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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

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

South	West	North	East
--	--	1 Spade	X
2 Club	Pass	2 Diamond	Pass
3 Club	Pass	Pass	X
All Pass			

Opening lead: Two of ♥

In a match-point contest, the number 200 is the Holy Grail for competitors. If your side does not have a game, collecting 200 from the opponents usually assures an excellent result. That leads to a lot of close doubles and defensive challenges.

South's hand was good for play in clubs and nothing else. North realized that and did not try to improve the contract after East doubled. East's conservatism in the auction was based on the fact that North had bid his second suit.

West led a low heart and the defenders quickly took two tricks in the suit. The two minor-suit aces would complete the defensive book, but where was the setting trick coming from? One possibility was to keep punching declarer with hearts but, as anyone can see that tactic was doomed to fail – declarer would first ruff the heart in hand and had enough trumps to withstand any attack.

East decided instead to try to promote an extra trump trick, and the diamond suit offered the only hope for that. At trick three the defender cashed the ace of diamonds and continued the suit, West's queen falling to the table's king. The king of clubs was taken by the ace and another diamond lead from East sealed declarer's fate. Whether declarer ruffed high or low, West's nine of clubs would be promoted to the setting trick.

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