Charge Account

by David J. Weiss

	North		E-W vulnerable, IMP scoring			
West S—J H—AJ109 D—8632 C—.K953	H—762 D—QJ7 C—J2 South S—K862 H—KQ8 D—K104 C—A84	East S—763 H—543 D—A95 C—Q1076	South 1NT* 2S 4S *15-1 **Tran	West Pass Pass Pass 7 ster to S	North 2H** 3NT Pass	East Pass Pass Pass
Trick 1: D2, 7, A, 4. Trick 2: H4, K, A, 2. Trick 3: H10, 6, 5, Q. Trick 4: S2, J, Q, 3. Trick 5: S4, 6, K, D3. Trick 6: S6, D6, SA, 7.			Trick 7: S10 , D9, S8, D8. Trick 8: DJ, 5, K , C3. Trick 9: D10, C5, DQ , H3. Trick 10: S9 , C6, H8, C9. Trick 11: C2, 10, A , K. Trick 12: C4, H9, CJ, Q.			

East's club seven was now taken by the eight, and another routine game was scored up. And this happened in a World Championship! Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "This is a hand where one defender is 100% at fault and the other totally blameless. The defense was perfect, although the carding was a little strange, until trick 11 whereupon East went off his rocker. There was no possible reason for playing the club 10 since partner was marked with a high club honor. I liked West's defense since it catered to a possible misguess by declarer if his clubs included the queen, which was possible given the bidding. Declarer would play the hand the same way and would then have had to guess the position to make his game. Unfortunately, West was playing with a bozo who made a grade school error on a hand that had no play."

Marshall Miles: "East is completely at fault. I don't know what conventions the defenders were playing and it looks to me as though the card of each suit led was selected randomly. Specifically, I don't like the deuce of diamonds lead without an honor, the four of hearts from 543, or the ten of hearts from J109. However, nothing bad happened until the eleventh trick, and by that time the distribution of all suits should have been obvious to both defenders. Even if West's ten of hearts was deceptive rather than conventional, East should have known that South would not discard a heart from an original holding of KQJ8, and West would not discard the nine of clubs from A94 (nor would South play' the 8 from K8 doubleton if East should play low).

"So East should not play the ten of clubs. West was correct in his discarding since declarer would have a cinch endplay if he had started with AQx of clubs, and West had kept Kx of clubs and one high heart." Let us look first at West's deceptive 10 of hearts. What was its point? One possibility is that declarer has Kxx, KQx, Kxx, AQxx. If West returns the honest heart jack, declarer might find the winning line: two rounds of trumps, strip diamonds, exit in hearts. But if declarer thinks West has the doubleton A10 of hearts (note that is consistent with East's seemingly hare-brained lead of the 4, if he were to then follow with the 3), he has a losing option which may attract him. He can hope West has the club king and lead low toward the jack. With the club king and no more hearts, West would indeed be fixed. This illustration is sufficient to justify West's choice, but perhaps more to the point is West's certainty that it can do no harm.

At trick 10, West has to come down to three cards. At this point he erred, though it should not have mattered on this deal. He kept two hearts and blanked the club king in order to avoid the endplay mentioned by the panelists if declarer held AQx of clubs as his last three cards; declarer could safely lead the heart from dummy at trick 11 if there were only one heart outstanding. But this steely unguarding was foolish because if declarer had held the feared hand (Kxxx, KQx, K10x, AQx), he would simply have drawn three rounds of trumps, stripped diamonds, and exited in hearts with the straightforward club finesse in reserve. Perhaps West thought his deception had succeeded and declarer was playing him for the doubleton heart? No, because if that were the case, declarer would not have played off all the trumps. The danger in West's defense is that if declarer had held A10x of clubs, blanking the king gives away an unmakeable contract. So West should have pitched the heart 9 at trick 10.

West's error was subtle, but East's was egregious. He had seen his partner pitch the club 3, 5, and 9. When could it ever help to play the club 10 at trick 11? If declarer has the ace and king of clubs (unlikely on the auction), declarer has ten tricks. And if partner has a club honor, declarer can get only one more trick whatever he does, provided East keeps the Q10 for tricks 12 and 13.