

CHARGE ACCOUNT . . . By David Weiss

North
 S—J2
 H—K1093
West
 S—KQ43
 H—862
 D—K
 C—98753

South
 S—9875
 H—AQJ7
 D—873
 C—AQ

East
 S—A106
 H—54
 D—A109652
 C—64

Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring

North	East	South	West
1C	1D	1H	Pass
2H	Pass	2S	Pass
3H	Pass	4H	Dbl.
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Trick 1: DK, 4, 6, 3.
 Trick 2: C9, 2, 6, A.

Declarer could now draw trumps, pitch his diamonds on dummy's clubs, and then establish dummy's jack of diamonds via a ruffing finesse for his tenth trick. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "I would hate playing with such a chintzy partner as East. On this bidding it is unlikely that West has two diamonds, in which case he needs to know what suit to play next. East should signal with the diamond ten so that West knows to lead a spade. East could overtake the diamond to give a ruff, but it is possible that West could have two diamonds and the defenders would look pretty silly. East gets full charge for unclear signalling."

Marshall Miles: "East was at fault for making such a wishy-washy signal. From West's point of view, declarer might have held 5-3-2 of diamonds, in which case East's six was his lowest card. Why not play the ten? If West had a doubleton, he would continue the suit. However, East should assume that the king was a singleton and signal suit preference."

"But West was not blameless. Since the signal was unreadable, he should fall back on common sense. If East had the ace of clubs, the hand could still be set (one trick instead of two) by shifting to a spade. If East's ace were in spades, it could be disastrous not to shift to a spade. But it is obvious that East could spare a higher diamond. So it is a case of common sense versus trusting one's partner completely. I'd still give 80% of the blame to East."

East's play was certainly careless. Directing a spade shift was not a difficult play and the diamond 10 should have been automatic. But is West guilty of contributory negligence? East was sure to have an ace outside of diamonds and, in that case, a spade shift would be sure to set the hand. The defense would score two diamonds, West's spade, and East's ace. If East's ace were in spades, of course, the ruff would produce an extra (doubled) undertrick. If East's ace were in clubs or hearts, the spade shift would break even on many patterns on which declarer had five hearts, because the defense would lose a tempo by not establishing a spade trick before clubs were established.

Is there, then, justification for the club shift? In doubling, West announced his greedy mood. While the spade shift would produce a set, the club shift would destroy the hand if East had the singleton club ace. Suppose East held xxxx, xx, A109876, A (leaving declarer with A10x, AQJx, 532, Qxx). The club shift could generate down four!

West fell from grace by trusting his partner's carding. Had East held the proposed hand, his carding would have been correct and the spade shift would have brought in 100 instead of 700 points. The six could not have been a high diamond, so West was correct in risking the club play. Why double if one does not intend to go for the throat?