamonds, and finesse ♥Q through East. On this layout the finesse works. But what if West had Qx in trump? Then West wins the ♥Q and is endplayed to give you a ruff and sluff or lead clubs on which you play the ♣9 to save a club loser. So here the finesse beats the drop.

These were hard hands, but hopefully you will consider an elimination instead of a finesse. Recognizing and executing the various elements of endplays will improve your declarer play. Be sure to warn all your partners that you will make seemingly unmakeable contracts.

If you have questions or suggestions, please email me at ronaldlien@aol.com.♣