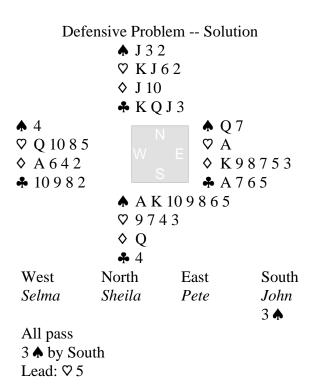
Board 3South Deals
E-W Vul



Your partner and both opponents are expert players, in this matchpoint pair game. Playing standard carding in this new partnership, you lead the \heartsuit 5. Dummy plays small and partner wins the \heartsuit A, declarer following with the \heartsuit 3.

After some thought, partner cashes the \clubsuit A, declarer following with the \clubsuit 4, and leads the \diamondsuit 9. You win declarer's \diamondsuit Q with the \diamondsuit A. How do you continue?





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After some thought, partner cashes the • A. This is a highly unusual play, establishing dummy's clubs, with the • J a likely entry. Preempters also have been known to have voids - leading the • A could have been a disaster. Think of this play as an "alarm clock" lead. Wake up and take notice!

Partner now leads the \diamond 9, and you win declarer's \diamond Q with the \diamond A. What do you make of that? The lead of the high card says, "do not return this suit." Partner would have led low, to ask for a diamond back.

Partner clearly wants something special from you, and in this case, it must be a ruff. Can it be in diamonds? No, because that would give declarer six diamonds, along with at least six spades, a heart and a club. So returning a trump or a diamond is clearly wrong.

Did partner have the singleton ace of hearts or clubs? In either case, declarer will have four cards in that suit, and likely a singleton in the other. Go back to the opening lead. Declarer knows partner has the ∇ A, since you would not underlead it. You are looking at the ∇ Q. If declarer had a singleton heart, would he not put in the ∇ J, hoping to establish the ∇ K for a discard? Declarer has likely ducked to ∇ 9743. Lead a heart. Obtaining this fourth trick holds declarer to 140, a fine defensive score.

If you would have returned a club, at least you were thinking along the right lines. Had declarer played the ∇ J at trick one, a club could well have been the correct return.

- Pete Matthews, Jr.