

	North	
	S—KJ8	
	H—KQ874	
West	D—K92	East
S—105	C—106	S—void
H—J963		H—1052
D—10	South	D—AJ87653
C—KJ8752	S—AQ976432	C—AQ4
	H—A	
	D—Q4	
	C—93	

N-S vulnerable, IMPs

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	2H	3D
4S	Pass	Pass	5D
5S	Pass	Pass	Pass

Trick 1: D10, 2, A, Q.

Trick 2: CA, 3, 2, 6.

Trick 3: H2, A, 3, 4.

Declarer claimed. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "South deserves the major charge! Ironically, bids can be so bad that they are likely to steal the pot. Who could believe that South would go to the five level with a ragged, unsupported suit and two quick losers in the opponents' suit? (And I don't rate East's five diamond bid very highly either.)

"Normally, West's deuce of clubs at trick two would merely confirm the fact that he had led a singleton diamond. Defending against four spades, West's signal would have been correct. However, in this case, West should have assumed that declarer's queen of diamonds was a singleton (to account for South and East's bidding). That being the case, he should have encouraged a club continuation. He had no promotable trump holding, and from his point of view —, xx, AJxxxxxx, AQx was a more likely hand than —, xx, AJxxxxx, AQxx, with which East might have bid 4NT. Consequently, I believe that West was 100% at fault for not encouraging a club continuation. East would play the queen, then try for a diamond ruff, thus getting all the tricks the defenders were entitled to.

"East's play could be right. He was playing declarer for AQxxxxxx, x, Q, KJx. That seems at least as likely as the actual South hand, as the singleton diamond would tempt South to bid; and it is consistent with West's signal."

Steve Evans: "East's play on this hand was absolutely incredible. When he led the club A, partner would tell him what to do. A low club would mean don't lead clubs, lead a diamond. An unnecessarily high club would mean lead a heart, while a moderately high club would mean play a club. Granted, one can't always work it out, but here West is known to have a number of clubs to choose from. So East was out of his mind when he played a heart.

"West, however, isn't blameless. On this deal it was O.K. to have partner give him a diamond ruff, but it was far more likely that East had 8 diamonds. Encouraging East to play another club would only be wrong if East were 7-4 in the minors, which doesn't seem too likely. Had West played the club 8, the defenders would have scored their four tricks."

As the panel's comprehensive analysis shows, the defenders were set a difficult problem by South's dubious bidding. The auction had the curious effect of convincing East that South's diamond queen was a true card, yet West was completely unfooled (to his subsequent chagrin). East's defense seems to me perfectly rational, and the heart switch could have been necessary to defeat the contract. Notice that with the hand constructed by Marshall, West would have no club which Steve's rule would mark as an unambiguous heart signal. East assumed that both defenders knew the diamond distribution (South **must** have a singleton) and thus West's signal was a normal attitude card denying the king. Therefore, try the heart before it goes away.

West is the culprit; and his crime was greed. He wanted his ruff, as though he knew he could get one. Perhaps ethical considerations played a role. West would not want to play a slow deuce and so he played his deuce quickly. He followed the established principle cited by the panel that a defender who has led a card which might or might not be a singleton should show the singleton by discouraging on a switch. West may have been caught off guard. He led his singleton and was awaiting his ruff when partner produced the unexpected club ace.

West should have reflected that when the diamond queen appeared, even if it was a false card, partner would never believe it. He should have asked for a club continuation, guaranteeing the set (and down 2 would still obtain if partner held his actual hand). West should know the second club will cash if the hand is settable, for an 0-2-7-4 hand would have to bid 4NT rather than 5D; 5C would be the only making game. If by some chance East held 8 diamonds and 4 clubs and stopped bidding, the hand could only be set if East held the heart ace; West's signal would be irrelevant.