



Charge Account

by David J. Weiss

West
S— — —
H—K962
D—J87642
C—AK10

North
S—KQJ943
H—84
D—A9
C—J42

East
S—10752
H—3
D—Q103
C—Q9753

South
S—A86
H—AQJ1075
D—K5
C—86

Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring

East	South	West	North
Pass	1H	2D	2S
Pass	4H	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Trick 1: CA,2,3,6
Trick 2: D6,A10,5
Trick 3: H8,3,10,2

Trick 4: HA,6,4,C5
Trick 5: HJ,K,S3,C7
Trick 6: CK,4,2,8

Declarer now had the rest, as the spade ruff was no longer available. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "West was at fault. He knew that he desired a spade ruff, while East was unaware of that desire. As a consequence, East could not signal intelligently. East's low club at trick one was not primarily because he didn't guess that West had the king; it was because he could stand a diamond shift and, now knowing about the spade ruff, thought there was little future in a club con-

...ion. Nevertheless, West should have led the king of clubs. When the partnership conventionally leads the ace-ace-king, it should make logical exceptions—such as a leading partner's suit or a suit that has been supported or when the bidding indicates that the defenders have to take their tricks fast. My *general* rule is to lead the king from ace-king against five-level contracts or

... But on this bidding it sounds as though declarer has lots of tricks and I might lead the unsupported king of clubs. Consequently, with both honors, I would lead the king.

"Forgetting about the 'rules,' how can an ambiguity arise from leading the king? On this bidding East is very unlikely to hold a doubleton club, so that is one holding he doesn't have to worry about. The only time something can go wrong is when dummy has three or four small clubs and East might signal encouragement with the jack.

"The more clear cut mistake was leading the six of diamonds at trick two. If West leads the *eight*, a good partner will signal encouragement with the king, not the queen. If

West had led the eight of diamonds, not only should East play low, but he should discard the nine of clubs instead of the five later."

Steve Evans: "I think West made the key error on this hand. When his partner played the diamond ten at trick 2, the only logical holding for East was Q10(x). If he had the diamond king, declarer would certainly duck from dummy at trick 2. And if East had KQ10, he should have signalled with the king. It is certainly arguable that East should only play the diamond 3 at trick 2, since partner should know declarer can't have the queen. I think it's a lot less obvious to East, though.

"I don't really know of a good way for East to show the club queen after discouraging at trick 1, using standard signals. Roman discards would help here. Conceivably, East should encourage with the 9 of clubs at trick 1, which would work on this hand. However, normally he would want a diamond shift, so I certainly understand his play."

Let's look at what was done correctly on this deal. East's low club at trick 1 was correct, as he knew three clubs could not be cashed (and his partner couldn't know that), and he knew the obvious switch, to diamonds, was safe. Directing a diamond switch catered to one of the hand types on which the defense can prevail, hands which contain the spade ace, the diamond king, and the club ace-king. On these hands, three rounds of clubs would be fatal.

West's diamond switch at trick 2 was equally logical. Since his partner had not encouraged in clubs, West had to worry that a key diamond trick was about to disappear, for declarer might have held Qx in both minors.

Ducking the heart at trick 3 was also good play, since nothing could get away and West might gain useful information. It wasn't until West cashed the club king that the hand got away. Where did the rot set in?

It seems to me that West's choice of which diamond to lead at trick two was the critical juncture. His low diamond lulled East to sleep. East thought the defense would get two clubs, one diamond, and a major suit trick. His ten of diamonds was not an intelligent signal, as Steve has observed; but it was a congratulatory note to his partner who had found what East thought was the winning shift. Had East been awake, he would have seen that it could not cost to play the club nine at trick 4. West would have been encouraged to underlead his club at trick 6, and East would not have been hard put to figure out what prompted this desperation.

West, too, could have recovered the defense's equilibrium. By placing more confidence in declarer's play than in partner's seeming encouragement in diamonds, West might have inferred declarer had the diamond king. Then he would know that the hand could be set only if East had the club queen, and so he might as well try the low club.

But none of this careful play would have been necessary if West had only led the eight (the jack would work on this deal, since East has the ten) of diamonds at trick two. East would know his queen wouldn't help and he would routinely play the right cards in both minors. West would have little choice but to underlead the club, especially if East reinforced the other messages by discarding the spade deuce after the club nine.