

THINKING BRIDGE -- By Eddie Kantar

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Dir: South Vul: Both	NORTH ♠ J10643 ♥ K42 ♦ K63 ♣ 94		West	North	East	South
			--	--	--	2 NT
			Pass	3 Heart	Pass	3 Spade
			3 NT	All Pass		
WEST ♠ K985 ♥ Q1063 ♦ 984 ♣ Q6		EAST ♠ Q7 ♥ J87 ♦ 10762 ♣ KJ87	Opening Lead = ♥3			
	SOUTH ♠ A2 ♥ A95 ♦ AQJ ♣ A10532					

Bidding commentary: South upgraded his hand one point based on his five-card suit headed by two honors, not to mention holding four aces. North transferred to spades, showing five of them, and then rebid 3NT to give partner a choice of games. With only two spades, South elected to play in notrump. If South had three spades, 4♠ would have been the final contract more often than not.

Play commentary: South starts with seven top tricks and must develop two tricks from one of the black suits. The spades are stronger than the clubs, (three honors vs. two honors), so that's the suit to attack, keeping at least two side entries to dummy.

Further play commentary: It appears from the lead that hearts are 4-3, so it should be safe to win the first heart (you would not be happy with a club shift) and play the ace and a spade. Assuming West plays low on the second spade, play low from dummy, the key play on the hand! If spades are 3-3, it doesn't matter which spade you play, but if spades are 4-2, the odds are that the player with a doubleton is more likely to have honor doubleton than two low ones.

If you duck the spade, East wins the queen. If East returns a heart, win the king and drive out the ♠K, leading the ♠J. West wins, cashes two hearts, but school's out. You have nine tricks.

Had East returned a club upon winning the ♠Q, you had better go up with the ace, hoping clubs are 3-3 or the suit is blocked when you knock out the ♠K. If you duck the club, West can win and shift back to hearts, and now you wind up losing five tricks: two hearts, two spades and one club.

Defensive commentary: A really great defensive play by West would be to duck the second spade holding K-Q-x-x. A strong South player will make the percentage play and call for a low card from dummy, and now the defenders take three spade tricks and easily defeat the contract.

The key play is managing the spade suit by playing the ♠A, followed by a low spade from hand and low from dummy. It's the right play. If West is good enough to play low from four to the K-Q, you will just have to pay off.