

**Uppercut
By Roger Lord**

**Dealer: South
Vul: East-West**

North
♠ Q532
♥ A32
♦ 10643
♣ Q2

West
♠ J94
♥ J6
♦ AKJ7
♣ J954

East
♠ 107
♥ KQ754
♦ Q9
♣ 10873

South
♠ AK86
♥ 1098
♦ 852
♣ AK6

South	West	North	East
1 Club	Pass	1 Diamond	Pass
1 Spade	Pass	2 Spades	All Pass

Contract: Two Spades

Opening Lead: Diamond Ace

On a hand from duplicate, South opened one club and West passed. Of the twelve Norths in the section, eleven responded one spade. One North player bid an old-fashioned one diamond up the line, which left room for opener to bid one heart or some number of notrump if his hand called for it. When South's rebid was one spade, North raised to two spades, which ended the auction. Thus, the declarer was South, the player who first mentioned spades, whereas at all other tables, it was North who played the contract.

West led the diamond ace, which was the agreed card to be led from a holding of AKx etc. East followed with the nine, apparently intended to be an encouraging signal. West continued the king, smothering his partner's queen. No matter, as West produced the diamond jack to win trick three. Although this set up dummy's ten, West persisted with a fourth diamond so that East could nullify the 10 by ruffing it.

It was imperative for East to ruff with the ten, rather than with the seven. Do you see why?

If East carelessly ruffs with the seven, South overruffs with the eight, preserving his high trumps. If East ruffs with the ten, declarer cannot gain by letting the trump hold and pitching a heart—he still has a heart loser for the defenders' fifth trick. But, if declarer overruffs the ten with the king, West eventually will score a trump trick with his spade J94. This trump promotion is known as an "uppercute." Both defenders must be alert to enact this maneuver.

At all other tables, the East players were on lead without the advantage of seeing the AKJ7 of diamonds. Most led a different suit, allowing declarers to win and draw trumps, losing just four tricks for a partial score of 140 North-South. The uppercute diminished the score for the one East-West pair to minus 110, a measly 30 point difference but enough to earn them a top.