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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

21st April 2011

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

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

Opening lead: Six of ♥

Study the bidding and play of this deal and then decide who, if anyone committed an error.

Despite balanced distribution, South's 18 points, mostly prime, and a weak doubleton made the hand unsuitable for an opening bid of one no trump at the expense of first probing for a suit contract. The auction proceeded normally to an excellent three no trump contract.

West led a low heart and, with only eight fast tricks available, declarer held up the ace until the third round of the suit. It was time to tackle diamonds, so declarer led the deuce and, when West produced the seven, covered with dummy's nine. East won with the ten and shifted to a low club. Declarer rose with the ace and reverted to diamonds and, when the suit broke reasonably, scored a fourth trick in the suit and nine overall. Was that a par result?

No! Despite declarer's fine play, the contract should have been defeated. Suppose that, on the first diamond lead, West ignored the shibboleth 'second hand low' and inserted the knave. As the cards lie, this simple maneuver defeats the contract no matter what declarer does. Since allowing the jack to hold permits West to cash two heart tricks to defeat the game, declarer must win in dummy. But now declarer can no longer concede a diamond to East since there is no entry to the table to cash the long diamond. Down one.

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