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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

25<sup>th</sup> Dec 2010 Both vulnerable. North deals

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

North	East	South	West
1 NT	Pass	6 Heart	All Pass

Opening lead: Three of ♠!

We learned long ago, in the words of the popular song, to "never say never again, again." However, we did think we were on safe enough ground in warning in a column to never underlead an ace against a suit contract. We were proved wrong, sort of, on the very day the column appeared by this deal from a team match.

We sympathize with South's decision to gamble on six hearts after North opened the bidding with one no trump. Partner could easily hold a hand where the slam would be laydown. Simply switch the spade and diamond holdings, for example, and declarer is on a club guess for a grand slam!

West found a brilliant opening lead. Since it was likely that the king of spades was going to turn up in dummy, the defender elected to play his partner for the queen of spades and so underled his ace. Naturally, declarer never suspected West would be leading away from the ace against a slam, so dummy's eight was played.

We would like to report that, as a result of West's daring, the contract was defeated one trick – any other lead would have given declarer no problem since two spades could have been discarded on dummy's high diamonds and declarer could not lose more than one trick even if he misguessed the location of the queen of clubs. But that pesky nine of spades in the East hand proved the defense's undoing.

East also did not dream that West was underleading the ace of spades so, when a low spade was played from dummy, he inserted the nine – the technically correct play to prevent declarer from scoring three tricks in the suit should partner be leading from the jack. Equity had been restored!

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