

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

AN OLD RUSE

By: Brian Gunnell

Here's a neat deception, but, alas, it won't work against modern signaling methods.

	♠ 54 ♥ 7542 ♦ AQJT ♣ Q93	
♠ KT86 ♥ KT86 ♦ 542 ♣ K4	North West East South	♠ J932 ♥ AJ3 ♦ 976 ♣ 865
	♠ AQ7 ♥ Q9 ♦ K83 ♣ AJT72	

None Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♦	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Against 3NT West leads his 4th-best Spade. East's Jack is taken by Declarer's Queen, then a Diamond to Dummy and the losing Club finesse. At this point West can count 9 or 10 tricks for Declarer, via 2 Spades, 4 Diamonds and 3 or 4 Clubs. West's only hope for defeating 3NT is that the defense can cash 4 Hearts. Bingo! He shifts to a low Heart and it's down one.

Take Two! West leads a low Spade, as before, but this time Declarer wins East's Jack with the Ace! Yes, really! Declarer doesn't need a second Spade trick, but he does want to avoid a Heart shift and that extravagance in the Spade suit is just the way to do it. Later, when West wins his ♣K, he's likely to be duped into assuming that East has the ♠Q and will lead another low Spade. 10 tricks!

The Antidote! Twenty or thirty years ago, this sneaky ruse worked every time, but nowadays there is a defensive antidote. It involves East telling partner whether or not he likes that opening Spade lead. When Declarer leads a Diamond at Trick 2, East can signal with the Nine (high means "I like your opening lead"), or with the Six (low means "I don't"). On the actual deal, East plays the discouraging Six, alerting West to Declarer's shenanigans. That signal is called a Smith Echo and is a common agreement among tournament players. For more on this, please Google "smith echo for dummies". No offense, dear readers, it's merely a search which takes you to a most helpful article.

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