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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

14th April 2011

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

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

Opening lead: Q♦

"I am the unluckiest player in the world," complains a reader. "The odds on a finesse succeeding are 50 percent, except in my case where 15 percent is nearer the mark. On this hand I would have succeeded at four spades if either the queen of spades or ace of diamonds had been well placed. But the ace was marked offside by the lead and, when the finesse for the queen of spades failed, I went down."

We suspect that the writer might remember those hands where the finesse failed and forget those where a key card was in the slot!

North gave full weight to the king in South's second suit in raising to three spades. West led the queen of diamonds and, since it was unthinkable that West could be leading away from the ace, declarer played low from dummy to prevent East from gaining the lead and shifting to a club. Declarer ruffed the diamond continuation, crossed to the king of trumps and continued with a low spade to the jack and queen.

West returned a trump, removing dummy's remaining fang and, in the fullness of time, declarer had to lose a club and a heart trick. Down one.

West's trump return was thoughtful play, but the defenders should not have been given that chance. After ruffing the second diamond, declarer should lead a heart to the king. If West ducks, the ace of hearts can be ruffed out, so the defender must win. Best is to force declarer with another diamond, but South counters by cashing the king and ace of spades and then running hearts, discarding clubs from the table. Declarer loses only one trick in each suit except clubs.

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