

Contract Bridge

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10019
CUSTOMER SERVICE: 800-708-7311 EXT. 257
CONTRACT BRIDGE
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By Steve Becker

POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE

East dealer.

Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ Q 8
♥ Q 6 4
♦ K Q 10 8 3
♣ Q 10 5

WEST

♠ A 5 4
♥ A J 9 7 3
♦ J 7 6 2
♣ 7

EAST

♠ K J 7 2
♥ 8
♦ 5 4
♣ 9 8 6 4 3 2

SOUTH

♠ 10 9 6 3
♥ K 10 5 2
♦ A 9
♣ A K J

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
Pass	1 NT	Pass	3 NT

Opening lead — seven of hearts.

Perhaps Hegel was right when he said one learns from experience that one does not always learn from experience.

Consider the present deal from a rubber-bridge game. South was in three notrump, and West led his fourth-best heart. Declarer took the first trick with the ten, then returned a low heart, winning with dummy's queen after West followed with the nine.

South next cashed the A-K-Q of diamonds, but after the jack did not fall, he finished down one, losing three spades, a heart and a diamond.

The outcome seems very normal, since South played the hand pretty much the same way most other declarers would have played it. But the fact is that South was decidedly out of order when he staked everything exclusively on a favorable diamond division. Granting that the diamond suit would -- from previous experience -- seem the natural suit to attack at trick three, declarer's correct play at that point was the eight of spades!

After scoring the first two hearts, he was gazing at eight sure tricks, and should have been looking for the best way to acquire a ninth. The spade lead would do exactly that, guaranteeing that after the defenders' ace, king and jack were driven out, South's ten would become trick number nine.

No distribution of the opposing cards can prevent this from happening if a spade is led at trick three, regardless of how much it goes against the grain to make such a play. It is true that declarer might fail to make four notrump by not playing diamonds first, but that is a very minor consideration when assuring a game is concerned.

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