

# Charge Account

by David J. Weiss

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## West

S—AQ62  
H—J3  
D—J98632  
C—A

## North

S—975  
H—Q7654  
D—KQ107  
C—7

## East

S—K83  
H—8  
D—A54  
C—Q96542

## South

S—J104  
H—AK1092  
D— — — —  
C—KJ1083

*Neither vulnerable, match points*

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

Trick 1: **CA**, 7, 2, 3  
Trick 2: D6, K, A, **H2**

Declarer drew trumps, making only 4. Who gets the charge?

**Marshall Miles:** "South, for not playing dummy's seven or ten of diamonds at trick 2. Surely, by applying the rule of 11, he could have made an easy overtrick.

Of the defenders, East is mostly at fault, although I think both players made the defense difficult by their bidding. West should have bid two spades over two hearts. Charge East's hand to Kxxx, x, KQ, Kxxxxx, for example, and the four-heart bid would create problems as a result of West's not having shown his suit at a convenient level. The two-spade bid would have warned East to expect more distribution. He would be more nervous about his ace of diamonds not cashing, and might take stronger measures to get a spade shift. Likewise, East's double implied shortness in diamonds and West might have played him for Jxxx, x, A, KJ10xxxx (not that a double would appeal to me with that hand either).

If the blame is assigned on the basis of the cards played on defense only, East must be at fault. He really should have played the queen of clubs instead of the deuce. West would then lead the deuce of spades. East would win and return the eight, and the hand would be set.

West apparently placed a good deal of confidence in partner's club deuce. The diamond shift

serves amplification. In fact, the club nine is the only correct card. The club queen is too valuable to be risked as a suit preference indicator here. What if West held QJxx, Jx, Jxxxx, AK? Now the defense is entitled to two spades, a diamond and a club if the spade shift comes quickly enough, but not if East has directed that shift with his club queen. Declarer will really chortle after he ruffs a club, and finds that he can pitch two spade losers on his now-good jack and ten of clubs. The rule is that in an obvious shifting situation, the suit preference card should be as unambiguous as possible. But one cannot afford to signal with potential tricks. If East cannot read the club nine, that's just too bad. Could it mean "please continue clubs, I cannot stand the obvious switch (to spades)?" I think not; East knows his partner will be switching here because East's auction guaranteed at least one high card in either diamonds or spades.

West apparently placed a good deal of confidence in partner's club deuce. The diamond shift would be necessary if East had a singleton ace of diamonds. There are two problems in this line of reasoning: 1st, this is not a clear-cut suit preference situation of me; and 2nd, since West has two hearts, East can have at most one and with two red singletons his bidding would be unusual. The question in my mind is whether West should play for a far-fetched possibility, showing complete trust, or make the play that would usually work. The double should persuade him to play for the far-fetched possibility."

**Steve Evans:** "East gets 100% of the blame on this hand. On the auction, West has at most 4 cards in hearts and clubs. So he has at least 5 diamonds and possibly 6. No matter what, East wants his partner to lead a spade. However, since West most likely has the spade ace (probably with the queen or jack), he will be unlikely to lead a spade unless strongly encouraged to. I think East should play the club queen to trick 1 which will force West to lead a spade. However, the nine should be good enough because looking at dummy, there must be a switch so East's card should be suit preference."

The panel has accurately blamed East for this disaster. He should have known there was no rush to score the diamond ace and his partner might not have this knowledge. Furthermore, East knew that a spade switch could never cost either a trick or a tempo, and once again his partner might not have this knowledge. From West's perspective, though, the diamond switch might have been necessary. Not only the cases in which East has a singleton diamond must be considered. The diamond switch is needed when South is threatening to pitch one of dummy's spades on his club king; East might have, for example, J10x, x, Ax, QJ10xxxx. While the nine of diamonds might have been preferable to the actual six, West's decision to switch to diamonds seems perfectly correct given his partner's club deuce.

Steve's offhand comment that the club nine would be sufficient suit-preference signal de-