

CHARGE ACCOUNT

David J. Weiss

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|----------|------------|----------|---------|-------|------|-------|
| | | North | | | | |
| | | S: K107 | | | | |
| | | H: Q8 | | | | |
| West | | D: AQ4 | East | | | |
| S: Q983 | | C: AJ732 | S: AJ52 | | | |
| H: J9 | | | H: 653 | South | West | North |
| D: 1083 | South | | D: KJ65 | 2H | P | 2NT |
| C: KQ106 | S: 64 | | C: 94 | 3H* | P | 4H |
| | H: AK10742 | | | P | P | P |
| | D: 972 | | | | | |
| | C: 85 | | | | | |

IMP scoring, N-S vul.

- Trick 1: Club K, A, 9, 5.
- Trick 2: Heart Q, 5, 2, 9.
- Trick 3: Heart 8, 3, K, J.
- Trick 4: Heart A, spade 3, diamond 4, heart 6.
- Trick 5: Club 8, 10, J, 4.

Declarer now ruffed a club and led a spade to the 10, endplaying East to make 5. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "This disaster is clearly West's fault. East's plays were correct for all five tricks, so only West can be blamed. West assumed that South had 3 clubs (although why he made that assumption I don't know) and therefore made his strange play of the club 10. If South had specifically 2-6-3-3 or 3-6-1-3 the hand would be defeated. However, if West wins the club and plays a diamond, the hand will go down in all instances when South has two clubs and neither outside jack."

Marty Shallon: "As the cards lie, the problem is trivial. West has to win the club queen at trick 5, and then lead a diamond through the AQ. East will now avoid being endplayed, and the club trick will not escape either."

However, the problem with the hand is whether clubs are 2-2 or 3-1. If declarer has two clubs, West has to win the club queen; but if declarer has three, West must play the club 10. This will lock declarer in the dummy and enable the defense to score all four of its tricks.

Unfortunately, I have no sure solution for this problem. East has to play the club 9 at trick one, or else West will definitely go wrong, and I know of no way that East can play the trump suit to indicate a singleton club. Therefore, West must rely on table feel and the likelihood of various hand patterns."

This month we are fortunate to have as a guest panelist a visitor to Bridge Week from San Diego.

Joel Hoersch: "West takes the charge. No doubt the duck was based on the assumption that the missing clubs were 3-1, but then declarer might have managed the spots differently. Besides, if West wins the club and leads a diamond, the defense has a chance against either 1-6-3-3 or 2-6-3-2. The duck is effective only in the first case, and break even at best."

The panel has been hard on West, accusing him of playing for a specific, and thus automatically unlikely, distribution. But if East does have a singleton club, West's duck can never cost, and may prove the only way to defeat the contract. Marty's comment about the trump suit may provide the key to this dilemma. East can probably tell that West will want to know how many clubs he has. On the other hand, East's trump length is known from the weak-two bid. In this special situation in which the trump count is not needed, it might be profitable to use the trump echo to signify unexpected shortness somewhere. In the present example, the message can only mean a singleton club, and thus West's defense has some justification. One must beware of automatic signals.