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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

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

South	West	North	East
1 Heart	Pass	2 Club	Pass
2 Heart	Pass	4 heart	All Pass

Opening lead: King of ♠

Most players know that defenders can communicate to each other with their carding, showing whether they like partner's lead or not. Few are aware that declarer can use the same signals in an attempt to deceive the defense.

The auction was routine. Once South showed a minimum opener by rebidding two hearts, North had ample to proceed directly to game.

West led the king of spades, fetching the three, four and deuce. A diamond switch was unlikely to cost — obviously a spade continuation ran the risk of setting up declarer's queen. After drawing trumps declarer took the club finesse, losing to East's king. The jack of spades was returned and the defenders took two more spade tricks to complete a one-trick set.

There is no sure way to make the contract, but South might have attempted to enlist the aid of the defenders. At trick one declarer should have followed with the seven of spades! Consider West's quandary. The deuce of spades was missing. If East held that card and was trying to encourage a spade continuation, a shift could cost a trick or two and present South with what was an unmakeable contract. There is no guarantee that West would not have shifted anyway, but at least there is a fair chance that West would have persevered with spades to present South with a trick and his game.

The rule for declarer is exactly the same as for the opening leader: If you want to encourage the defender to continue the suit, play a high card; if you would prefer a switch, play the lowest card possible!

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