

BRIDGE

By Paul Thurston

NORTH
 ♠ Q53
 ♥ AQ
 ♦ AQ53
 ♣ K952

WEST
 ♠ K1042
 ♥ J109874
 ♦ -----
 ♣ 764

EAST
 ♠ AJ987
 ♥ 53
 ♦ K1064
 ♣ A3

SOUTH
 ♠ 6
 ♥ K62
 ♦ J9872
 ♣ QJ108

Vulnerable: None
 Dealer: North

The bidding:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|----------|
| | 1 NT | Pass | Pass |
| 2♥ | Pass | Pass | 3♦ |
| Pass | Pass | Dbl | All Pass |

Opening lead: ♥ J

likely would have been easily fulfilled as West's diamond holding wasn't at all conducive to leading the suit through declarer to establish the King before the club ace was driven out.

While West didn't have a wealth of high-cards for that enterprising two heart call, he did have some distributional assets and the certainty that his partner would have some useful values sitting over the notrump opener, as North and, most particularly, South had made no move towards game.

As two hearts would have come home, perhaps with an overtrick, South also judged accurately when he introduced diamonds at the three-level, but may have been regretting that action when East doubled in a fit of pique — all regret vanishing with the arrival of dummy!

Admittedly East-West were never going to have an easy time locating their gilt-edged spade fit (unless, perhaps, East had introduced the suit directly over two hearts), but there was still no compelling reason for East to double three diamonds, a lesson painfully brought home when South negotiated a doubled overtrick to leave West regretting ever having balanced in the first place — three against one is just too

Balancing — refusing to let the opponents buy the contract at a low level — can often be a productive action, but the success or failure of such bids often depends on the temperament of the balancer's three opponents.

What, you think there are only two opponents per deal? What about East on today's auction, as he hung his partner out to dry for bidding over North's one notrump opening, a contract that