

# Charge Account

by David J. Weiss

## North

S—Q105

H—K10872

D—K1032

C—10

## South

S—A9876

H—J

D—Q9

C—KQ942

## East

S—KJ

H—A65

D—J754

C—AJ53

## West

S—432

H—Q943

D—A86

C—876

IMPs, E—W vulnerable, the auction:

North	East	South	North <sup>West</sup>
Pass	1C	1S	Dbl.
Redbl.	Pass	Pass	2C
2S	Pass	3S	Pass
4S	Pass	Pass	Pass

Trick 1: C6, 10, **A**, 4.

Trick 2: D7, 9, 8, **10**.

Trick 3: SQ, K, **A**, 2.

Trick 4: C2, 7, **S5**, C3.

Trick 5: S10, **J**, 6, 3.

Trick 6: D5, Q, **A**, 2.

Trick 7: D6, **K**, 4, HJ.

And declarer was home. Who gets the charge?

**Marshall Miles:** "West gets 70% of the blame. He got off to a terrible start by leading the unreadable six of clubs rather than the eight. No one can convince me that it is just a matter of style. There is **no** justification for leading low from three small after supporting a suit. Had West led the eight, East would be surer that West had the diamond ace, and he could then cash the heart ace before leading a diamond. East probably should have done that anyway, so he gets 30% of the blame.

East led the seven of diamonds to discourage a diamond return. He thought West would win with the ace, if he had it, and return a heart. Obviously West placed East with a doubleton diamond, a trump trick, and no ace of hearts. There are several reasons why this assumption was wrong.

having Ax of spades with two little diamonds. But after two rounds of spades, partner can't have the needed holding, so West should play hearts.

However, East made the worst play on the hand. If I were his partner, I would have won the diamond ace and returned the suit, playing partner for Q97. There was no reason for East to get active on defense. If partner had the diamond ace, East could lead diamonds when he got in with the heart ace. A club return could scarcely cost, since declarer could either ruff his club losers or pitch them on dummy's secondary red suits."

The panelists have blamed West for three bad plays, but surely only one, the third round of diamonds at trick 7, mattered. West's choice of the club 6, rather than the 8, seems to have rankled the panel, but it had no effect on the defense. And his ducking the first diamond, while encouraging with the eight, was good, since he might well have failed to find the heart switch had he won the trick.

No, it was East, the one who was looking at all of the tricks, who engineered this disaster. When he won the club ace, he could see that he needed his partner to have an ace to set the hand. Nothing else will work as South can use the bidding and his singleton heart (known from the double) to discover the location of any cards to be guessed. East's only problem is to make sure his partner does not find a way to blow a trick while searching for a possible set, since West does not know about East's trump trick.

Best is for East to cash the heart ace at trick two, before switching to a low diamond. While this laying down an ace seems odd and not without risk, it is hard to see how the defense can prevail if South is void in hearts. Even if a legitimate set is possible, East will be forced to blow it by beating air with his heart ace. After all, if declarer gets to dummy and calls for a low heart, can East afford to duck? No, East should cash his ace before the mice get to it and then make sure partner does the same.

If East held something like Ax, Jxx, xx, AQJxxx, he would rebid two clubs. Therefore, South is marked with at least four clubs by East's failure to rebid that suit. If South also had four diamonds (and long spades), he would have no hearts and East would have bid two hearts.

West apparently played East for 3-3-2-5 distribution with no ace of hearts. That would mean East held KJx, Jxx, xx, AQJxx (and failed to rebid 1NT), while South overcalled and rebid a poor 4-card spade suit."

**Steve Evans:** "Although looking at the combined assets of the defensive hands makes it seem easy to beat 4 spades, in actuality catering to all possibilities makes it difficult. I really don't understand any of West's plays on this hand. Why did he lead the club 6 since partner can't misread the 8 when West has raised his partner? Why did he duck the diamond 7 when partner might have had Q97? Why, upon winning the diamond ace, did he try to give partner a ruff when partner couldn't have three trumps on the bidding? The only holding justifying West's defense was partner