Bridge by Andrew Robson

Dealer: North	Vulnerability: Both

North: ♠ 7 ♡ 9 7 2 ♢ J 10 9 7 5 3 ♣ 7 6 5

West: ♠ Q 4 3 ♡ 6 4 ♢ K 8 4 2 ♣ 10 9 3 2

East: ♠ J 10 8 5 2 ♡ A 8 3 ♢ Q ♣ A Q 8 4

South: ♠ A K 9 6 ♡ K Q J 10 5 ♢ A 6 ♣ K J

S	W	N	E
		Pass	1♠
Double	Pass	2♢	Pass
2♡	Pass	3♡(!)	Pass
4♡	All Pass		

Contract: 4♥	Opening Lead: ♥4

What do you expect from a partner who begins with a take-out double, and then bids his own suit?

There are two schools of thought. Traditionally such a route indicates a hand too strong to begin with a simple overcall; a hand with at least nineteen points or the equivalent in playing strength. But some modern players, notably American superstars Jeff Meckstroth and Eric Rodwell ("Meckwell"), believe these strong hands to be sufficiently infrequent to play that to double and bid your own suit shows an off-shape double with as little as 12 or 13 points.

On today's deal, taken from this year's Lederer, South was English International Gunnar Hallberg. He had informed me in our brief system chat (for I was his partner) that he belonged to the traditional school; that if he doubled and bid a suit, he had better be taken seriously. Even so, perhaps my Three Heart bid was a bit too sporty!

West, Pat Walshe of Ireland, had to find an opening lead against the Four Heart contract. Say he leads the three of spades, his partner's suit. Declarer would win the king and immediately begin the process of trumping spades in dummy. There is a hidden pitfall here though - say he trumps a low spade at trick two, returns to the ace of diamonds, trumps his second low spade, then leads a club. East would rise with the ace, cash the ace of trumps, then lead a spade, West ruffing away declarer's ace. Down one. I am sure that Gunnar would not have fallen into this trap. He would have won the king of spades, cashed the ace at trick two (key play), ruffed a low spade, crossed to the ace of diamonds, ruffed a fourth spade and led a club towards his king. He would merely lose a trump, a diamond and a club. Contract made.

But West did not lead a spade. He found the diabolical lead of a trump. East won the ace (declarer unblocking the ten) and led a second trump. Declarer was sunk. He won in hand and tried ace of diamonds (felling East's queen) and a second diamond. West continued his fine work by ducking, letting East trump. Declarer won East's low spade switch with the king, trumped a spade, and led a club towards his king. East won the ace but declarer had to lose a late trick in spades. Down one.

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