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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

16th June 2011

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

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

Opening lead: Three of ♥

When someone shows you a bridge hand, all too often the spot cards are designated with an "x". Those cards are usually unimportant, but once in a while the exact cards can be crucial.

The auction was straightforward. South's jump to two no trump showed a balanced 18-19 points, and North had ample to raise to game. West led a low heart. Since it was obvious that the diamonds would have to be developed, declarer won in hand, cleared the king and queen of diamonds, then crossed to the ace of hearts and played the ace of diamonds. When the jack did not drop, declarer could establish two long diamonds but there was no entry back to the board to cash them, and the contract failed by a trick.

Had South been presented with a diagram where dummy's spot cards in diamonds were represented by an "x", the chosen line of play would have been eminently correct. But this is a case where the spots are crucial. Since South needs only four tricks from diamonds, possession of the 10 and 8 means that, besides the 3-3 split, declarer can set up four tricks if either defender holds a doubleton knave or 9!

After winning the first trick in hand and cashing the king of diamonds, declarer should overtake the queen with the ace. If neither the jack nor the nine appears, declarer needs an even break. But when East drops the nine, declarer simply forces out the knave by playing a top diamond and still has the ace of hearts as a dummy entry to score a total of four diamond tricks and the contract!

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