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Bridge column by Frank Stewart

9th April 2011

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

South	West	North	East
2 NT	Pass	6 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: Seven of ♠

Study the bidding and play of this deal, then decide: Who, if anyone, is guilty of an error?

With only 9 high-card points and a weakfish five-card suit, an invitational raise to four no trump would have been more appropriate with the North hand. But the concentration of honors in the five-card suit favored aggressive action, so the leap to slam is acceptable.

West led the seven of spades to East's ace and South won the return with the king. With only eight fast tricks in the three top-ranked suits, declarer had no option but to develop clubs without losing a trick in the suit, and there was no point to delaying matters. The five of clubs was led to the ten and queen and, when that held, declarer continued by cashing the ace, and great was the fall thereon.

Had anything gone wrong in the play?

West missed the chance for a spectacular defensive coup, which might have tilted matters in favor of the defenders. When declarer led a low club at trick three, West should have followed with the king!

A skilled declarer would surely have considered the possibility of a false-card, but our bet is that even a world champion would have taken the monarch at face value. Since declarer needed four tricks from the club suit, the logical way to continue after capturing the king with the ace was to return a low club and finesse the nine – down one.

gorenbridge@aol.com