

<b>Dealer: S</b> Vul: N-S	<b>North</b> ♠ J 7 6 5 2 ♥ J 6 ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 9 8	
<b>West</b> ♠ K Q 10 9 8 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ 9 3 ♣ K 7 6		

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
1 ♠	1NT	2 ♥	5 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West is on lead against five clubs. His choices include the king of spades and the ace of hearts. I am a big advocate for keeping aces in my hand until their moment arrives and I would lean towards the king of spades.

South ruffs the first lead and goes to dummy with the ace of diamonds, East playing the eight.

Dummy leads the nine of clubs and runs it to your king. If you wish to duck it, you are welcome to do that, but it might be expensive. Better to win the trick. Doing so almost guarantees defeating five clubs. Do you see why? It is very important for you to see why five clubs is in trouble.

What should West lead now?

<b>Dealer: S</b> Vul: N-S	<b>North</b> ♠ J 7 6 5 2 ♥ J 6 ♦ A K J 10 ♣ 9 8	
<b>West</b> ♠ K Q 10 9 8 4 ♥ A 5 ♦ 9 3 ♣ K 7 6		<b>East</b> ♠ A 3 ♥ Q 10 9 8 7 3 ♦ 8 7 6 2 ♣ 2
	<b>South</b> ♠ - ♥ K 4 2 ♦ Q 5 4 ♣ A Q J 10 5 4 3	

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1 ♣
1 ♠	1NT	2 ♥	5 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Believe it or not, almost any card will set five clubs barring the two that most players would be leading now.

Any spade other than the queen, a diamond, and a club are all nearly certain to defeat five clubs.

A heart is hugely dangerous. Here are the reasons.

South has a maximum of six club tricks.

He has a maximum of four diamond tricks.

South has no spade tricks coming so if he is going to make five clubs, he has to get a heart trick.

How can he do that?

It is possible that East has the king of hearts, but it is not a lock. The good news is that if East has the king of hearts, the defenders will get two more tricks before the hand is over. South, no matter what his hand, will have to deal with the heart suit.

The hand that West is catering to is the one where South has the king of hearts. If he does have it, West's not leading a heart now will force South to play on the hearts himself.

South has the six club tricks you expected and the four diamond tricks you worried about, and he has so many hearts that he can't get rid of them on the diamonds. West, if he ever leads a heart, will give South the contract. As long as West counts declarer's tricks, he will see that there are not enough. West does not bang down the ace of hearts because he knows that doing so might give South that elusive eleventh trick. A thoughtful defense.