THINKING BRIDGE - - By Eddie Kantar
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Bidding commentary: Playing “support doubles,” North’s raise to 2♥ shows four hearts, while a double of 1♠ would shown three hearts. Not playing support doubles, a single raise (as many play) can show three or four hearts. In any case, South, with a double fit (an upgrade), has a clear cut 4♥ bid.

Lead commentary: Suits headed by the Q-J- 9 are normally strong leads. East signals encouragement with the ♦8, the highest equal, at trick one

Play commentary: The North-South hands have “mirrored” (identical) distribution. Mirrored distributions lead to strip and endplay strategies. Declarer wins the ♦A, draws trumps, strips diamonds from the opponents’ hands and exits a spade hoping for something good to happen in clubs.

Defensive commentary: After declarer strips the hand and exits a spade, East wins the ♦K and should have a count of the four hands. Partner has shown out on the third round of each red suit and needs five spades for the overcall.

Translation: South has exactly three clubs, and three club tricks are needed to defeat the contract. Furthermore, East can lead clubs only once. East must project West to have the A-Q-J-x and lead the ♣10. This lead prevents South from ducking the trick into West, forcing a club lead from the ace.