

North

S—J106

H—QJ7

D—K973

C—1073

South

S—432

H—963

D—105

C—AKQ64

East

S—KQ97

H—A52

D—Q64

C—982

West

S—A85

H—K1084

D—AJ82

C—J5

Both vulnerable, IMP scoring

North

Pass

Pass

East

Pass

Pass

South

INT*(!)

West

Pass

*12-14 HCP

Trick 1: H4, Q, A, 6.

Trick 2: H5, 9, K, 7.

Trick 3: H10, J, 2, 3.

Trick 4: D3, 4, 10, J.

Trick 5: D2, K, 6, 5.

Declarer now completed his thievery by running off the five club tricks. Who should be charged with complicity?

MARSHALL MILES: "I suppose that West is more at fault. However, South played the hand rather strangely. If he had led a club to the queen at trick four, followed by a low diamond to the king, he could almost surely have stolen his contract.

"From East's point of view at trick two, it was difficult to visualize a hand where INT could be defeated. If South were missing the ace of spades, he needed very good clubs and the ace of diamonds or king of hearts for his bid. East's best chance was to find South with a hole in the club suit, with the honors favorably placed for the defenders: Axx, xxx, Axx, KJxx; or Axx, xxx, Axxx, AQx; or Axx, xxx, Jxxx, AKJ. In all of these cases a return of the nine of clubs would make the defense easier by showing where East was weak (and by implication, where he might have strength). With Qxx of spades and no desire for a spade shift, East would simply return a heart.

"West might have gotten a clue from East's pitch, if he had cashed his good heart, but he was afraid his partner would have a difficult discard. Once East failed to return a low club at trick two, West's best chance was to lead a spade, not a diamond, playing South for Qxx, xxx, Q10x, AKxx."

STEVE EVANS: "West was not too intelligent on this board, although South, despite the good board he received, made two poor plays. I can't understand West's

reasoning in returning a diamond at trick 5. Why doesn't he just cash his heart to see partner's discard? If he does, East will throw the diamond queen (he definitely wants a spade shift and West's heart ten at trick three probably indicates the ace). I don't see how West thought returning a diamond was logical. If East had the queen, declarer was fooling around, and if South has it, there is no reason to play his suit. I don't understand South's play of the heart nine at trick 2 since it allowed West's suit preference signal. And the diamond play at trick 4 was just plain stupid. If he wants to try to steal the contract, he should lead a club to the K or Q, and lead a diamond. Since West has no possible knowledge of what South has done, there is no way he will rise with the ace."

In a column devoted to defense, both panelists found declarer's play so outlandishly poor as to merit special condemnation. While I, too, find South's line bizarre, in his defense I would stress that he did make the contract (in an international match of some import), and he gave the opponents a sporting chance to 'set him. For those who think such sportsmanship is silly, consider its effect on the opponents for the rest of the match. South's weird play may be considered a 5-IMP gambit which, if it works, can totally destroy the defenders' morale. South could see that two of a major was cold (and his teammates duly picked up 110), so even down three would only cost 5 IMPs as opposed to down 1.

From a defensive perspective, it seems to me that only West can be charged. East's heart return at trick two was forced, as his partner might have had five hearts. (This is not a defect attributable to fourth-best leads; had the defenders been playing "attitude" leads, South would have played the heart three at trick 1.) And East could not afford to pop the diamond queen at trick 4, as declarer might have had Axxx.

West should have gotten it right, albeit fortuitously. His plan should be to score three hearts, two diamonds, the spade ace and either the spade queen or club queen

(continued on page 10)

CHARGE ACCOUNT

(continued from page 5)

(that is, South has Kxx, xxx, Q10xx, AKx or Kxx, xxx, Q10x, AKxx). With this construction, South has his bid, the play has been rational, and the defense can prevail. What West apparently had in mind was to win the third diamond (hoping declarer had only three diamonds, but not giving up anything if he had four), and exiting safely with the club jack. So exiting with the low diamond at trick 5 was not irrational—it was less risky than a spade or club at that point—but it was wrong. The simple play of cashing the good heart was correct. Partner would have no discard problem as he could spare any of his little cards. And if declarer had fudged a point and was missing the spade king, partner would be able to signal with a high spade. On the actual deal, East might have risen to the occasion by finding Steve's suggested pitch of the diamond queen, but even a sleepy East would have been able to play a low club (the nine of spades might be the setting trick if South has the ace). The key point is that South would have to pitch too, and this might make the defense easy. For example, if South pitched a spade (from his purported Kxx), West could lead ace and another while still retaining the diamond ace.