

# CHARGE ACCOUNT

by David Weiss

<b>North</b>		
<b>West</b>		<b>East</b>
S-J1084	S-K73	S-5
H-K98	H-A632	H-J10
D-KQ2	D-AJ	D-108753
C-J105	C-AK42	C-Q9873
<b>South</b>		
	S-AQ962	
	H-Q754	
	D-964	
	C-6	

IMPs, E-W vulnerable:

<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>
Pass	Pass	1C	Pass
1S	Pass	2NT	Pass
3H	Pass	4D	Pass
4H	Pass	Pass	Pass

- Trick 1: DK, **A**, 3, 4  
Trick 2: HA, 10, 4, 8  
Trick 3: H2, J, Q, **K**  
Trick 4: H9, 3, C9, H5  
Trick 5: CJ, **A**, 3, 6

Declarer was now able to ruff a spade (rather than a diamond) in dummy; thus he made the contract. Who gets the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "This is a hand on which West had all the information to do the correct thing but didn't use it. After the play to four tricks, declarer is known to have 5S, 4H, and probably 3D and 1C, based on partner's signal. But regardless of declarer's minor suit distribution, the contract will go down if West plays diamonds. The only holding that will foil diamond plays is declarer's having 10xx of diamonds; but then the hand is cold no matter what West leads. So a diamond play will set the contract whenever it can be set."

**Marshall Miles:** "It was West's fault—and it had nothing to do with signaling. If West had played the queen of diamonds, East would play the eight, showing "present count" and West could at least **hope** that East had the ten.

The only South hand I can think of, consistent with the bidding, where a diamond continuation would cost is: S-Axxxx, H-Qxxx, D-108xx, C-Void.

That is not a likely hand, as South must have a precise distribution and East must hold the singleton queen of spades along with the nine, but not the ten or eight, of diamonds. Besides, with 9xxx of diamonds, East might have played his next to lowest diamond at the first trick."

The panel has analyzed this problem accurately, in my opinion. At the time East was criticized for his directing the defense toward the club suit, with his three of diamonds and nine of clubs. But, an indication of strength in a suit is not necessarily a command to play the suit, and in this instance the knowledge that East had clubs locked up should have assured West that his own spades would suffice to beat the contract. West can tell that his jack of spades will provide the setting trick if dummy can be tapped, or even if he gives a ruff-sluff. So the ten of diamonds is the key card, and West must hope his partner has it. However, East is not blameless. He should have signalled his possession of the highest relevant diamond at trick one, not only because Marshall's unlikely hand is a possibility, but because it is a useful general principle for the weaker hand to signal as much as possible. East knows that West will be making the critical decisions for the defense, and knowledge about the diamond ten could conceivably be crucial. So, curiously enough, East, with his terrible hand, should have exercised two opportunities to signal "high" cards: the eight of diamonds at trick one, and the nine of clubs at trick four. Then West could not possibly (ha, ha!) have gone wrong.

As for whether South should have played a **low** heart to his queen at trick two, I leave that interesting question for other analysts . . .