

Charge Account by David Weiss

	North		Both vulnerable, IMP scoring			
	S—J54					
	H—10764		South	West	North	East
West	D—1062	East	1NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
S—3	C—954	S—AQ762	(15-17)			
H—93		H—KQ8	Trick 1: D7, 2, A, 5.			
D—K9873	South	D—AJ5	Trick 2: S6, 10, 3, J.			
C—KJ832	S—K1098	C—76	Trick 3: HJ, 9, 6, 8.			
	H—AJ52		Trick 4: HJ, 9, 6, 8.			
	D—Q5		Trick 5: H5, D8, H7, K.			
	C—AQ10		Trick 6: SA, 9, C8, S4.			

The defense was now finished, as declarer could score three spades, three hearts, and the club ace. The blockage in the diamond suit was insurmountable. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "East made a very poor shift at trick 2. Unless West has the spade king, the shift will allow declarer to get to dummy when he never could on his own. Also, the shift is 100% wrong unless partner has the king or three small. I think East should return a diamond at trick 2. It is only wrong if declarer started with Q53 and false-carded at trick 1. Even then it will set up the fourth round of the suit and won't help declarer develop another suit."

"West's discard of the diamond 8 was a stupid, confusing play. It should indicate he has led from a four-card suit. This may have influenced East to lay down the spade ace, although declarer's false-card of the spade ten probably played a greater role. There is no reason for West not to discard the diamond 3, which would tell partner he had begun with five diamonds. At least the defense would then get back on track and still defeat the contract."

Ed Davis: "After trick one, East knew that West had: (1) 6 to 8 HCP; (2) a diamond suit headed by one or two honors; and (3) no suit longer than diamonds (nobody leads a doubleton diamond on this auction). If West has led from K987, a diamond return costs a trick; if West has led from any other holding, a diamond return is right. Even if a diamond return costs a trick, any other return may also cost a trick. East should expect a diamond return to either set up West's suit or allow West to run the suit. Since East's defense is just not defensible, I give a 50% to the moderator for using a frivolous problem."

Certainly the spade shift a trick 2 was poor, perhaps even indefensible. To be sure, the panel has overlooked a hand type on which the shift is necessary (suppose South has Kx, Axx, Qxx, AKxxx); but it is risky to allow access to an unreachable dummy in light of East's heart holding. The point of this problem is that the contract had not yet been surrendered with that shift.

If at trick 6, East had played a diamond, the defense could amass seven tricks. East would have to play a club after winning the third diamond trick with his jack. It was the spade ace at trick 6 which was the killer. Was this play induced by West's discard of the diamond 8 at trick 5?

Certainly. If West had begun with four diamonds and two hearts, then he should have three spades. This conclusion results from the choice of lead; West would not have a 5-card club suit.

West should have discarded a club, keeping all of his diamonds. That would convey to East that the diamonds were worth pursuing. Then if the spade ace had been cashed, East could be charged with maintaining his unfortunate *idée fixe*.