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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

14th June 2011

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

South	West	North	East
--	--	1 NT	Pass
3 Diamond	Pass	4 Diamond	Pass
5 Diamond	All Pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

Minor-suit games have become increasingly unpopular, especially in duplicate where making 10 tricks at no trump outscores 11 tricks in the minor. That was not the case here, but South's careful maneuvers to land five diamonds are worthy of note.

Had South simply responded three no trump, the recommended action with a relatively balanced hand and no slam ambitions, East would have led a heart. All North need do to bring home 10 tricks was to hold up the ace for two rounds, then willingly concede a diamond trick to West via a finesse to keep East off lead.

The five-diamond game was considerably more perilous. Faced with a sure loser in each major, it seems declarer must locate the queen of trumps to get home. Appearances, however, can be deceptive.

Declarer won the opening spade lead in hand, cashed the ace and king of clubs and ruffed a club in hand. Dummy was re-entered with the ace of hearts and another club was led. Had East followed, declarer would have discarded one of his major-suit losers and then would have been left with the diamond guess. But when East showed out declarer could ruff the club safely.

After declarer surrendered a heart, the best the defenders could do was revert to spades. Declarer took the table's king, ruffed a heart and exited with the remaining spade. Both declarer and dummy were now down to nothing but three trumps each. No matter which defender was on lead, or which suit was led, South would have to score the last three tricks. Try it for yourself if you doubt us!

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