

# Charge Account

David J. Weiss

	<b>North</b>	
	S—AJ84	
	H—Q3	
<b>West</b>	D—AQ974	<b>East</b>
S—109763	C—53	S—K2
H—K96		H—105
D—void	<b>South</b>	D—K632
C—AQ1074	S—Q5	C—K9862
	H—AJ8742	
	D—J1085	
	C—J	

## E—W vulnerable, IMPs

South	West	North	East
2H	Pass	2NT	Pass
3D	Pass	4H	Pass
Pass	Pass		

- Trick 1: C7, 3, K, J  
Trick 2: C6, H2, C4, C5  
Trick 3: H4, K, 3, 5  
Trick 4: H6, Q, 10, A

Declarer now drew the last trump, finessed diamonds and eventually pitched the spade loser on the fifth diamond. Who gets the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "West made a highly imaginative (on this hand, brilliant) lead which should have defeated the contract two or three tricks. When East won the club king at trick 1, he should wonder what partner has led from. The only holdings consistent with the play to trick one are AQ107 and AQ1074. East might wonder why partner has made such a strange lead. When he recalls the bidding, West must be void in diamonds. So East should return the 6 of diamonds (as much suit preference as he can give). West can ruff and return a spade. If declarer refuses the heart finesse, he can go down two; otherwise he will go down three. However, West is certainly not blameless on this hand. When he gets in at trick 3 with the heart king, a spade shift is mandatory. It can never cost and beats the contract whenever East can tie up the diamonds."

**Marshall Miles:** "East and West were equally at fault. West's opening lead seems unduly aggressive, but I can't blame him for making a double dummy lead. East might have found it hard to believe that the opening lead was fourth best from AQ1074. However, the alternative is also improbable—that West had led from Q107 and South had played the jack from AJ4. The next clue East had was that South had bid diamonds. I assume that North-South were not playing Ogust (bad hand, good suit) since (a) it would have been alerted and (b) South's hand doesn't meet either requirement. South must either be showing a feature or a suit, and from East's point of view, it had to be a suit. With the opening lead and the bidding, East should have figured West for a void in diamonds and should have returned a diamond at trick two."

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“West might argue: ‘When East failed to give me my diamond ruff, he was marked with KJ10x or KJxxx of diamonds. Consequently, there was no reason for me to attack spades.’ But that is not a practical argument. It is possible that East failed to read the lead. It is hard to see how it could cost for West to return a spade since South was marked with six cards in spades and diamonds. A spade trick could be lost by not leading spades. The setting trick in diamonds could not be lost.”

This is really an unlucky deal for declarer. Normal defense, beginning with the routine lead of the spade 10, beats the contract because all of the finesses lose. But West's bizarre lead threatened to surpass the par result by a trick; declarer ought to go down two as he cannot refuse either the spade finesse at trick three or the trump finesse a little later. But East couldn't, or more precisely didn't, work out the lead. This is certainly a chargeable error, as the panelists have explained. But West is, in my view, the primary culprit. First of all, if one is planning a desperation lead, the message should be as explicit as possible. The fifth best club would be a louder alarm clock and it might have awakened East. Secondly, at trick three West knew his partner had blown the lead reading. Now West's play matters only if East has both missing kings. The trump return cannot gain, and the spade return cannot lose. So West gets the charge because he made the crucial last mistake.

The opening lead deserves special comment. West's gamble seems not only unilateral, but terribly risky. If declarer has a singleton club and the king and jack placed in any way in the North-South hands, the defense's club trick will vanish. The underlead would have more to gain if West did not have the queen, for then a misguess would be possible. On the actual deal, West's heart king affords him control of the defense. He should lead a spade so that he can see how many tricks are coming in that suit. By the time he wins his trump trick, West should be in a position to know whether an underlead is necessary to beat the contract. At IMP scoring, West's lead deserves condemnation whether or not it worked. At board-a-match though, East would be getting more of the blame as the lead might be justifiable. Board-a-match is a result merchant's game.