

Sweet and Sour Grapes

TO THE EDITOR:

On a deal from an online imp pairs game, with North dealer and neither side vulnerable, as West I held:

♠ 10 ♥ 9 4 ♦ J 10 9 6 4 ♣ Q J 9 5 4.

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	—	1 ♥	4 ♦
4 NT	5 ♠	Double*	Pass
Pass	6 ♦	Pass	Pass
7 NT	Pass	Pass	Double
Pass	Pass	Pass	

*even number of aces

I bid five spades because South's four notrump was likely to be based on a big spade suit plus a heart fit. I hoped that South would fear a spade void and thus would not bid seven hearts over our seven-diamond sacrifice. Perhaps the opponents would not reach spades after this start or would have a misunderstanding after the interference.

After five spades, all calls came in normal tempo, except for South's very slow seven notrump. I needed to find a lead. Partner's double strongly suggested that he held an ace. If that was in a major suit, the contract was doomed. The usual inference that a Lightner doubler wants a lead other than his own suit pointed to a club, but would East have bid four diamonds with seven to the king-queen-eight and the ace of clubs? And what was South's final hesitation about?

The clues conflicted. I led the diamond jack, and the defense took the first seven tricks to score 1700. This was the layout:

NORTH
 ♠ Q 9 5 4
 ♥ A Q 10 8 3 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ K 6 5

WEST
 ♠ 10
 ♥ 9 4
 ♦ J 10 9 6 4
 ♣ Q J 9 7 4

EAST
 ♠ 3
 ♥ 7 6
 ♦ A K Q 8 7 3 2
 ♣ 10 8 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A K J 8 7 6 2
 ♥ K J 5
 ♦ 5
 ♣ A 2

The email post-mortem found plenty to complain about. Was East's double a terrible move (risking scoring minus 1790 with plus 350 readily available)? Had I been wrong to lead a diamond? What reason did South have for preferring seven notrump to seven spades? Had North been guilty of a crime for pretending that he held two aces? (As some authority once stated, "A void is not an ace." Or was that, "The trump king is not an ace."?)

Of course, North and South agreed that East had been crazy to double; they also were of one mind that I had been wrong to lead a diamond. We accepted the remarks and silently laughed on our way to the bragging-rights bank.

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