

North  
 S—943  
 H—QJ542  
 D—AJ3  
 C—85

South  
 S—K2  
 H—K87  
 D—KQ10  
 C—KJ976

West  
 S—AQ5  
 H—A103  
 D—8762  
 C—1043

East  
 S—J10876  
 H—96  
 D—954  
 C—AQ3

**Both Vulnerable, IMPs**

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2D*	Pass
2H	Pass	2NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		*Transfer

Trick 1: D8, 3, 4, Q  
 Trick 2: H7, 3, J, 6  
 Trick 3: H2, 9, K, 10

Trick 4: H8, A, 4, D5  
 Trick 5: C4, 5, Q, K

Declarer cashed his red suit winners to make 2NT. Who gets the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "West should duck the second heart lead and win the third because often his partner will tell him what to lead. In this case, East's low diamond induced West to correctly play a club, but West's middle club, the 4, wasn't readable. If West had held 10 8 3, the 8 would convey the intended message. East read the club 4 as showing something in the suit, so he saw no reason to win the ace and switch to spades. West should lead the club 10, which East will read as his highest. East, therefore, will switch to spades as the only hope to beat the contract."

**Marshall Miles:** "There are two factors which make it difficult to assign the blame. First, South's bidding is very strange. Why didn't he bid three hearts over 2NT with three-card heart support, plus a ruffing value? Both defenders might reasonably assume that South could not have his actual hand. Since only a part-score was involved, it might be correct to try to avoid giving away overtricks rather than going all-out to set the contract.

"Second, were the defenders playing that the lead of a ten shows zero or two higher? If so, West should have led the ten of clubs rather than the ambiguous 4 at trick 5.

"Assuming that it is correct to try to set the contract, East is at fault. He was apparently playing West for either five clubs to the king or four to the king-ten, plus the ace of spades. With the former hand, West would surely have led a club originally. If West had the latter hand, declarer would have only 14 points. It is hard to say which South hand is more likely, the actual one with a ruffing value or KQx, Kxx, KQ10, J9xx, an aceless 14 points. What tips the scales is that with Ax, Axx, xxxx, K10xx, West would probably lead a club originally."

Certainly it can be difficult to defend against players who do not bid the way we think they should (Marshall ought to know . . . ). On the other hand, if South had chosen the normal correction to three hearts, the defenders would have had no opportunity for a plus score. Let us then praise South for giving the defense a sporting chance and give West the blame he deserves for a careless play.

When West won the heart ace, he could count at least seven red tricks for declarer. Obviously, lots of spade tricks are needed and they will be available if partner has either Kxxxx or the club ace and any five spades. Surely with Kxxxx of spades, East would have signalled at trick 4 with a high diamond spot (if he had one) or with a small club; he probably would not be able to afford a high spade, because that would be the setting trick. So West correctly inferred the winning play, and accurately switched to a club. But unfortunately, East had not worked everything out, so he (perhaps unthinkingly as Marshall observed) hoped partner had four club tricks and the spade ace. His play of the queen rather than the ace suggests that East was trying to avoid a committal play; maybe overtricks were on his mind.

It's that horrible club 4 that did it. West knew that East had to win this trick and switch. Was he saving the club 10 for next hand? Or did he want to avoid declarer's finessing successfully on the second round of clubs? Whatever one's lead agreements might be, leading a high card through dummy's two small must mean "Don't play this suit back." And that's just what West wanted and why he should have led the club 10 at trick 5.