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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

16th December 2011

Dealer : North Vul : None	NORTH ♠ K 8 5 ♥ A Q J 9 4 ♦ 7 5 ♣ A Q 7	
WEST ♠ 3 ♥ 10 8 7 6 2 ♦ 10 9 2 ♣ J 9 6 5		EAST ♠ A Q 7 ♥ 3 ♦ A Q J 8 4 3 ♣ 10 4 3
	SOUTH ♠ J 10 9 6 4 2 ♥ K 5 ♦ K 6 ♣ K 8 2	

South	West	North	East
--	--	1 Heart	2 Diamond
2 Spade	Pass	4 Spade	All Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♦

How highly do you rate your technique? Cover the East and West hands and decide how you would play four spades after West leads the ten of diamonds and East overtakes with the jack.

If you are among those who sensibly do not open one no trump holding a five-card major and a low doubleton on the side, you should have an auction identical to the above. South clearly has a two-spade bid after East's overcall and, should you raise to only three spades, you are asking partner to do your work for you.

West leads the ten of diamonds and East produces the jack. It seems you cannot possibly lose more than two trumps and a diamond. Is there any threat to the contract? How do you continue?

With East marked for virtually every missing high card, there is only one threat to the spade game — that East can obtain a ruff. Suppose you win with the king of diamonds and run the jack of spades. That loses to East's queen and back comes a heart. You win in hand and lead another trump to the king and ace. East returns a low diamond to West's ten, and the heart return gives East the ruff for the setting trick.

Excellent defense by East — that jack of diamonds at trick one was a thoughtful move. But it is relatively simple to counter once you realize why East did not take the first trick. After winning the king of diamonds, exit with a diamond. That simple maneuver cuts the communications between the defenders and there is no way the contract can be defeated. What a simple game bridge is!

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