

	North	
	S—105	
	H—10	
West	D—AJ10876542	East
S—J72	C—7	S—A864
H—AJ865		H—732
D—9	South	D—void
C—AK84	S—KQ93	C—QJ9532
	H—KQ94	
	D—KQ3	
	C—106	

Both vulnerable, IMPs

South	West	North	East
1D	1H	5D	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Trick 1: CK, 7, J, 6.

Trick 2: S2, 5, A, 3.

Trick 3: S4, K, 7, 10.

Declarer now claimed. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "This problem is so easy the defenders should never mess it up. East's trick one signal must be suit preference, indicating values in spades. West's spade 2 should indicate a desire to have that suit returned. West's play was terrible; he should lead the jack, which can't possibly be misread. Actually, in this situation, West should probably lead the king from Kxx so partner can't possibly mess up. East on this hand did just as he should have. West was totally at fault."

Marshall Miles: "West gets the charge. I don't know why East didn't play the queen of clubs, rather than the jack, at the first trick; but that had no bearing on the later play. West should shift to a spade since East might have the king-queen of spades instead of the ace. If so, a spade trick could be lost by cashing the ace of hearts at trick two. But West should lead the jack of spades, not the deuce. From East's point of view, West might have held the king of spades, the queen-jack of hearts, and the ace-king of clubs."

Defense is difficult, which is why our expert panelists so often disagree. Here though, they both point at that deuce of spades lead, and I make it unanimous, so this must be an easy hand. West reasoned correctly that spades should be tried before cashing the heart ace, because a slow spade (i.e., KQ) might get away. Only an overtrick could get lost by this switch (if South had AKQ), so West had solved the defense for this deal. But his technique was faulty. As the panelists have stressed, East could not tell where the third trick was; sometimes people do bid suits not headed by the ace. This is a theme we have seen recurrently. Low leads should promise strength in the suit. In a cash-out situation such as the present one, West should lead his highest card so that East knows what to do. Even from Qxx, the honor should be led; what if declarer held KJ9x? When East wins the ace, he could give away the contract by returning a spade. Don't let partner make a "mistake"!