

Charge Account

David J. Weiss

North		East	
S: A642		S: Q5	
H: AJ105		H: 973	
D: 5		D: K97642	
C: J874		C: K5	
South		West	
S: J1098		S: K73	
H: 82		H: KQ64	
D: 1083		D: AQJ	
C: AQ102		C: 963	

IMP scoring, neither side vulnerable

North	East	South	West
P	P	P	1NT*
2C**	3NT	4S	Dbl.
P	P	P	

*15-17 pts. **For majors

- Trick 1: Club 3, 7, K, A.
 Trick 2: Spade 8, 3, 2, Q
 Trick 3: Club 5, Q, 6, 4
 Trick 4: Spade 9, 7, 2, 5
 Trick 5: Heart 2, Q, A, 3

Declarer now drew the last trump, forced out the high heart, and claimed. Whose responsibility is the failure to find the killing early diamond plays?

Marty Shallon: "The charge goes to West for the opening lead. West should be making an attacking lead, not trying to find East. However, on this hand it is understandable that West does not want to jeopardize any tenaces, and so only a club lead remains. Because of this type of situation, I might lead any card from three small. On this hand, since East knows that West has 15-17 HCP, he should assume that West is leading from an honor. Then the club return at trick 3 is very appealing because of the likelihood of a club ruff at trick 4. Therefore, if West is to lead a club at trick 1, he should consider East's thoughts and lead a club.

There are good reasons for East to shift to a diamond at trick 3; however, the club ruff outweighs these reasons. After getting the ruff, East would still have time to make the diamond shift."

Steve Evans: "This hand is as much the fault of the lead agreement as it is of the defenders. Apparently West can lead small from 3 little. East thought his partner probably had Qxx or Qxxx, and wanted to get a ruff with his small spade. This would be the correct defense if West actually held the club queen. If West had led the club 9, East would know there was no future in clubs and would switch to diamonds with alacrity.

Had East thought more deeply about the hand, he might have avoided the disaster. West must have Kxx of trumps for the double. If that is the case, the defense should tap the dummy to avoid what actually happened. This defense would blow the ruff, but it would surely beat the hand. However, East didn't know if the object on this hand was to just beat 4S, or to beat it three tricks."

The panel has very precisely identified the source of this defensive disaster. Even at IMP scoring, one does not always play for the surest one-trick set. Even on this deal, on which East can see at trick 2 that 3NT was not making, it is tempting to go for the throat, to try to win a lot of IMPs.

Even a defensive partnership which is highly count oriented should consider the advisability of leading low from three or four small when the leader is marked with a good deal of high-card strength. So often the important message to convey is the location of the strength. East might have gone wrong even if the high club had been led, but there would be no doubt as to who would get the charge.