

Charge Account

by
David J. Weiss

West
S—73
H—10965
D—AK853
C—106

North
S—KQJ65
H—void
D—QJ7
C—Q9852

South
S—A109842
H—QJ
D—1092
C—K4

East
S—void
H—AK87432
D—64
C—AJ73

IMP scoring, E-W vulnerable

East	South	West	North
1H	1S	2H	4H*
5C	Pass	5D	5S
Dbl.	Pass	Pass	Pass

*Spade raise, shortness in hearts

Trick 1: DA, 7, 6, 9.
Trick 2: C10, Q, A, 4.
Trick 3: C3, K, 6, 2.

Declarer was now able to set up the club suit and pitch both of his remaining diamonds, so the defense had added the insult of —650 to the injury of missing their slam. It mattered, because 5S doubled made at both tables in this match. Who gets the charge for the defensive disaster?

Marshall Miles: "Both defenders did several bad things, so I would apportion the blame 50-50. West should have bid three hearts, not two hearts. Aside from the pair selling out too cheaply, this bid made the defense more difficult. West should have led the king of diamonds rather than the ace. Even though the defenders may have agreed, *in general*, to lead ace from ace-king, they should make exceptions when (a) leading partner's suit, (b) leading a suit supported by partner, (c) in a cash-out situation—always against five-level contracts and higher, occasionally against lower contracts, (d) from ace-king doubleton. In the first three situations, the ace is a likely lead without the king and it will avoid the more likely ambiguity to lead the king. (Also, a third round ruff is unlikely so that when West has KQ10xx and leads the king, he won't be trapped into continuing the suit into declarer's AJx.)

Once West led the ace of diamonds (which he might have done without the king), he should have continued with the king. There are only two times when this could lose—where declarer has 6-4-1-2 distribution so that a club trick would go away, or where declarer has 6-3-2-2 distribution with Ax of clubs. But East surely would not play the six of diamonds from 10642 (with the AK of clubs), or from 1064 whatever his club holding might be.

It looks as though there can't be much blame left for East. But he made a strange signal when he played the six of diamonds. Even if he thought West had the king, East

going to ruff the second diamond. However, as Marshall has observed, East would have no reason to play the six from four small in this situation. Even if West is trying to build a fence around partner by playing a club, so that East cannot make an unfortunate duck with AJxxx of clubs, there is just no reason not to cash the diamond first.

Should East have saved the day after his partner made the wrong play? His club continuation would have been necessary if West had the hand proposed earlier, with Axxxx of diamonds and a singleton club. True, the club lead might have been more attractive with that hand, but perhaps, thought East, bidding hearts and clubs, then doubling spades, suggested diamond shortness to my partner, and he was considering giving me a ruff or two. He changed his tack when he saw his queen of hearts was not a re-entry, and anyway, he could still expect two club ruffs if my diamond was a singleton.

Also on East's mind was a possible extra undertrick, usually a consideration when defending against a save. Why would his partner switch to a club if he did have both high diamonds? Must not the club be a singleton? While East realized that the club ruff could just as well have come a trick later, now that it has been sought it must be taken at this point.

On this tragic deal, East's defense, while no better inspired than his bidding, could have been right. West's defense, on the other hand, could never have gained. West gets the charge.

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couldn't ruff the third round, and he had no reason to encourage a continuation. The costly error was to play ace and another club. East should either duck the club or shift to a diamond. Despite West's unhelpful defense, he would surely have led a club originally with a singleton and no king of diamonds. In fact, he almost has to have the ace-king of diamonds not to lead a club on this bidding, whatever his club holding might be. (I am assuming that the defenders use inferior methods so that leading the ace of diamonds did not positively deny the king.)"

Steve Evans: "East's defense on this hand seems incomprehensible. Certainly his partner has the AK of diamonds. And if West had 2 clubs, leading a club at trick 3 was giving declarer the contract. West was likely, with a singleton club, to lead it at trick one, and he probably would have bid more as well. West should possibly cash the diamond king at trick 2 (it's difficult to construct a hand where it would matter), but unless he knows his partner is an idiot, there is no reason to do so."

Given that both defenders bid so badly on this deal, it is hard to see how they might have altered their defense based on possible bids made with other hands. Could not West have bid the way he did with xxx, Qxx, Axxxxx, 10? On the actual deal, the two heart bid was conservative, to say the least, but East's double of 5S seems bizarre. We had better look at the justifications for the cards played; some hands can be solved without too much reference to the bidding.

West's lead of a high diamond is normal enough. But why didn't he continue the suit? His partner's signal asked him to, and the shift would cost a trick whenever South had both black aces, unless East had doubled with no trumps. The trick that would get away would not be the setting trick, to be sure; but losing the ruff if East had, say, x, AKxxxx, xx, KJxx, would blow a 200 point under-trick. Notice that on the actual deal no harm is done if three rounds of diamonds are played.

No, it is the club switch which has nothing to gain. The club spots West can see mean that no endplay within the suit is looming, so the only good that can come of the shift is a third round ruff if East has AKx. But this ruff can wait until after the diamond has been cashed, unless declarer is