

## A Revealing Auction

**Board 13**  
North Deals  
Both Vul

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

3 NT by South

The delicate North-South auction was designed to determine whether they belonged in three notrump or five clubs. Eventually they chose three notrump but along the way they generously donated all sorts of useful information to their opponents.

West mulled over the auction, always a good idea before making the opening lead. What did North's two diamonds mean? It was inconceivable that North-South would play in a diamond contract, so West concluded that North was bidding out his pattern, which appeared likely to be 4-1-3-5. By so doing, North was indirectly saying to partner (and to the opponents) "I am short in hearts; if your hearts are weak then perhaps we belong in clubs rather than three notrump".

As for South, he had bid hearts, after which he would not have bid no trump without something in the unbid diamond suit. For his third bid he raised clubs, at which point there didn't seem to be much room for a whole lot of spades in his hand, maybe two but quite possibly only one.

After that riveting and revealing auction, what would you lead? Not a heart, nor a club, those can hardly be right. A diamond lead doesn't seem so appealing, either, with North and South both indirectly showing something in the suit. That leaves a spade. Which one? Yes, West must lead the *king*, protecting against South having a singleton queen or jack. Nicely done, Mr. West, the ♠K is the killing lead! And, of course, West will be sure to follow up with the ♠10 at trick two.

A more Neanderthal North would simply have raised one notrump to three notrump. Now West has fewer clues. He might lead a top-of-nothing diamond, he might lead a spade, but even if he chooses the latter there won't be a compelling reason to lead the spectacular king.