Board 4
West Deals
Both Vul

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<th>West</th>
<th>North</th>
<th>East</th>
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Singleton Ace

IMP Pairs, March 20, 2012 -- Singleton Ace

In standard bidding, after North's 2♥ overcall, East has these choices:

- **Pass** -- all the weak hands
- **2♠** -- non-forcing (competitive)
- **2NT** -- invitational
- **3♠/3♥/3♣** -- natural, and forcing
- **3♥** -- Stayman
- **3NT** -- to play

None of these actions says anything about hearts - a heart stopper is assumed, a defect in standard methods. However, we were playing Lebensohl, where a direct 3♥ or 3NT denies a heart stopper, and:

- **2NT** -- requires opener to bid 3♠, whereupon...
  - **Pass/3♦** -- to play (competitive)
  - **3♥** -- Stayman, holding a heart stopper
  - **3♣** -- natural, invitational
  - **3NT** -- to play, holding a heart stopper

What would you bid?

At IMPs, you should try to bid vulnerable games at 40% or better. The one action I was not going to take was to bid 2NT and then invite game at 3♠. Why risk going down at the 3-level in a bad suit, without being in game?

I hate a singleton ace. Unless a huge trump fit is disclosed, I generally find a singleton ace to be worth about three points, including any shortness value. Nevertheless, I decided to drive to game, but not show the fifth spade: 2NT followed by 3♥, Stayman with a stopper. I counted on Rishabh to bring the game home, if it could be done.
2♠ was our last chance for a positive score. I forgot that Rishabh is one of the more aggressive bidders at the club, and should have taken the low road with my flawed hand.

While I would have opened Rishabh’s hand 1♦, with a fine 2♠ rebid in reserve, I never worry about partner's judgement calls. Change the ♦J to the ♦Q, and I would likely have tried 1NT myself. A singleton king often has more value at no trump than in a suit contract.

Our combined aggressive actions landed us in a poor game. Rishabh could have cashed out for down two. However, he took the play to make, hoping for a doubleton ♦K in the North hand, finessing the ♦J at trick two (swap the ♦K and ♦10, and he makes). South proceeded to cash five hearts, and after dummy parted with those junky spades, four spades. When the carnage ended, we were -600, down six!

The opponents had their own vulnerable game to bid, 4♥ making five, -650. That happened at two tables. At another, our side was doubled for -1400. There were also two -200s and a -100. Cashing out would have been a big win for us. Would you have done that? As it was, rather than being a disaster, we only lost a little on the board.