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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

11/06/2009 East-West vulnerable. West deals.

	NORTH K A2 K Q J 6 5 4 9 7 3 2	
WEST A 10 9 8 6 4 3 K 10 5 A K 6		EAST J 2 8 6 4 3 8 3 2 J 10 8 4
	SOUTH Q 7 5 Q J 9 7 10 9 7 A Q 5	

SOUTH - 2 NT	WEST 1 Spade Pass	NORTH 2 Diamond 3 NT	EAST Pass All Pass
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Opening lead: ?

We have often repeated Terence Reese's admonition that there is no such thing as a blind opening lead, just deaf opening leaders. So if you would like to test your ability to "hear" the right salvo at trick one, look at nothing other than the West hand and the bidding.

The first round of the auction is automatic. While North's raise to game is a bit of a stretch, the sixth diamond and king of spades were awfully attractive cards and, with routine defense, the contract would have sailed home.

If you considered anything other than a spade lead, you must have been looking at some other West hand. But if that caused you to lead a low spade, you did not properly assess all the information that was available.

If the opponents have all three missing spade honors, only a 2-2 division in the suit will help – it is almost inconceivable that East has an entry to lead a spade through declarer. On any other distribution, if declarer has any two of the missing spade honors, the contract is probably unbeatable. The only hope for the defense is to find dummy with a singleton spade honor.

West, therefore, dropped the ace of spades on the table with gratifying results, but it still required fine East defense to sink the contract. The defender unblocked the jack! A spade continuation resulted in setting the contract three tricks.

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