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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

7th Jan 2010 Neither vulnerable. North deals.

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

North	East	South	West
1 NT	Pass	3 Spade	Pass
4 Spade	All Pass		

Opening lead: Two of ♦

There are two ways to tackle the heart suit on this deal. One is the straightforward finesse, or impasse in French. The other is also known as a finesse in English, but the French have a word for it – the expasse.

The auction is routine. Transfer bidders will reach the same contract, only with North as declarer, even though, as the cards lie, three no trump is an easier contract. The diamond weakness is likely to cause North to correct to the suit contract.

Declarer inserted dummy's nine of diamonds at trick one, a good technical play, then captured East's ten with the ace. After drawing trumps in three rounds, ending in the closed hand, the heart finesse was taken. Even had the operation succeeded, the patient would have died – declarer would have had only nine tricks.

After winning the first trick in hand, declarer should draw only two rounds of trumps with the king and jack. Now a low heart is led toward the jack – the expasse. If East rises with the king and the defenders cash two diamonds, declarer can win any return, cash the jack of hearts, cross to dummy with either a trump or the ace of clubs, then discard two club losers on the high hearts.

As the cards lie, East cannot help the defenders' cause by following with a low heart when declarer leads that suit from the table. The jack wins, the ace of hearts is cashed and a heart ruff falls the monarch, allowing declarer to discard a loser on the queen of hearts after extracting the defenders' last trump.

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