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Bridge column by Tanna Hirsch

30th June 2011

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

South	West	North	East
1 Spade	Pass	3 Spade	Pass
4 Club	Pass	4 Diamond	Pass
4 Heart	Pass	5 Club	Pass
5 Spade	Pass	6 Heart	All Pass

Opening lead: Three of ♥

When faced with a bad break, many declarers develop a panic attack. A far more profitable course to pursue is to search for a distribution that will allow the contract to be brought home.

North's jump to three spades was forcing in the partnership methods, and all first- and second-round partnership controls were located by the cue-bidding sequence that followed. However, there was a strong possibility that there would be a loser in one of the side suits other than diamonds, so South wisely settled in the small slam.

West led a low heart and, when dummy appeared, South was delighted that conservatism had paid off. Even the small slam was in jeopardy when, after winning the king of hearts and leading a low spade to the king, trumps turned out to be 3-0. Declarer was now looking at a sure trump loser and had to avoid losing a club to get home.

A trump was continued to the ace, the ace of diamonds was cashed and declarer ruffed a diamond in hand to clear that suit. Next came the ace and king of clubs followed by the ace and queen of hearts to set the scene. The East hand had been reduced to nothing but diamonds and the queen of trumps. If East ruffed, the forced diamond return would allow declarer to ruff in hand while discarding the table's club loser, so the defender discarded instead. That only delayed the inevitable. Declarer continued with a trump, East won but was forced to bow to the knee by returning a diamond and yielding the ruff-sluff. Six spades bid and made.

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