

Strange Lead

West's 3♥ jump overcall showed long hearts and not much else (preemptive, in other words), and South eventually bought the contract in four spades. Put yourself in the West seat. You'd love to get a diamond ruff (or two) but, alas, you are on opening lead. Any thoughts?

This deal was played in a team game and at one table West routinely led the ♥K. Declarer ruffed the second heart and played a trump to East's ace. A diamond was returned for West to ruff, briefly raising the hopes of E-W. But that was all they got, and declarer had ten tricks. In the post mortem West stated the obvious by pointing out that East needed to overtake the king with his ♥A at trick one and shoot back a diamond, getting the defense two ruffs and setting the contract.

At the other table, West was made of smarter stuff. At trick one she led the heart *two*! Unless leading "top of a sequence" it is customary to lead fourth best from a long suit (some prefer "third or fifth"), so that heart two was distinctly fishy-looking, considering that West's bidding had announced six or seven hearts. What was West trying to say by her strange lead? She clearly wanted a shift, probably for a ruff. East concluded that diamonds were more promising than clubs, all the more so as, if West was out of clubs, then East had natural club tricks coming his way. So back came a diamond for the first of two ruffs. Down one!

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

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