

CHARGE ACCOUNT

David J. Weiss

West
 S: 104
 H: QJ105
 D: KQ6
 C: K1063

North
 S: QJ7
 H: 87
 D: 10952
 C: QJ42

South
 S: 96
 H: AK643
 D: 874
 C: A97

East
 S: AK8532
 H: 92
 D: AJ3
 C: 85

Both vul, IMP scoring:

West	North	East	South
P	P	1S	Dbl.
Rdbl.	P	P	1NT
Dbl.	P	P	Rdbl.
P	2C	P	P
Dbl.	P	P	2H
Dbl.	P	P	P

Trick 1: S 10, J, K, 6
 Trick 2: C 8, 9, K, 2
 Trick 3: S 4, 7, A, 9
 Trick 4: D A, 4, 6, 2
 Trick 5: C 5, A, 3, 4

Declarer now pulled two rounds of trump, cashed two rounds of clubs and then a high spade. He thus went down one. Even though the contract was beaten, the defenders' teammates, who had watched 3NT be made on a squeeze at their table, were not pleased. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "West's defense on this hand was terrible. He knew what should be done, but let his partner guess what to do, knowing partner would guess wrong. After 2 tricks, West knows partner has: S: AKxxxx, H: xx, D: Axx, C: xx, for the following reasons: Spades must be 6-2, else

South wouldn't have a double because he would have 3 spades with a bad hand. On the play of the clubs, partner must have 2, otherwise South wouldn't duck. And declarer's remaining distribution must be 5H and 3D, otherwise he wouldn't double. Also, South is marked with H: AK, C: A, because without AKxxx of hearts, he would have passed 2C.

Since West knew the whole hand, he should have led the K, Q, and a third diamond to collect a 3-trick set."

Marty Shallon: "The charge goes to West. At trick 3, West should stop and count high card points. East is known to have 7 points in spades and none in clubs; this means that East has at least 4 more points in the other suits. Therefore, West can safely return either the K or a low diamond at trick 3. This will fail only when East has the heart ace. However, this cannot be the case because South would not have corrected to 2H with K empty in hearts and Axx in clubs. West also should not have returned a spade because he knows no uppercut will be useful before the defenders have cashed their side tricks. If South has 3 spades, West still will have time to lead a spade through later."

The panelists have taken West severely to task, but in my opinion they have not gone far enough. Given his trump holding, West is unlikely to want ruffs. The diamond king seems to me a more intelligent opening head than the spade, not only because it will either cash or establish a trick immediately, but also because it will prevent partner from mis-inferring the partnership's priorities. Short-suit leads inevitably give the appearance that the leader wants to trump.