

Charge Account by David J. Weiss

	North		E-W vulnerable, IMP scoring
	S—74		
	H—K10953		
West	D—QJ75	East	East South West North
S—J8	C—K9	S—AKQ9532	3S 4C 4S 5C
H—Q64		H—82	Pass Pass Pass
D—AK10982	South	D—64	
C—75	S—106	C—42	Trick 1: DK , 5, 6, 3.
	H—AJ7		Trick 2: SJ , 4, 2, 6
	D—3		Trick 3: D8, Q , 4, S10
	C—AQJ10863		

With the expected diamond trick in the bag, declarer did not even have to guess hearts. West was squeezed when declarer ran off the trumps. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "East gets the charge. Since the four of diamonds is missing, West would know that he could cash a diamond trick if he had fewer than six diamonds. Consequently, the spade shift must mean that West has a six-card suit. (The hand is not likely to be beatable if South has Ax of spades and two small diamonds.) East should overtake the spade and continue spades. Letting West hold the trick implied that East had a singleton diamond.

"Incidentally, declarer made a mistake when he discarded the ten of spades. He should have discarded the jack of hearts instead so as to have a sure squeeze against whichever defender had the queen of hearts."

Steve Evans: "I would defend just as West did. Unless there was a specific agreement to the contrary, East's spade two indicated disinterest in spades, rather than count. With standard agreements, East should play the deuce only if he had a diamond void now. Clearly West must be worried about whether to cash the diamond ace. East should either encourage a spade continuation with the nine or, better yet, should overtake the spade so partner can't make a mistake."

This is a bread-and-butter situation whose logic is worth analyzing. Certainly East gets the charge, since West's defense was not only accurate but even inspired. The shift to the spade jack was not without risk (East might have had AQ109xxx, xx, 6, xxx; after the shift the defense will lose its second diamond trick), but it was necessary on the actual deal. When his partner left him on lead at trick 3, what over reason could there be than to play a diamond?

Why did East go wrong? East might have failed to overtake because he didn't know whether a second spade would cash. His partner had raised and West might have had J10x of spades. East's idea was to give the spade count and then West would know which trick would cash. Could not, thought East, my partner have a 3-3-5-2 pattern? The point is that West would know what to cash, but if East overtook the spade, he would not be sure.

There are two flaws in this Eastern reasoning. First, if the diamond were cashing, West would have cashed it. Holding five diamonds, West would be able to tell from the spots on the first trick that a second diamond would live and he might hope that East had a singleton. Second, with three spades, West would have led low (yes, even from J10x!) to give count unless he felt it imperative to stay on lead, and why would he care about that unless he couldn't tell who had a singleton diamond? So East should have overtaken the spade jack and confidently cashed a second spade.