

## Penalty Card

### Question

South plays in 5S. West leads HA, which declarer ruffs. Not noticing this, West attempts to cash the CA next. The director is called and rules that the CA is a major penalty card. Declarer plays a trump, which West wins with the Ace (NS have overbid a bit!!!). Declarer wishes to stop the defender playing a club and thereby defeating the contract. Can he? Would it make any difference if East had won the Ace of spades?

### Answer

Generally, a major penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity whether in following suit, leading or discarding. The only times a penalty card is not automatically led would be:

- (a) when the player has more than one penalty card - in which case declarer chooses which card is to be played, or
- (b) when the player with the penalty card is subject to a lead penalty.

In our example, West is required to lead CA. In the absence of any other restrictions, when the player with a penalty card is on lead, declarer has no right to prohibit the lead of that suit - it must be led.

However, had East won the SA, declarer has the option of demanding or prohibiting the lead of a club, in which case CA is returned to hand and is no longer a penalty card.

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