

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

A STRANGE LEAD

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ JT3 ♥ 743 ♦ J86 ♣ AK87	
♠ 982 ♥ KQJT952 ♦ ♣ 963	North West East Declarer	♠ A ♥ A6 ♦ T9743 ♣ QJT42
	♠ KQ7654 ♥ 8 ♦ AKQ52 ♣ 5	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1♠	3♥	3♠	4♥
4♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

West's 3♥ jump overcall showed long Hearts and not much else (preemptive, in other words), and South eventually bought the contract in 4♠. 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 10 tricks. In the post mortem West stated the obvious by pointing out that East needed to overtake the King with his ♥A at Trick 1 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 1 she led the Heart Two! Unless leading "top of a sequence" it is customary to lead 4th best from a long suit (some prefer "3rd or 5th"), so that Heart Two was distinctly fishy-looking, considering that West's bidding had announced 6 or 7 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!

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