



# Charge Account

SEPT. 81

by David J. Weiss



## North

S-KJ986

H----

D-J5

C-AQJ854

## South

S-107

H-AKQ73

D-K742

C-109

## East

S-42

H-J862

D-AQ96

C-K73

## West

S-AQ53

H-10954

D-1083

C-62

IMPs, North-South vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1H	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	2S	Pass
3H	Pass	3S	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

**Trick 1:** S3, 6, 4, 7

**Trick 2:** S10, A, 8, 2

**Trick 3:** C6, Q, K, 9

With the ace of diamonds on side, the hand could no longer be set. Who gets the charge?

**Steve Evans:** "This is an interesting hand in that East made a terrible play, yet South probably would have made the hand anyway. West's defense wasn't nearly as bad, but he could have beaten the hand easily. Both players seem to have had a fixation that South would be 2-6-4-1. That's the only explanation for West's club lead and East's winning of the king West's lead of the club at trick 3 would be right if declarer had one club. Since West had no information to go on, his play is probably correct. A diamond switch would be deadly if South's diamonds were stronger (i.e., interchange East's and South's diamonds). East's play, though, is hard to comprehend. There is no holding consistent with the bidding that West would lead the club six from other than 6-2 doubleton. A smooth duck would leave South in

the dummy, where he can lead spades. When West won the spade queen, a further club lead would give South a guess whether to play for the club king or diamond ace on-side. He would probably guess right, but who knows? East's defense was a guaranteed disaster."

**Marshall Miles:** "I suppose the fault is all West's since, when he failed to shift to a diamond at the third trick, the hand could no longer be defeated. It is not easy to see that a diamond switch is necessary, and it isn't clear whether West should lead the three or the ten of diamonds. I wouldn't call West's error serious. East's winning the first club trick seems illogical, but it didn't cost unless declarer would have repeated the club finesse—hardly likely."

I think the panel missed the boat on this complex hand. To be sure, East's winning the club king was a bad play; but unless he could have produced a *smooth* duck it would not have mattered. Probably one should have a smooth duck prepared when there is an AQJ suit in dummy. East did know that declarer could not run for home since he stopped both red suits, but perhaps he was worried about being end-played.

Without pardoning East then, I want to focus on West's errors. West made two bad plays and they cost the contract. The obvious one is the club shift. Even if South has the 2-6-4-1 pattern presumed by the defenders, a club switch cannot be necessary. Shifting to the diamond ten is the way to disconnect the hands. Even if South's diamonds are quite strong, say AK9x, the switch will not give away the contract when South has a singleton club. And if, by some chance, South has a doubleton club, the diamond switch is likely to prove the only way to defeat the contract.

West's other error was more subtle. He should not have taken the spade ace. There was no rush, since West had no constructive play to make. If declarer was planning to win the trick in dummy to play more spades, West would be able to get

information from both East's discard and South's discard, and he might then know what to do. East would, in fact, pitch the club three on this line and West would know the club count since the three would not be pitched from K1093, K1073, or K973. Appreciating the danger, West would be forced to find the diamond shift. In actuality, though, declarer would have won the spade ten in hand and started the clubs. West would give count, East would duck (now smoothness wouldn't even matter), and the contract would go down routinely because the club position was unfavorable for declarer.

Obviously, this is a difficult hand and the auction did not make the defenders' task easy. This deal was played in the 1981 Grand National Zonals against Denver and the bidding and defense were the same at both tables.