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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

16th Nov 2010 East-West vulnerable. South deals.

	NORTH ♠QJ ♥Q10863 ♦K104 ♣J74	
WEST ♠K1093 ♥A ♦Q962 ♣10963		EAST ♠54 ♥K72 ♦J853 ♣AK85
	SOUTH ♠A8762 ♥J954 ♦A7 ♣Q2	

South	West	North	East
1 Spade	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 Heart	Pass	3 Heart	All Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♣

Vulnerability plays an important role in bridge. At duplicate pairs it permits the not-vulnerable side to take a three-trick penalty, doubled, against a vulnerable game. At rubber bridge, it makes a nonvulnerable sacrifice against vulnerable opponents less appealing because the vulnerable side is a 2-to-1 favorite to win the rubber. Most interesting of all is at Chicago, where the vulnerability fluctuates from deal to deal.

At either duplicate or rubber bridge, South has a doubtful opening bid. At Chicago, however, because a partial is carried forward, it is almost compulsory for South to open to kill the enemy vulnerability on this hand. Should the hand get passed out, East-West will be vulnerable again on the re-deal and might pick up enough for game or even slam. So South opened the bidding and became declarer at a three-heart contract that, in essence, seemed to depend on the spade finesse.

West led the ten of clubs. East won with the king, cashed the ace and then shifted to a diamond. Declarer took the two top diamonds, discarded a spade on the jack of clubs then ruffed a diamond. When declarer then followed up with a trump West, forced to win with the ace, had to either give declarer a ruff-sluff or lead a spade. Either way, nine tricks were there.

The contract should have been defeated. We cannot fault West for not leading the ace of trumps. However East might have foreseen the need to lead trumps as soon as possible — a spade would have been equally effective — after winning the two high clubs. If declarer has the ace of hearts, it is unlikely that the contract could be defeated. If partner held the ace, it is vital to switch to a trump to get partner off the endplay.

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