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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

15th April 2011

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

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

Opening lead: Six of ♠

No matter how simple the contract seems, train yourself to take some time to consider what might happen before playing to the first trick. It will save you thousands of points every year.

South had visions of slam once North opened the bidding. Those hopes were soon shattered when the misfit became apparent, and three no trump became the final contract.

West led a low spade and, with eight tricks assured by the opening lead, declarer followed low from dummy almost before the cards were on the table. When East inserted the nine, declarer won with the queen and went after the fulfilling trick by leading a heart to the king. East grabbed the ace and returned a spade, and the defenders collected four spade tricks for a one-trick set.

The winning line is not difficult to spot if you take a few moments to study the hand. The danger is that West started with five spades while East has the ace of hearts. That can be countered simply by playing a low spade from dummy and allowing East's nine to win the first trick. As the cards lie, that shuts out West's spade suit, and the contract is safe.

What if West started with only four spades? That would not be an attractive lead into a suit bid naturally at the defender's right since it could cost a trick and a tempo. Can't West have five spades to the ace-king and the ace of hearts? Most unlikely. West would have opened in any seat with that holding, but only the incorrect play of the jack of spades at trick one would cater to that case.

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