Old Ruse

by Brian Gunnell

Here's a neat deception, but, alas, it won't work against modern signaling methods.

Board 11
South Deals
None Vul

	♠ 5 4 ♥ 7 5 4 2 ♦ A Q J 10 ♣ Q 9 3	
♠ K 10 8 6 ♥ K 10 8 6 ♦ 5 4 2 ♣ K 4	N W E S	♠ J 9 3 2 ♥ A J 3 ♦ 9 7 6 ♣ 8 6 5
	♠ A Q 7 ♥ Q 9 ♦ K 8 3 ♣ A J 10 7 2	

NS 3♦; NS 3♣; EW 1♠; EW 1♥

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
			1 NT
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	3 NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Against 3NT West leads his fourth-best spade. East's ♠J is taken by declarer's ♠Q, then a diamond to dummy and the losing club finesse. At this point West can count nine or ten tricks for declarer, via two spades, four diamonds and three or four clubs. West's only hope for defeating 3NT is that the defense can cash four hearts. Bingo! He shifts to a low heart and it's down one.

Take Two! West leads a low spade, as before, but this time declarer wins East's ♠J with the ♠A. Yes, really! Declarer doesn't need a second spade trick, but he does want to avoid a heart shift and that extravagance in the spade suit is just the way to do it. Later, when West wins his ♣K, he's likely to be duped into assuming that East has the ♠Q and will lead another low spade. Ten tricks.

The Antidote! Twenty or thirty years ago, this sneaky ruse worked every time, but nowadays there is a defensive antidote. It involves East telling partner whether or not he likes that opening spade lead. When declarer leads a diamond at trick two, East can signal with the ♦9 (high means "I like your opening lead"), or with the ♦6 (low means "I don't"). On the actual deal, East plays the discouraging ♦6, alerting West to declarer's shenanigans. That signal is called a **Smith Echo** and is a common agreement among tournament players.