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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

24th May 2011

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

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

Opening lead: Five of ♣

It is amazing how much information can be obtained from the opening lead. Consider this deal from last year's von Zedtwitz Life Master Pairs.

North's two-club response to South's opening bid was Drury, asking South to describe the strength of his opening bid. A rebid of opener's major suit would have shown a minimum — any other action was natural and promised a sound opening bids. Three no trump was arrived at in short order.

Reluctant to lead from any of his tenaces, West elected to lead his fourth-best club. East won the opening lead with the ace and returned the deuce to declarer's king. Declarer cashed the king and queen of hearts, on which West discarded a diamond. West was now almost surely marked with a 4-1-4-4 shape — the defender would not have led from a weak four-card suit had he held a five-carder. The play was now easy.

Declarer continued with the ten of hearts, ducked by East as West let go a spade. Declarer returned to hand with a club to cash his winning hearts, and West was in trouble. He could let go a diamond on the first heart winner, but the next heart was a killer.

West finally came down to the jack of clubs and king-jack of spades and diamonds. (If West let go of a spade, declarer's 10 of spades would become established). Declarer now cashed the ace of spades and continued with a spade. West could win and cash the jack of clubs, but then had to lead a diamond into declarer's ace-queen tenace for the overtrick and an outright top board.

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