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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

13th Nov 2010 Neither vulnerable. West deals

	NORTH ♠2 ♥8 ♦A Q J 10 9 8 ♣A J 7 6 4	
WEST ♠A 10 9 7 5 ♥A Q 6 5 3 ♦Void ♣9 5 2		EAST ♠K 8 4 3 ♥K 4 ♦K 7 6 5 3 ♣K 8
	SOUTH ♠Q J 6 ♥J 10 9 7 2 ♦4 2 ♣Q 10 3	

West	North	East	South
1 Spade	2 NT	3 Diamond	Pass
3 Heart	Pass	4 Diamond	5 Club
Pass	Pass	X	All Pass

Opening lead: Five of ♠

Underleading aces against a suit contract is a sure way to the poorhouse. But every once in a while an exception occurs. Deciphering the meaning of West's opening lead allowed East to conduct a stellar defense for a top score on this deal from a pair championship.

North's two no trump was unusual, takeout for the minors — a convention we dislike because it is so often abused. In our opinion the hand is neither weak enough nor strong enough for that action, and the wisest course would be to bid both suits, starting with two diamonds. When East-West reached game, South elected to sacrifice in five clubs, duly doubled.

West led the five of spades. It was the lowest spade outstanding, but East knew partner could not have a four-card suit. When the king won, East knew partner was underleading the ace of spades for a specific reason, and that was easy to deduce. So at trick two East returned the seven of diamonds!

West ruffed and, trusting East's high spotcard as showing an entry in hearts, underled the ace of hearts to partner's king. A second diamond ruff and the king of clubs spelled down three for a penalty of 500 points.

The second undertrick was vital. Since East-West could score 450 at a spade game, beating the contract only two tricks would have resulted in a very poor score.

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