

West	H—KJ962	East	East	South	West	North
S—KQ102	D—K94	S—A954	Pass	3C	3D*	4C
H—4	C—K4	H—Q853	Dbl.**	Pass	Pass	Pass
D—AQ10853	South	D—J762	*For Takeout — **Responsive			
C—A2	S—76	C—3				
	H—A107		Trick 1: H4, 2, Q, A.			
	D—		Trick 2: CJ, A, 4, 3.			
	C—QJ1098765		Trick 3: S2, 3, A, 7.			
			Trick 4: S4, 6, Q, 8.			

May 19

Now the ruff was gone and the contract was made. While the auction was poorly judged by E-W, +200 would actually have produced an average. Several pairs reached the doomed slam and a couple allowed 3C to be the final contract! Who gets the charge for the defensive calamity?

Steve Evans: "Clearly, E-W were not on the same wave length on this hand. East should know West's lead at trick one is a singleton; he would have had a better lead than from 1074 of earts. So he should win the spade at trick 3 and lead a high heart back at trick 4 so that West will cash a second spade before trying the diamond ace. If West, by some chance, did have three hearts, the defense was never beating the contract. Maybe West should lead the spade 10 at trick 3 but I don't know if that would matter to East. East earns 90% of the chage and West gets 10%."

Marshall Miles: "West was at fault. It is hard for East to believe that his partner has made a takeout bid with a singleton heart. (My choice would be to overcall 3S, even if a natural 3D bid were available.) So West has to do something drastic to get his message across. Leading the queen of spades (with the jack in the dummy) should do the job."

The defenders' hopeless bidding methods led to a poor defense as well as a silly contract. With no apparent distributional requirements for either the overcall or the double, neither defender knew what to play partner for. Someone had to work out that a ruff was needed to defeat the contract. With the good hearts in dummy, it is also cashout time.

West knew more about the deal than his partner. He knew there was a ruff about, he knew there was a chance the diamond ace would not survive, and he knew his partne did not have five spades. His job was to force East to win a spade trick, give him a ruff, and at the same time get sufficient count to know which additional trick, if any, will cash. Having made the decision to play for the penalty, West was certainly hoping for down two.

The spade deuce is a clear error. That is how West would play with, say, Kxxx of sapdes, hoping for his partner to win the ace and queen of spades and furnish count in the suit so that East would know what to cash. The lead of a low card suggests a return of that suit. The correct sequence is for West to lead the king of spades, expecting a count card from East because dummy's jack makes East's attitude known when the king wins. West should follow with the spade ten in an attempt to force East to win the trick and alert him to the need for an unusual return. Leading the spade queen at trick 3 is not sensible, because the defense might need three spade tricks to get +500, and the forced overtake establishes dummy's jack. Would it not be mortifying to get the ruff only to allow declarer to escape for down one if South's club 5 were, instead, the spade five? Leading the spade ten at trick 3 might work on this hand, but once again, West would have a problem knowing what to cash after scoring his ruff and spade king. Use of "present count" would resolve this problem, so leading the spade ten would constitute a valid sblon if the partnership used this tool.

Steve's comment that a low heart from 1074 would not be a good choice has some merit, but since West did not communicate his holdings in the other suits effectively, East can be excused for seeing the lead as a choice among unattractive options. Singleton leads are not always such a great idea anyway. On the actual deal, the defense would have been much easier if West had made the more sensible lead of the spade king. The heart switch after East's nine was played would have been perceived as an obvius singleton. If East is careful to cover dummy's heart to prevent declarer from using the diamond king (pitching his remaining spade) as a scissors, the ruff will be obtained easily.