

	North	
	S—Q108	
	H—J76	
West	D—AQ643	East
S—9	C—Q4	S—A74
H—K108		H—AQ953
D—852	South	D—J10
C—J109653	S—KJ6532	C—K82
	H—42	
	D—K97	
	C—A7	

Both vulnerable, IMP scoring

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	3S	Pass
4S	Pass	Pass	Pass

Trick 1: CJ, Q, K, A
 Trick 2: S2, 9, Q, 4
 Trick 3: S8, 7, 3, C3
 Trick 4: DA, 10, 7, 2
 Trick 5: D3, J, K, 5
 Trick 6: D9, 8, Q, SA
 Trick 7: HA, 4, 8, 6
 Trick 8: H5, 2, K, 7
 Trick 9: H10, J, Q, S5

Declarer crossed to dummy in spades and pitched his club on a diamond. Whose charge?

Steve Evans: "East gets the full charge on this hand. West did just as he should have on every play while East's defense was hopeless. The first clue East had to the right defense occurred at trick 3; West discarded his lowest club. After leading a suit, if defender wants to give count to his partner, he gives current count. That is, from an original 4 or 6 card suit he discards his lowest because he has an odd number left. So West was indicating an even number of clubs, certainly 6 on this hand. When East ruffed in with the spade ace, defeating the contract required either 3 heart tricks or 2 hearts and 1 club. East gave his side no chance for 3 heart tricks and his partner trusted him when he tried to cash the third heart. Since East knows the club distribution, he should return a club at trick 7 and let his partner play hearts. Assuming East *doesn't* know the club distribution, he should play a low heart at trick 7 and when partner wins the king and returns

card for a doubleton. If not, he'll have a guess. Finally, once East has let the heart ace, he should continue with the queen. Then if partner had Kxx (with Kx East already blew it), East would stay on lead to return a club."

Marshall Miles: "East is at fault. The first questionable play was ducking two rounds of spades. Perhaps East was playing declarer for something like KJxxxx, Kx, xx, Axx. But that would assume that declarer was playing illogically since, with that hand, he would play a club at trick two before starting the trumps.

East might have been playing West for J9 doubleton of spades, in which case a quick duck would almost surely enable West to score the jack. But there is a good chance that he would score the jack anyway and there is some risk in ducking twice. Suppose that South holds KJxxxx, xx, Kx, Axx. Now West must show his distribution in diamonds; East must refuse to ruff in the third round of diamonds, and when West gets in on the fourth round of diamonds (as South discards his last heart), West must underlead his 10-9 of clubs.

But for East's duck to be effective when West has the J9 doubleton, it must be made without apparent thought; and there is no time to work out the variations, so I can't really blame East for ducking.

East's clear cut error was in leading the heart 5 at trick 8. That is the way he would play with AQ95 (declarer could be concealing the three). East knew that if West had Kxx, the third round wouldn't cash. So the correct play was to cash the ace of hearts and lead a club and, if West didn't have the king of hearts, he could play declarer for an error and attempt to cash another club. If East wanted to take a deep position that no club was cashable (West having started with seven and declarer having the foresight to put up the queen at trick one despite having the singleton ace), to be consistent, East should lead a low heart at trick seven. The only way to get three heart tricks is to play West for Kx."

Here we have a typical cash-out problem, difficult at IMP scoring and often insoluble at matchpoints. Because this is an IMP problem, the defenders should both know to play for either three hearts or for two hearts and one club. Thus, the defense's high cards are known by assumption. The problem is the count. Apparently Marshall has been out in the suburbs too long, for in the big town nearly every declarer with three shall hearts and a singleton club ace would try to confuse the defense by putting up the club queen from dummy. Indeed, the tough players would even "try" the club queen from Qxx in a similar situation.

Since West knows that East will play him for the heart king, no suit preference message about that card within the club suit is necessary. This means that the current count method proposed by Steve would be an acceptable means of conveying the appropriate distributional information; if this method was agreed to by the partner-

ship. I'm not certain that this agreement will always be optimal, since it seems to me that West will often need to give suit preference signals. But here all of the relevant high cards are already placed.

However, West had an alternative solution available on this deal. He should have thrown ^{the} heart ten when the second round of trumps was played. Then East would be certain his partner had three hearts, since he would not blank his king for fear of blocking the suit. East would lead a low heart after winning the spade ace, grab the heart return, and know what would cash. In the absence of a firm agreement as to what the club discard would mean, his solution is best and West should have found it. The proposed answer, as is the case for many improvised defensive plays, is somewhat fortuitous in that West could not adopt it if there were no heart honor in dummy. West could not waste his heart ten if it was a potential winner.