

Failure to Communicate

Which of West's four-card suits would you lead against 3NT? As North did not bother with Stayman, there would be a tendency to lead a major in this situation. So, let us assume that West leads his fourth best heart, if only because it's the stronger suit.

East's ♥A won the opening lead, the heart seven was returned to declarer's queen and West's king, and the third round of the suit knocked out declarer's heart stopper, setting up a third heart winner for the defense. Next declarer played on diamonds. East won the ace and, being out of hearts, shifted to a spade, won by declarer. Thanks to the 4-1 diamond break there was still a diamond to be lost, but eventually declarer was able to rustle up his ninth trick in the suit. Poor West never did score that third heart trick, and the defense had to make do with two hearts and two diamonds.

West slipped up when he won the second round of hearts. With no quick entry, West must keep the heart suit as the line of communication between the E-W hands. So West must duck the second trick, letting declarer have her heart trick early and leaving East in a position to lead hearts again when he gets in with the ♦A. Now the defense scores three heart tricks and two diamonds, and that's down one.

The defense did not shine here, and had to do everything just wrong to let 3NT make. A club or a spade opening lead would beat the contract ... as would a heart lead and a (non-obvious) spade shift by East at trick two ... or the aforementioned heart lead and duck of the second round of hearts.

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 8 5 4 ♥ K 10 8 5 ♦ 7 ♣ 8 5 3 2		♠ 10 9 7 ♥ 9 6 ♦ K J 6 5 4 ♣ A J 10	♠ J 3 2 ♥ A 7 2 ♦ A 10 9 8 ♣ 9 6 4
West Pass 3 NT by South	North 3 NT All pass	East All pass	South 1 NT