

CHARGE ACCOUNT

by David J. Weiss

	North	
West	S-10863	East
S-K74	H-J	S---
H-AK10763	D-98754	H-Q9852
D-3	C-J73	D-1062
C-Q108		C-AK542
	South	
	S-AQJ952	
	H-4	
	D-AKQJ	
	C-96	

E/W vul., IMP scoring

South	West	North	East
1C*	1H	Pass	4H
4S	Pass	Pass	Pass

* strong, artificial

Trick 1: D3,4,10, K
 Trick 2: SA,4,3,H2
 Trick 3: SQ,K,6,C5
 Trick 4: C10,3,K,6
 Trick 5: CA,9,8,7
 Trick 6: C4,SJ,CQ,J

And E/W had capped a bidding disaster with a defensive disaster. Who gets the charge?

Steve Evans: "East was asleep during the entire defense. West should get some charge because he should have cashed a heart before leading a club. Also, he should never have led the club 10 with East as his partner. Plays like that are great on paper (i.e., declarer having A93); but in actuality, partners never work out the situation.

East's first insanity occurred at trick 1. The only holdings the diamond three could have been led from, if it were not a singleton, include two honors, and a low lead from QJ3 or AJ3 is hardly credible. Since West has led a singleton, East should play the diamond deuce to indicate his entry is in clubs, the lower suit. And when he got in, he should have led a diamond immediately, as South might have held 2 hearts and only 1 club."

Marshall Miles: "East was at least 90% at fault. What did he think West's diamond holding was? AQJ3 or QJ3? He should have returned a diamond the moment he won the club king. Besides, East's signalling was not very clear. The five of clubs **could** have been his lowest club. East could call for a club lead with less ambiguity by discarding the two, then the nine of hearts. The first heart I play would say, "I don't have a top heart," and the second discard would show present count.

If West knew that a heart would cash, he could lay down the king of hearts upon winning the king of spades. The failure, on opening lead, to lead a suit headed by the ace-king, would guarantee a singleton diamond. (But this wouldn't work well if East had six hearts and AKxx of clubs. You say he wouldn't have sold out to four spades? He shouldn't have with his actual hand.) West made a small error when he didn't drop the queen of clubs under the ace."

The panel has correctly observed that East took a nap during this deal. He played only two correct cards during the reported six tricks, the heart 2 and the club K. And yet, as is so often the case, had wide-awake West made the careful, partner-protecting play of cashing the heart ace at trick four, before he played the club, only an extra 50-point undertrick would have gotten lost.

How many times have we seen this theme in these columns? One partner makes egregious errors, card after card, yet the debacle can be averted with care from the other side of the table. The problem is usually that the alert partner does not know that his usually reliable opposite number has chosen this particular moment to send his brain out to lunch. The solution is to assume that partner always needs protection.

One might expect that the defense on this deal would be an academic issue, with E/W cold for a vulnerable slam. But at the other table South opened 2C (I thought I had a good hand!), and eventually bought the contract at 5S, down one; on passive, ineffectual defense. So, allowing us to make cost a game swing. The defense can never rest.