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Bridge Tips **Tanna Hirsch**

22nd March 2011 North-South vulnerable. South deals.

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

North	East	South	West
--	--	1 Club	1 Spade
2 Diamond	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

How you play a specific suit depends on several factors, among them how many tricks you need from the suit and whether a particular opponent must be kept off lead. But sometimes the enemy can thwart your best efforts.

The auction was routine. That set the stage for an intriguing battle between South and West.

The Rule of Seven states that, by deducting the combined number of cards the declaring side holds from seven, declarer arrives at the number of times a single stopper must be held up. But that rule did not apply here. Declarer refused to play the ace of spades for one round, since West had bid the suit, winning the second.

South had five fast tricks in hand, so only four were needed from the diamond suit. Also, West had to be kept off lead at all costs. Since the odds favored a 4-2 diamond split, declarer led a low diamond, intending to duck the trick to East. Had West routinely followed the dictum of second hand low, declarer would have inserted the eight and, with the expected diamond distribution, all would have been well as long as declarer did not risk the finesse should East shift to a club.

But West shot in with the jack of diamonds, and declarer was forced to go up with a high diamond. When that suit did not split evenly, South tried for the fulfilling trick with a club finesse, and the defense prevailed.

Yes, declarer could still have prevailed by end-playing West, but that's another story.

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