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Bridge:

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Study the diagrammed deal and try to decide whether six hearts can be made after the lead of the spade queen. Would another lead be better?

The deal was played in New York City in 1973. The North-South cards were held by two young English experts, Phillip Alder and John Reardon. They were touring to promote the First Up system devised by Berl Stallard of Miles City, Mont.

-- The diagrammed deal is not included --

He arrived in Montana as a baby, in a covered wagon from Oklahoma, and died in December at 83, after a career as an accountant. He was the longtime treasurer of the International Bridge Press Association.

One tenet of Stallard's system was that an opening-suit bid denied a lower-ranking suit. Another, more mainstream, was that a player should bid slowly until a fit is found and then take vigorous action.

Reardon bid just two hearts as South, then a slam. He expected to find dummy with good hearts, a spade void and the diamond ace. He was right on two of three. West's double was more from pique than conviction.

Slams missing three aces are not usually desirable, but this one was difficult to defeat. The opening lead of the spade queen was ruffed in dummy, and a club was ruffed. South led his singleton diamond and was in control after West took the ace.

A diamond was returned and South played winners in that suit from the dummy until East ruffed. South overruffed and continued with a crossruff to make his slam.

West blamed himself for taking the diamond ace, but South pointed out that he would have survived a duck. He would then ruff a diamond and lead the spade ten, losing a trick to the ace. Later he would take a ruffing finesse against West's jack.

The only way to defeat the slam was to lead a small spade. South must ruff in the dummy, and cannot then survive, provided West ducks when the singleton diamond is led.