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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

26th April 2011

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

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: ♠ J

There is usually more than one way to develop any tricks you might need to fulfill your contract. The art is to combine as many lines as possible without endangering your contract. Here is a fine example.

The auction is simple. With a balanced 12 points and a source of tricks in a minor facing an opening no trump, there is no need to look for any contract other than a no-trump game. There's no sense in wasting time and asking for trouble with any other action.

West led the jack of spades, attacking the chink in declarer's armor. There are seven fast tricks, and the two needed can be developed in either minor. But because the defenders have at least three spade tricks that can be established quickly, declarer can afford to lose the lead only once. It might seem that two finesses in either minor is the best way to go, but that means declarer must commit to just one line.

Best is to win the spade in hand and lead a diamond to the ace. Here, an honor falls and declarer can simply continue diamonds to come to 10 tricks. But suppose only low cards appear. Now declarer must abandon diamonds and run the jack of clubs. If that loses to the king and a spade comes back, declarer will win in dummy and should continue with the nine of clubs to the queen. Should both defenders follow with low cards, next comes three rounds of hearts, winning on the table. If the suit breaks evenly or if the jack comes down, the ninth trick is there in hearts. If not, declarer finally leads dummy's last club and decides whether to finesse East for the ten or play for an even split. All in all, a better than 90 percent chance to bring home the bacon.

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