Charge Account By David Weiss Aug 1981

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                    North                    Neither vul., IMP scoring
                    S—A10765
                    H—Q72                    North   East   South   West
    West            D—J42        East        Pass    Pass   1H      Pass
    S—932           C—63         S—K84       2H      Pass   4H      Pass
    H—86                         H—J         Pass    Pass
    D—Q1096         South        D—A875
    C—AK87          S—QJ         C—Q10952
                    H—AK109543
                    D—K3
                    C—J4
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Trick 1: **CA**, 3, 9, J.	Trick 4: SJ, 2, 5, **K**.
Trick 2: D10, 2, 8, **K**.	Trick 5: **DA**, 3, 6, 4.
Trick 3: **HA**, 6, 2, J.	Trick 6: D5, **H10**, D9, J.

Declarer drew the last trump and claimed, pitching his small club on the spade 10. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "The fault is at least 80% East's. First, East should have played the ten, rather than the nine, of clubs. The nine should deny possession of the ten and this could mislead Wet as to East's distribution (playing declarer for the jack-ten). However, even the nine should have persuaded West to underlead his king of clubs for a diamond return. West certainly was disregarding his partner's signal when he shifted to the ten of diamonds.

"But East's defense is incomprehensible. Why didn't East simply win the ace of diamonds, return a club, and wait for a spade or a diamond trick? East didn't even know that West had the queen of diamonds. West might have held: xxx, xxx, 109x, AKxx.

"Perhaps East thought West had a five-card club suit and that was why West didn't attempt to cash (or underlead) a club at trick two. But West wouldn't know that East have five clubs. Also, it would be an unusual plan to shift to the diamond ten at trick two from xxx, xx, A106, AKJ84, and if South held K93 of diamonds, he would have covered with dummy's jack at trick two."

Steve Evans: "I think East was mesmerized by South's falsecard at trick 1. Certainly there is no reason for him to duck the diamond at trick 2. And it seems logical in a cash-out situation for East to play partner for his actual hand instead of Q10x, AKxxx in the minors. I think West's defense was correct since a switch to diamonds was necessary if East had Kxx, Q109xxx in the minors. But I wouldn't be too hard on East as he doesn't have any solid information on which to base his defense."

It could certainly be necessary to West to underlead his club king at trick two. If declarer had the spade king instead of the queen-jack, a diamond misguess would be the only hope for the defense. And equally, it could be necessary for West to shift to the diamond ten at trick two, as Steve's example shows.

But both of these plays are fraught with risk. Suppose that West underleads, and a desperate East returns the favor by underleading Axxxx of diamonds. With a certain major suit trick, East would not underlead, of course; but with Qx of spades, East might not be able to read the position.

A diamond shift is also risky, especially as East's high club could hardly be construed as a request for West to play diamonds. On the actual deal, once West made the shift, East could not know what to do. If East had (correctly) won the ace and returned a diamond, he could not be certain which minor would yield the setting trick when he got in with the spade king.

Ducking the diamond ace was a poor play to be sure, but winning it would not have made the winning defense a certainty. That is why I think West merits the charge.

West should have continued clubs at trick two. South is unlikely to be ruffing, because with a six-card suit, East might have entered the auction. A low club would have been a confidence builder, but even a high club would have done the job. The main advantage of a club play is that East may be in a better position to execute the defense. If the club gets ruffed, East will know just what he must play for in diamonds. And if the club doesn't get ruffed, East will automatically play a low diamond if he doesn't have the ace; if East does have the diamond ace, he will know you have an honor (why else underlead?) and can make an informed play which will depend on his major suit holdings. Sometimes (rarely in our column deals) simplest is best.