

CHARGE ACCOUNT . . . By David Weiss

	North		Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring:		
	S—KQ1082				
	H—Q6		South	West	North
West	D—1097	East	1D*	Pass	1S
S—J43	C—KQ9	S—965	1NT	Pass	3NT
H—A74		H—J1053	Pass	Pass	Pass
D—AJ8	South	D—KQ43			
C—J1085	S—A7	C—73			*Precision, may be short
	H—K982				
	D—652				
	C—A642				

Trick 1: CJ, K, 3, 2.
 Trick 2: D10, 4, 2, J.
 Trick 3: C5, 9, 7, 4.

Declarer could now cash the high club in dummy, return to the spade ace, cash the club ace, and run spades. Could this have been prevented without second sight? Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "In my opinion, neither defender did anything terrible. I tended at first to blame West, then I changed my mind so as to give East most of the blame. At the table, this would be a very difficult hand.

"My first thought was that while East should have played the seven of clubs at the first trick, West should have made the right play anyway. Because of West's and dummy's spade holding, I thought West couldn't afford to play passively; he should cash the ace of hearts and if East didn't signal encouragement, play ace and another diamond. However, East would know when to signal encouragement. Would K10xx or K10xxx of hearts be enough? He wouldn't know who had the jack of hearts. And if East had KJ32, his "encouraging" card might not be readable.

But suppose South had A7, J852, K632, A62. Then a passive defense would be best and cashing the ace of hearts would be fatal. So I believe East is mostly at fault. If he had the ace of clubs, he should win the first trick and shift to a red suit. Consequently, when he doesn't play the ace of clubs, it is because he doesn't have it and he should show distribution. If West can see nine tricks in the black suits (with declarer's only problem being to unblock the club suit), West will know he must adopt an aggressive defense.

"West deserves a little blame. If he is going to defend passively, it is slightly better to shift to a spade than to continue with a club. This allows more of a margin for error and might save the day with the actual hand."

Steve Evans: "Upon viewing dummy, West knows partner has very little. Unless it is concentrated in the red suits, declarer will make his contract. So West should play the ace of hearts and either continue the suit or switch to diamonds based on partner's play. It is clearly a time for action since declarer's spades are coming in."

Declarer's cunning diamond play made the defense difficult. Had South tried the more obvious heart, West would have had little alternative but to try to strike gold in the diamond suit. While with the actual play, West could hardly divine what was going on, there was no immediate threat from the diamond suit since he still had the ace remaining. On the other hand, the club suit constituted an obvious danger.

Should East be furnishing count in clubs? It is often logical to agree that one gives count when the attitude is already known, thus if West leads low and dummy plays, say, the queen from QJx, then East should give count. I don't think that principle should apply here. East might well duck the club ace because he didn't want to commit the defense before he knew more about the deal. Even if this were an unambiguous count situation, West could not be sure because even a singleton club (leaving five clubs in declarer's hand) is not inconsistent with a Precision diamond opener.

Therefore, the evidence is strong that South has the club ace; East's card conveys his attitude toward that suit. East's other option was in the diamond suit. But it is hardly reasonable for him to split, and even if he did, it would be difficult for the defenders to avoid blocking the suit.

The misdefense was West's fault. He was not in a now-or-never situation and he should have sought a passive play. The only suit that looks safe is spades and that is the suit West should have played. West would still have a difficult problem to resolve as declarer ran the spade suit, but he would at least

difficult problem to resolve as declarer ran the spade suit, but he would at least have a chance to get it right.