East made a couple of fine defensive plays on this deal, but Declarer parried with some good plays of her own, and eventually prevailed.

Declarer wins the second round of Spades (East pitches a Club), and must flush out East’s Aces in order to reach 9 tricks. She leads the ♥K, but East cleverly ducks that, making his own hold-up play in order to shut out Dummy’s Club suit. Declarer persists with Clubs and East wins the second round, then exits with a Diamond. Next comes the ♥K, but again East holds up his Ace, and holds up yet again when Declarer plays the ♥J! East has succeeded in keeping Declarer from reaching Dummy, but only temporarily. Declarer leads another Heart, which East must win. Again, East exits with a Diamond. Declarer cashes the remaining Diamond winners and loses the fifth round to East. East’s remaining card is a Club and that gives Declarer her 9th trick. It took a while, but finally, at Trick 13, Declarer reaches Dummy!

Post Script: If Declarer had held three Clubs instead of just two, East would have wanted to duck the second Club and win the third round. How did East know to win the second round instead? His helpful Partner gave him a count signal, playing the Two on the first round. By playing a low Club West showed an odd number … if West had held a doubleton, he would have played his high Club to show an even number. Nice defense by E-W, albeit in a losing cause.

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