

CHARGE ACCOUNT

by David J. Weiss

		North		
		S: Q54		
		H: Q		
West	D: QJ54	East		
	C: QJ876	S: AJ976		
		H: 752		
		D: 73		
		C: 1093		
		South		
		S: K3		
		H: J863		
		D: A986		
		C: AK4		

N-S vulnerable, IMP scoring

East	South	West	North
Pass	1NT (13-15)	Pass	2C
Pass	2H	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Trick 1: H10, Q, 2, 3

Trick 2: DQ, 3, 6, 2

Trick 3: DJ, 7, 9, K

Trick 4: S10 4, 9, K

Declarer took his minor-suit winners and made 4. Who gets the charge?

Marshall Miles: "East was about 70% at fault. His partner is unlikely to have led declarer's suit with a ten-high holding. East should figure out that West does not have 10x(x), A1098x, Kxx, Kx(x), for example, since that would leave South with Kx(x), KJxx, A10xx, Axx, and he would be unlikely to play the diamonds in such a way as to cut himself off from Dummy's club suit. South's play is more consistent with a running club suit—consequently, no top hearts.

However, West deserves 30% of the blame for not leading the eight of spades. By making it appear that South has the ten, he could avoid any possibility of East's ducking with the ace-jack. This is similar to winning a trick with the ace, holding ace-king on defense, when you have a side singleton and want partner to give you a ruff.

If West knew that East had three hearts, he could have made things much easier by cashing the king of hearts before leading a spade. Does East's deuce of hearts at trick one guarantee a three-card holding? I don't think so. East's signal should show the absence or pres-

ence of the jack of hearts (so that if West started with K109xx, he could continue the suit himself upon regaining the lead). Admittedly it is unlikely that South has five hearts, but I don't think West should take that chance."

Steve Evans: "West made a couple of serious errors on this hand; East's defense seems normal. If declarer had Kxx, AKJx, A10xx, xx, East defended as he must to beat the contract. West's first problem was whether to lead a heart honor or not. On this hand the honor lead would have made the subsequent defense very easy but the choice of the ten shouldn't have hurt the defense. It was West's shift to the spade 10 that blew it. He should lead the 8 because he wants his partner to win the trick if he can so as to put through a heart. In a position like this, West should lead a high spot (denying an honor) if he wants a shift. West also could have made it easier by leading a heart honor before the spade, but that wouldn't have worked if declarer had five hearts."

Although the panelists are in agreement that West's play of the spade ten, rather than the eight, was the critical mistake, they disagree in a more fundamental sense. Suppose West's spades had been 1032, or 102? Would there then be no rational way to solve this? With Steve's example hand, East's duck is necessary. Marshall argues, though, that West would not have led a heart from 10xx, 1098xx, Kxx, AK; but I don't see why not. Notice that the popular "10 or 9 = 0 or 2 higher," would not resolve this deal.

West's problem is to convince his partner that he is stronger than it might seem in the suit originally led. The solution is one that has been advocated previously and repeatedly in this column. West should play the ten of diamonds at trick 2. This is a signal that can be used from either side of the table; the play of an unnecessarily high card in a suit attacked by declarer means: "I am better than it might appear in the suit we opened." On this deal, West could have built a fence around his partner by leading the spade eight, and obviously, he should have done so. But, what if they don't deal you the right spots? The Brazilian world champions who misdefended this hand were doubtless tired at the time, but if they had been playing the recommended signal, they would have had more ways to wake each other up.