

## North

S—K964  
H—KQ5  
D—105  
C—KQ106

## South

S—AQJ5  
H—A62  
D—J964  
C—A8

## East

S—82  
H—93  
D—KQ73  
C—J9532

## West

S—1073  
H—J10874  
D—A82  
C—74

*Neither vulnerable, match-points*

## South

1NT (16-18)  
Pass

## West

Pass  
Pass

## North

3NT

## East

Pass

Trick 1: HJ, K, 9, 6.

Trick 2: S4, 2, J, 3.

Trick 3: D4, 2, 10, Q.

Trick 4: H3, 2, 7, Q.

Trick 5: D5, 3, 9, A.

Trick 6: H4, 5, C2, HA.

When declarer cashed out his spades, East was squeezed in the minors. Making 5NT allowed N-S to surpass the score of the normal humans who played 4S. Which defender deserves the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "I don't think anyone played well on this hand, including South. The best play for 11 tricks is the clubs 10 finesse at trick 2. Fiddling around with diamonds only gives the defense a chance to take their 3 tricks in that suit and doesn't improve declarer's chances very much.

Both defenders should be mighty suspicious when with 29+ HCP in the two hands, declarer leads low toward 10x. East, at trick 3, knows declarer has 3 points in spades plus 3 aces. That's 15 HCP and the 4th ace would give him too many points, so declarer must have the diamond J for his bid. Why would declarer play a diamond toward the 10x if he had AJ? If declarer had the 8 or 9, he would play from the dummy. He can't have AJxxx without the 8 or 9, and he would never play the hand this way with AJxx. East should conclude that declarer is messing around and return a diamond at trick 4. When West gets in at trick 5, he should ask himself why declarer led a diamond toward the 10x missing AQ. He would not do that holding the king and so, West should play a diamond at trick 6. Both defenders gave perfect examples of robot defense; just play with no thought involved."

**Marshall Miles:**

West is entirely at fault. There were only three significant cards West could have been in doubt about: the queen of spades, the king of diamonds, and the jack of clubs. Suppose that South held AJx, Axx, KJ9x, Axx. In that case, he couldn't avoid taking the rest of the tricks. Besides, that hand is impossible because declarer wouldn't play the diamonds that way.

Change South's hand to AJ doubleton of spades so that he would only have three spade tricks. In that case, he would have enough length in the minors so that he would still be able to take the rest of the tricks.

To put it simply, South's play of the diamond suit indicated that he did not have the king and the defenders' only chance to take another trick was if East had the king of diamonds. East could lose his diamond trick if it were not cashed."

Steve accused everyone but the dummy of erring; I would go after North, too, for failing to use Stayman. But South is the hero. Perhaps he should be given credit for rejecting the simple line of the club finesse. Knowing that West has 5 or 6 hearts to East's 1 or 2 makes the club finesse less than 50%. This deal comes from a high-level pair event and all of the players were of international caliber.

The defenders sure looked bad here, though. East's heart return at trick 2, while not inspired, cannot be criticized too severely. From his point of view, it cannot cost; and it could be necessary if South has misrepresented his hand during the auction. But West knew, or should have known, all. Whatever the bidding might conceal, the play guarantees that East has the king of diamonds. And why would declarer be attacking diamonds if he had work to do in other suits? No, West was setting up his hearts for next hand. He was not thinking about this one.