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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

12/24/2009 North-South vulnerable, South deals.

	NORTH A Q 6 7 2 K J 5 4 3 Q 8 4	
WEST 10 9 3 K J 8 5 4 3 8 7 6 5		EAST J 8 7 4 2 A 6 10 9 6 2 10 9
	SOUTH K 5 Q 10 9 A Q A K J 7 3 2	

SOUTH 1 Club 3 NT	WEST Pass Pass	NORTH 1 Diamond 6 NT	EAST Pass All Pass
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### Opening lead: Ten of

"Strange hand," remarked the kibitzer. "Where slam was bid, declarer made 13 tricks. Where the contract was only game, declarer went down two tricks!"

The hand that occasioned these remarks was dealt in an inter-club team match. Since South's bidding showed a hand of 20-21 points, probably with club length, North felt his queen in partner's suit should be upgraded and South did the same because of his sixth club. On this auction West feared that a heart lead would give declarer a trick he could not make under his own power and chose to make the "safe" spade lead. Declarer romped home with 13 tricks.

At the other table the contract was only three no trump. Many players are reluctant to lead from a long suit if they do not hold an outside entry for fear of losing a tempo, and so prefer to try to find partner's suit. One advantage of leading the long suit is that, afraid of letting the opening leader regain the lead, declarer might take a series of losing finesses into the other hand and blow the contract.

The other advantage was more readily apparent. East won the opening lead with the ace, returned the six of hearts through the queen and the defenders banked six tricks before declarer could get started.

Were East-West unfortunate in the respective cases? Against six no trump we, too, might have chosen a spade lead rather than a heart. Against three no trump, we might still be sitting at the table trying to decide what to do, although partner's failure to overcall one spade would probably swing the decision to a heart.

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