

CHARGE ACCOUNT . . . By David Weiss

	North		Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring			
	S—A987642					
	H—K5		East	South	West	North
West	D—73	East	Pass	1H	Pass	1NT*
S—J10	C—94	S—Q53	3D	3H	Pass	4H
H—Q42		H—10	Pass	Pass	Pass	
D—AJ	South	D—KQ109842				*shows spades
C—A87532	S—K	C—Q10				
	H—AJ98763		Trick 1: CA, 4, 10, 6.			
	D—65		Trick 2: DA, 3, 2, 6.			
	C—KJ6		Trick 3: C5, 9, Q, K.			

After unblocking the spade king, declarer was able to pitch his losing diamond on the spade ace to make his game. While South could have made the contract on a double-dummy basis anyway, a more effective defense would likely have defeated him. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "East deserves all the blame. Why didn't he encourage a diamond continuation? My guess is that East was playing his partner for the ace-king of clubs and three diamonds, so he was hoping West would play the king and another club. But it was unrealistic to play West for the king of clubs. West would have bid and South could scarcely have his bids (and if South had Kx, AQJxxx, x, Jxx, the hand couldn't be defeated with a club continuation)."

Steve Evans:

"I think West should have led the ace of diamonds originally, but I don't think his failure to make that lead can be blamed for what happened later." East gets 100% of the charge. It was a virtual certainty that West would lead a club at trick 3 after East played the diamond deuce. East wants partner to continue diamonds so he should play the 10. This is an attitude situation, not a count situation."

West's lead is just awful. While it could prove the only way to set the contract (2 aces and 2 ruffs), the difficulty is that West will be unlikely to be able to tell whether his partner has a club singleton. With the queen of hearts likely to provide a trick, and with 2 aces, West does not need such heroics. If he cannot bear to lead a diamond, the jack of spades would seem more reasonable.

West thought he would be able to diagnose the club distribution by leading the ace of diamonds at trick two. He should have been able to; East's deuce of diamonds is a terrible play. Even if East were worried that a second diamond wouldn't cash, the club king was unlikely to go away. But West might as well have led the diamond ace. If his partner discouraged, then there would be time to try for the club ruff if the view of dummy suggested it.