

Mea Culpa

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

	♠ 10 9 6 5 4		
	♥ 7 6 3		
	♦ 7		
	♣ A J 8 5		
♠ K	N	♠ A 2	
♥ K J 2	W	♥ Q 10 9 8 5	
♦ A Q 10 4 3 2	E	♦ J 9 8	
♣ Q 7 6	S	♣ 10 3 2	
	♠ Q J 8 7 3		
	♥ A 4		
	♦ K 6 5		
	♣ K 9 4		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♦	4 ♠	All pass	1 ♠
4 ♠ by South			

When these cards were dealt in a team game, both declarers played in four spades. At one table, West led a club and declarer eventually pitched her heart loser on the thirteenth club, for ten tricks. At the other table, West found a heart lead, and now declarer did not have the timing to draw trumps and then get rid of the heart loser. Down one!

That adverse game swing cost the match, and West on the losing team apologized profusely to his teammates for his unsuccessful club lead. "No problem", they politely replied, "opening leads are tough, it was just a guess." And, on that note, the losers went home, with West resolving to re-read "Opening Leads 101".

But our eagle-eyed readers will have noticed that the real culprit was South! Yes, indeed, four spades can be made even with an opening heart lead. Declarer wins the ♥A, and instead of playing on trumps he cashes the ♣K, finesses the ♣J, cashes the ♣A, and leads the thirteenth club on which he pitches his heart loser. The defense can ruff that last club, but whether they ruff with the ace or the king or the two, they will sacrifice a natural trump trick. They'll end up scoring the ♦A, a club ruff, but only one trump trick. So you can return that book to the library, Mr. West, and buy "Exotic Coups for Beginners" as a birthday present for South.