

# Charge Account

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David J. Weiss

## West

S—J104  
H—AJ6  
D—AQ54  
C—643

## North

S—83  
H—Q98  
D—J2  
C—KQJ1072

## South

S—AKQ5  
H—743  
D—K9763  
C—8

## East

S—9762  
H—K1052  
D—108  
C—A95

### E-W vulnerable, match points

West	North	East	South
1D	3C	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Trick 1: SJ, 3, 2, **K** (J=top)  
 Trick 2: C8, 3, **K**, 5  
 Trick 3: **CQ**, 9, H3, C4  
 Trick 4: CJ, **A**, H4, C6  
 Trick 5: S9, **O**, 4, 8  
 Trick 6: D6, **O**, 2, 8  
 Trick 7: D4, **J**, 10, 3  
 Trick 8: **C10**, H5, D7, H6  
 Trick 9: **C7**, H2, S5, D5  
 Trick 10: **C2**, S6, H7, HJ

With the heart ace now bare, West had to surrender a ninth trick to declarer. Who gets the charge?

**Marshall Miles:** "The bidding made it difficult for either defender to visualize declarer's hand. East couldn't believe that South had a singleton club, and West couldn't believe that South could have so few high cards. West thought that his only chance was to let declarer squeeze himself. Nevertheless, I consider West entirely at fault. East would not make the passive spade return at trick five unless he thought the dummy was dead—which means that he had to have the king of hearts. Without that card, East would surely return a diamond. The clincher is that South, with the king of hearts, would not discard down to the singleton or doubleton king, which would risk being cut off from dummy."

**Steve Evans:** "The only thing worse than West's defense on this hand was South's bidding. Only a lunatic would bid 3NT over a preemptive 3C bid, but at least South knew that one opponent was an idiot. This hand is not really a problem because West didn't bother to look at a single card his partner played. Also, he might have wondered why declarer was playing the hand this way if he had the heart king. Suffice it to say that he was double-dummy nullo on defense and deserved any recriminations directed his way."

Well, the defenders certainly had a large number of chances to set this contract, as is indicated by the play chart extending all the way to trick 10. West had more chances to get it right, so our panelists have singled him out for blame. His blanking the heart ace at trick 10 was clearly the most atrocious play, as he knew declarer had the spade ace remaining. However, without excusing West, I would like to focus on our seemingly innocent East's errors. Firstly, East fell asleep during the auction. With a club stopper, the heart king, and sufficient length in both majors to suggest that South will not be able to run a suit, East should double 3NT. This double does not only serve to increase the penalty. More importantly, it allows the doubler's partner to be in on the joke, to know that declarer is a lunatic. Especially at match points, such doubles are useful because they force the defenders to focus on the proper objective; here the defense should be trying for a set rather than stopping overtricks.

Having failed to double, East must defend in such a way as to inform his partner about the heart king. The simplest way to do this would be to return the heart deuce at trick 5. This is completely safe. East knows his partner has the heart ace from the bidding and the informative (jack=top) spade lead. East need not be concerned about declarer's entering dummy with the heart queen, because if West's heart return is not the jack, East can simply win the king knowing South's jack will fall under it. This information is available because declarer has pitched two hearts on the club plays. After winning the second (or third) heart trick, East can cash any good cards (on the actual deal, since West will return the heart jack the whole suit comes in) and

exit with a diamond. This sequence of plays allows West to retain a spade exit if he has opened light with only the KQ in the diamond suit.

People do bid like our South, and it is important for the defenders to set ludicrous contracts. The key is to maintain composure. Usually one need not defend perfectly, only adequately. There will be several chances to defeat the contract and seizing one of them will be sufficient.