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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

19th May 2011

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

South	West	North	East
--	1 Diamond	Pass	Pass
1 Spade	Pass	3 Spade	Pass
4 Spade	All Pass		

Opening lead: Jack of ♥

"Cover an honor with an honor" is an old, and like most maxims, mostly true adage. It prevents the opponents from winning a cheap trick and helps promote your secondary honors in the suit led. But, before committing yourself, take time to consider all the ramifications of the contract.

We would prefer a one-heart response with the East cards. A five-card major headed by the ace and, hence, at least one ruffing value is too good to suppress at the one-level. That might have kept North-South out of a shaky game. Since South might have acted with considerably less in the balancing seat, proceeding to four spades was automatic.

West led the jack of hearts and declarer saw that a heart trick could be establishing by covering — and looked no further. East captured the queen with the ace and shifted to the ten of diamonds. West scored two diamond tricks and the ace of clubs to complete a one-trick set.

As the cards lie, there is no way for declarer to make the contract legitimately. However, he could have presented the defenders with a far more difficult problem had he ignored the adage and played a low heart from dummy at trick one. If East does not rise with the ace, setting up a second heart trick for declarer, the contract can no longer be defeated.

Suppose West shifts to the ace of clubs and another. Declarer wins in dummy and leads the king of hearts. East covers, but declarer ruffs, draws trumps while finessing West for the queen, and can claim 10 tricks. Declarer loses only one trick in each suit except trumps.

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