

**Second Hand High?
By Roger Lord**

Dealer: West
Vul: none

North
♠ QJ
♥ K6
♦ AK
♣ QJ109865

West
♠ A10974
♥ 10
♦ 95432
♣ K3

East
♠ 52
♥ J8532
♦ J76
♣ A74

South
♠ K863
♥ AQ974
♦ Q108
♣ 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	1 Club	Pass	1 Heart
Pass	3 Clubs	Pass	3 Notrump
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Contract: Three Notrump

Opening Lead: Spade Seven

This deal was played in New Orleans at the recent Spring North American Championships. Over North's opening one club and South's one heart, North jumped to an invitational three clubs. South decided not to rebid three hearts in search of a 5-3 fit. From North's failure to bid one spade on the second round, South knew that there was no 4-4 spade fit. Thus, South closed out the auction at three notrump.

Put yourself in East's shoes and look only at your hand and dummy (North). Your partner leads the seven of spades, presumably fourth-best, and dummy's jack wins. At trick two, declarer calls for the queen of clubs. Plan your defense.

The winning play is second hand HIGH! You will take your club ace and return the spade to West's ace, capturing North's queen. West will continue the ten of spades, knocking out declarer's king. The next club trick will be won by West's king, and West will cash the nine and four of spades to set the contract.

Instead, if you play the normal but in this case inferior second hand low at trick two, partner will win the king and thereby deprive himself of a needed later entry to his spades. Observe that the opening lead of the spot card was essential in establishing the suit, whereas the lead of the ten, the top of an interior sequence, would have created a further stopper of the spade eight for declarer.

Couldn't East's initial club ace run the danger of dropping partner's singleton king? Yes, but if that is the case, it would be unlikely that any defense could defeat the contract. Do you want to hold down the overtricks? Or do you want the opportunity to be rewarded for an alert and thoughtful play?