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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

30th April 2011

Dealer : West Vul : None	NORTH ♠ A 4 ♥ A Q 7 3 ♦ A K 4 ♣ 9 8 5 4	
WEST ♠ K Q J 10 9 8 5 ♥ J 5 ♦ 10 ♣ A K J		EAST ♠ 7 2 ♥ 9 8 6 2 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ Q 7 6 2
	SOUTH ♠ 6 3 ♥ K 10 4 ♦ Q 9 7 6 3 2 ♣ 10 3	

South	West	North	East
-	1 Spade	X	Pass
2 Diamond	3 Spade	X	Pass
5 Diamond	All Pass		

Opening lead: King of ♣

A diagram of a hand where the cards below the rank of a jack are represented by an 'x' can be confusing. A pip more or less could make a tremendous difference in the play.

Since North had doubled one spade for takeout and since West had shown a good suit by jumping to three spades, North's second double was not for penalties but promised a good hand. South judged that the sixth diamond and working king justified trying for game.

West led the king of clubs and, despite East's encouraging signal, shifted to the king of spades, setting up a third defensive trick. The only parking spot for a black-suit loser was on dummy's fourth heart. If you are shown the hand with just x's for spot cards, you would need a 3-3 heart split. However, the ten of hearts offers an extra opportunity – a doubleton jack also permits declarer to score four heart tricks under most circumstances.

Declarer won the second trick with the ace of spades, cashed the queen and king of trumps and, when the suit broke 3-1, left the jack of diamonds outstanding. A heart to the ace and a heart back to the king, felling the jack, presented declarer with the chance that had been allowed for in drawing only two rounds of trumps. The ten of hearts was cashed, dummy was entered with the ace of trumps and a spade was discarded on the queen of hearts. Declarer lost only two club tricks.

Switch the ten and nine of hearts, and declarer's extra chance is to find defenders with a J 10 doubleton. Weaken South's holding any further, however, and a 3-3 split is the only hope.

gorenbridge@aol.com