

# CHARGE ACCOUNT

## by David J. Weiss

		E-W vulnerable, Board-a-match			
		North		East	
West	S—Q J82	S—Q J82		S—A653	
	H—876	H—876		H—J5	
	D—72	D—72		D—10965	
	C—8532	C—8532		C—Q94	
		South		West	
West	S—107	S—K94		Pass	
	H—A1093	H—KQ42		1NT*	
	D—A843	D—KQJ		Pass	
	C—KJ10	C—A76		Pass	
		North		South	
		S—Q J82		S—A653	
		H—876		H—J5	
		D—72		D—10965	
		C—8532		C—Q94	

\*16-18 pts.

Trick 1: H9, 6, J, K.  
 Trick 2: S9, 10, J, 3.  
 Trick 3: S2, 5, K, 7.  
 Trick 4: DK, 4, 2, 6.  
 Trick 5: DQ, A, 7, 5.

Trick 6: H3, 7, 5, 4.  
 Trick 7: C2, 4, 7, 10.  
 Trick 8: CK, 3, 9, A.  
 Trick 9: DJ, 3, C5, D9.  
 Trick 10: C6, J, 8, Q.

East could now cash a diamond and the spade ace, but had to give dummy a spade at the end, making 2! Who gets the charge?

**Marshall Miles:** "I believe that the defenders were equally at fault. East got the defense off to a bad start at the first trick. My assumption is that the nine showed zero or two higher. It was very unlikely that the nine was West's top card and if it were, East's play would be immaterial. Given that the nine was almost surely from A109x(x), K109x(x), or Q109x(x), what purpose did it serve to play the jack? If East had most of the high cards, he might play the jack to unblock but West is bound to have most of the defense's high cards and plenty of entries. So playing the jack ought to guarantee the queen. (This is similar to having the nine led when dummy has J10x and covers with the ten. East should not play the queen with Qxx, only with KQx.)

"West made the assumption when he led the three of hearts at trick six. However, it is hard to see how a diamond continuation could lose after East's high-low. So it was a case of not analyzing the hand carefully after East's misleading play. Again, at trick 8, West should lead a diamond. He was probably so demoralized after trick six that he quit thinking."

**Steve Evans:** "The errors on this hand were numerous but West gets the majority of the blame for making the larger number of errors. I strongly disagree with leading the heart nine from that combination. The three should be led because too often the high spot is needed for later play. There is also no reason for East to play the jack at trick 1 because partner must have led from honor-109x. On this hand the jack should not really cost, but it did mislead his partner. When West led to trick 6 he played his partner for QJ of hearts. Certainly East should have had them but since East had signalled his diamond length, West should just play a diamond. The same holds true when he got in at trick 8. West got a completely wrong picture of the hand at trick 1 and didn't let any later evidence alter that picture. If he had paid attention to the diamond plays, he could have returned a diamond and the defense would have had a much happier ending."

I believe the key error on this deal has escaped the panelists' notice. It is certainly true that several questionable plays took place but nothing went seriously wrong until after trick 5. There was no reason for West to take the diamond ace; one more duck and all would have been clear. On the actual defense, West must have feared a 5-card diamond suit in declarer's hand and then panic set in.

Incidentally, this deal offers yet another instance of the utility of the Smith echo (a high card played in the suit attacked by declarer connotes a better than apparent holding in the suit originally led). After East plays the heart jack at trick one, he could high-low in spades if holding the heart queen. The unblock of the jack is not as bad a play as the panelists suggest if the echo is a partnership tool, and it might facilitate running the suit if West has A109xx.