

# Charge Account by David J. Weiss

## North

S—K1054

H—AJ42

D—1032

C—J2

## South

S—J

H—73

D—J97

C—AK107654

## East

S—AQ762

H—10985

D—A864

C—

## Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring

### North

Pass

Pass

Pass

### East

Pass

Dbl.

### South

3C

Pass

### West

Pass

Pass

## West

S—983

H—KQ6

D—KQ5

C—Q983

Trick 1: HK, A, 10, 3.

Trick 2: C2, S7, CA, 3.

Trick 3: H7, Q, 2, 5.

Trick 4: DK, 2, 8, 7.

Trick 5: S9, 4, Q, J.

Trick 6: DA, 9, 5, 3.

Trick 7: H9, DJ, H6, HJ.

Having pitched his diamond loser, South was able to concede a club and go down only one. Who gets the charge?

**Marshall Miles:** "I think the charge should go to East, but the hand is much more complicated than it appears. Declarer made an odd play when he won the first heart trick, cutting himself off from the dummy. Winning the first trick made it appear that he started with an odd number of hearts.

"Suppose that West's hand were 983, KQ, KQJ5, Q983, leaving declarer with x, xxx, xx, AK10xxxx. Declarer would figure, 'If I give up my trump trick right away, by leading low to the jack, West will cash the queen of hearts, indicating a desire to ruff the third round, and will surely get his ruff. But if I lead hearts myself, it will confuse the issue.'

"So how can West show that he doesn't want a heart ruff? He knows at the second trick that East had 5-4-4-0 distribution since his first discard should be from length. At trick four, if West held 4-2-3-4 distribution, he would simply play king, queen, and a small diamond. With 3-2-4-4 distribution, he should cash the king of diamonds and lead a spade, just as he did. But when East cashes the ace of diamonds, West should drop the queen under it to say that the third round won't cash. So when West actually followed low to the ace of diamonds, East should have played the third round. This hand is easy for a weak defense pair, who wouldn't recognize the problem (and to whom the possibility of king-queen doubleton of hearts wouldn't occur), but is very difficult for an expert pair."

**Steve Evans:** "East went crazy on this hand. The only excuse is that East was playing Rusinow leads (K led from KQ doubleton, Q from KQx) and West wasn't. If West had a doubleton heart, there is no way he would lead diamonds. He would lead a spade immediately and discourage if East cashed a diamond. Also, there is no hurry to play hearts since West clearly has trumps. Declarer has not played the diamond jack and West would certainly have led a diamond from KQJ. The only thing I would have done differently from West is that I would have given count by leading the spade 3.

"Declarer has played poorly by taking the heart at trick one. He would have made the defense more difficult by ducking, so that he could finesse later if the defenders had not cashed all of their tricks correctly."

The panel has certainly missed its mark this month. West is the one who knew the whole hand at trick three and West is the one who blew the defense. From East's first two plays, the count card at trick one and the discard from length at trick two, West can deduce East's distribution. He must have the unseen aces and since he has five spades, he has either the queen or jack of that suit.

Declarer made peculiar, and probably wrong, plays at tricks one and two. West knows this, but East does not. West must play in such a way as to secure the defense's six top tricks and should try to capitalize on declarer's weird club play to steal a seventh. Probably the best way to do this is to lead the spade nine at trick four. Leading a low spade ("to give count") is not only dangerous, because partner might foolishly insert his jack, but off the track. What West wants to do is to persuade his partner that he has a doubleton spade! If that message can be transmitted, East will not be distracted by thoughts of a heart ruff. Ideally, East will try to cash two spade tricks. At worst, East will win the spade and return a low diamond. In that case, West should win the queen and play a second spade (unless, of course, partner has won the spade ace). The trap the defense is setting will spring shut if declarer plays a trump rather than a diamond after ruffing the spade. West can grab the trick and clear diamonds, ending up in the East hand. Now a fourth diamond promotes another trump trick for down three! It should occur to West that a declarer who has taken the first heart and attacked trumps by leading to the ace, will not recognize the need for a scissors coup.

West's actual defense was pretty close to optimal in a technical sense, but by cashing the diamond king before trying the spade nine, he allowed his partner to focus on the wrong issue. East's defense would have been correct if West's pattern were 3-2-4-4. By withholding his diamond jack when East cashed the ace, declarer gave East the clue that his supposition was not correct; so East did make the last (and most costly) error. However, West missed the chance to shine.