

CHARGE ACCOUNT . . . By David Weiss

North			E-W vulnerable, IMP scoring			
West	S—K74	East	West	North	East	South
	H—Q75		Pass	1D	1S	4H
	D—AK65		Pass	Pass	Pass	
	C—J87					
S—6		S—AJ9852				
H—1063		H—				
D—10742	South	D—J983				
C—KQ1043	S—Q103	C—A52				
	H—AKJ9842					
	D—Q					
	C—96					
			Trick 1:	S6, 4, A , 10.		
			Trick 2:	C2, 6, Q , 7.		
			Trick 3:	C4, 8, A , 9.		
			Trick 4:	C5, H2 , C3, C.J.		

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 Trick 4: C5, H2, C3, CJ.

The ruff was missed and declarer claimed. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "This is a simple hand to defend if West thinks of how to force partner to do the right thing. West should play the club king at trick 2 and lead a club back at trick 3. East will know there are no club or diamond winners so he will lead a spade as his only hope. East's play of a low club back at trick 2 is correct, because it may work when partner has the heart king instead of the club king."

Marshall Miles: "I would give 70% of the blame to West and 30% to East. "West has an easy way to prevent his partner from continuing clubs. He should win with the king of clubs instead of the queen. This will persuade East that there is no future in playing the third round of clubs (since West could hardly hold a doubleton on this bidding). It is easy for West to anticipate his partner's problem since, if the six of spades had been recognized as a singleton, East surely would have returned a spade at the second trick."

"But East was not blameless. Suppose that West's hand was 63, 1063, 10742, KQ104. West would know that the best defense was to continue clubs. Rather than force his partner to guess what to do, West would (in that case) win the queen of clubs and return the king. When on the actual hand West returned a small club instead, he denied the above (possible) holding."

Although an East blessed with second sight would simply return the spade deuce at trick 2, East could not afford to put all his hopes in that single basket. There was room, given the auction, for West to have a high card or two; and the club queen and heart king, or the club king-queen, might suffice. Certainly some thought should have been given to the spade return since a singleton spade in West's hand would yield a set without his holding any high cards. But doubletons are much more frequent than singletons and it was not unreasonable for East to suspect that a South with Q10x of spades might have responded at the two-level in an attempt to reach a no-trump contract.

In addition, East might well get a second chance if his partner did . . . have only one spade. On the actual deal, he should have. When the club came toward him at trick 2, West knew his partner had the club ace because if declarer had it, he would have won the trick and drawn trumps. West had to hope his partner had led from three clubs rather than four; declarer obviously had lots of tricks available if he could get in. So the key was to deprive East of any option but to try the spade. As the panelists noted, West can accomplish his goal by winning the club king. If he then returns the club 10, East will think declarer has the queen. East will be forced to grab the club ace and hope his partner has a trump trick, either a natural one or a spade ruff. Unfortunately for the defenders, West did his thinking after he had made the routine play of the club queen. He was undoubtedly caught off guard when he realized his partner had returned the wrong black deuce and he perhaps thought it would be unethical to think about which club to play in the middle of the trick. East must have taken time to think before returning the club and West's real crime was that he did not think right along with him.