

	North	East
West	S-AQ82 H-J3 D-KQ852 C-75	S-9543 H-K876 D-J109 C-96
	South	
	S-K H-AQ1092 D-63 C-KJ1083	

Matchpoints, neither side vulnerable

North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1H	Pass
1S	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	3C	Pass
3D	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Trick 1: S6, 2, 5, K.

Trick 2: H2, 5, J, 6.

Trick 3: C7, 9, J, Q.

Trick 4: S7, A, 3, H9.

Trick 5: C5, 6, 10, A.

Trick 6: SJ, 8, 4, H10.

Trick 7: S10, Q, 9, HQ.

Trick 8: DK, 9, 3, A.

Declarer now had the remainder. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "East clearly could have beaten the hand at trick 2 by winning the heart king and returning a spade. The defenders would come to 2 clubs and 1 trick in each other suit. However, if hearts is the suit declarer is trying to set up, ducking is clearly right. If declarer has AQ9xx, he will probably finesse the nine on the way back, and at least communications are made more difficult in a hand

with huge communication problems to begin with. The question is whether East can afford to duck a trick when his side will have trouble gathering tricks. West, however, has an easier play to make because he knows more about the hand. After two tricks, declarer must have nine tricks unless East has a heart honor. Therefore, the problem suit is clubs, not hearts. So West should duck the first club. Declarer still might get home by making a series of inspired guesses, but it is unlikely."

Marshall Miles: "I think West was 75% at fault. East's duck of the jack of hearts is questionable, and if he had won, the defense would have been easier. And it is hard to construct a hand where his duck would gain. If declarer had K, Q109xx, xx, AQ10xx, East could win the heart king and return a club, and West could sacrifice a club trick to kill the heart suit. If declarer had K, Q109xx, xx, AKxxx, once his heart suit was shut out he could shift to diamonds. However, it is hard to tell what to do so early in the hand. When West won the club trick, it was much easier for him to know that he should return a heart to kill the only possible entry to declarer's clubs. If he had done so, declarer would have a choice, discard a losing spade on the third round of hearts, but establish a heart winner for the defenders; or else lose a spade, two diamonds and two clubs."

On a double-dummy basis, this hand may be adjudicated easily. Had East won the heart king and returned his partner's lead (where have I heard that rule?), the hand would go down routinely because the club finesse would lose. The defenders would simply plug away at spades, and West need only duck the first diamond to ensure the set. On the other hand, West can do little once his partner has let the first heart go by. Steve's suggestion that West should duck the club won't work; declarer wins the club jack and leads a diamond. West must duck, but declarer leads a heart to his queen and tries another diamond. With diamonds splitting so favorably, an overtrick rolls in. Marshall's suggestion that West should return a heart after winning the first club also won't work. Declarer wins the heart queen and leads a diamond. West must duck, and declarer tries a second club. After winning this, what can West do? If he exits with a spade, declarer wins the A and Q before getting out with the fourth spade. Neither defender can profitably win this trick.

Of course, bridge is not a double-dummy game. In assessing blame, we must try to guess what might have happened had the defenders tried other options. Assuming East ducked the heart smoothly enough, declarer might

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have placed the king in West's hand. The problem with East's tactic is that it worked! Declarer never tried to bring in the heart suit. But everything else worked for him. East gave up one trick to save four in the heart suit, but it turned out he couldn't afford to give up the one.

West's problem is that he knows diamonds lie well for declarer. Is there a way to divert him? Nothing is certain, but I would suggest West might win the first club with the ace and try the diamond seven. Thinking that clubs might come in and diamonds not, declarer might go back to the heart suit. If the defense gets its heart trick back, they can revert to spades. A greedy declarer could go down.

When the defense is obscure, it is probably correct to assign blame on the basis of technical accuracy. Thus East should get the charge. But West might have tried harder, since he could tell declarer would succeed on the defense he was following.