

# CHARGE ACCOUNT

by David Weiss

	<b>North</b>	
	S-QJ4	
<b>West</b>	H-QJ10	<b>East</b>
S-765	D-QJ10	S-92
H-K7	C-AQ32	H-A83
D-K632		D-A9875
C-10874	<b>South</b>	C-K96
	S-AK1083	
	H-96542	
	D-4	
	C-J5	

E-W vul., IMP scoring

<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>
Pass	Pass	1NT	Pass
2H*	Pass	2S	Pass
3H	Pass	4H	Pass
Pass	Pass		

\*Transfer

Trick 1: H7(!), 10, A, 2

Trick 2: D7, 4, K, 10

Trick 3: D2, J, A, H4

Declarer now led a trump and claimed. Who gets the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "East is the major culprit on this deal although West should get some blame for his stupid opening lead. Since West has three spades, there is no reason to cut down dummy's ruffing ability because spades split. And even if there were enough time to cut down the one spade ruff that might be needed, the low trump lead would block the suit so that three trump plays (required since dummy will have three hearts, we hope) would be impossible. A normal minor suit lead (either one) would make the contract easy to beat. However, the reasoning for East's defense is hard to fathom. The only conceivable holding that his defense would win on is partner having Kx of diamonds, which gives declarer three small diamonds and a club void. On the actual deal, any lead but a low diamond will set the hand. Since declarer's club loser (if he has one) can never disappear because he should have only three minor suit cards, ace and another diamond seems to me to be the play that will make the subsequent defense the easiest."

**Marshall Miles:** "West gets 80% of the blame. If East trusts the opponent's bidding, he should *probably* return the ace of diamonds. North must have thought South was showing a five-card heart suit, otherwise North wouldn't bid four hearts. If South has ten cards in the majors, the only time it gains to lead a low diamond is when South has 5-5-3-0 distribution with three small diamonds. But a low diamond loses when South has the actual hand (almost an impossibility) or 5-5-1-2 distribution missing the ace or king of spades. However, there is a possibility that the opponents have erred, and South has only four hearts. East's play would win if declarer had AKxxx, Kxxx, xx, xx.

While East has a guess, and his play could be right, West made a terrible lead. It is not that he greatly jeopardized his trump trick—although he might do that also, when his partner has Jxx. His lead had nothing to gain, and a minor suit lead (preferably a diamond) was called for by the bidding. If West had led logically, fourth best of either minor, nothing could have gone wrong."

When I selected this problem (from a World Championship report), I hoped it would inspire Marshall to defend an opening lead which only he and a few others have in their repertoires. Instead, he soberly criticized it and correctly observed that a normal lead would have sufficed. Is there a New Year's resolution at work?

West's stupid opening lead should not have cost the contract, though. East must play partner for a major suit winner—otherwise declarer has five spade tricks, four heart tricks, and the club ace—and must concentrate on not letting anything get away. A spade return perhaps maximizes the defense's technical chances, and

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should not lead to a disaster because West knows the major suit count. East should plan to not duck a diamond if led, and he should certainly attempt to cash diamonds (starting with the ace) if declarer takes a desperation club finesse.

The low diamond return is needed only when declarer is 5-5-3-0 and is solid in the majors; and in that case, West would have had a blank hand with the king doubleton of diamonds. He surely would have tried that lead.