AN ESSENTIAL PRECAUTION

By: Brian Gunnell

Both Vulnerable

South West North East
1♠ Pass 2♦ Pass
2♥ Pass 4♥ Pass
Pass Pass

N-S zip into 4♥, and West sensibly leads the unbid suit. After the defense has cashed three Diamonds, East exits a Spade and now the contract depends on Declarer picking up the trumps for no losers. Any thoughts?

Of course, Declarer will finesse against East for the ♥K and the lazy way of doing that is to run the Jack around, thereby keeping the lead in Dummy for a repeat finesse, if necessary. But, alas for Declarer, there is no repeat finesse! East’s King covers the ♥J and, when East shows out on the second Heart, Declarer realizes that he has blundered! Now West’s Heart Nine will eventually score a trick and Declarer is down one.

It was necessary for Declarer to lead a low Heart from the board, an essential precaution against East having a singleton King. This is the kind of problem that nobody gets wrong when they see it in the newspaper. But in the heat of battle it is a different story, as evidenced at a recent club duplicate game where four (embarrassed) Declarers managed to lose a trump trick and go down.

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