CHARGE ACCOUNT . . . By David Weiss

	North	
	S—1094	
	H—Q107632	
West	D—8	East
S—K875	C—QJ4	S—Q632
H—AJ9		H—K4
D—93	South	D—K765
C—K965	S—AJ	C—1083
	H—85	
	A—AQJ1042	
	C—A72	

Neither vulnerable, IMP scoring

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1D
Dbl.	2H	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Trick 1: C5, **Q**, 3, 2.
Trick 2: D8, 7, **Q**, 3.
Trick 3: **DA**, 9, H2, D5.
Trick 4: DJ, S5, H3, D**K**.
Trick 5: C8, **A**, 6, 4.
Trick 6: **D10**, S7, H6, D6.
Trick 7: **D4**, H9, H7, C10.
Trick 8: **D2**, HA, S4, S3.

Declarer now led a heart, establishing his ninth trick in that suit. Who gets the

Steve Evans: "West went off the deep end on this hand. First he should pitch the heart 9 at trick 6 so that if partner thinks spades is the right suit to play, he will play them. I think East's play of the club 10 at trick 7 should mean: "I've got stuff in both majors," so West would know it would be safe to pitch anything on this hand. That is, anything except the insanity of throwing the heart ace, a play which could never gain. If he wants to keep his Kx of spades because declarer might have AQ, he can just pitch a club. then partner can get in with the heart king and lead a spade. West's play of the heart ace was a spectacularly nullo play."

Marshall Miles: "East made a strange play at trick 5 by returning the eight of clubs instead of the ten, but this should not have affected West's play. When West discarded the ace of hearts, he was playing his partner for the king of hearts. If West assumes that his partner has that king, he has a sure set by discarding his small club and keeping K8, AJ, —, K. That way he doesn't have to guess whether declarer started with AQx of spades and a small heart or his actual major suit holding."

Hands of this nature, in which declarer runs off a long suit in his quest for nine tricks are often excruciating for the defenders. Each defender must try to determine, often independently, whether a straightforward set is available or whether declarer must be induced to misread the ening. On this deal, for example, a spade return by East at trick 5 would have made the defense easy. Yet both defenders had good reason to avoid this winning choice.

Because of his partner's takeout double, East was certainly the one who knew more about his partner's hand. Still, the spade return was dangerous because declarer's majors might have been: S—KJ, H—Ax or S—AJx, H—x. With the former holding, a club return would force declarer to guess the end position to obtain his ninth trick. With the latter holding, a spade from East would be harmless but West might not be able to find the winning exit of ace and another heart.

Different worries inhibited West from requesting a spade shift (by discarding the club 9 at trick 4). If declarer had: S—AQx, declarer could duck and get his fulfilling trick immediately. If declarer had: S—AQJ, H—x, only a club return would do. Still, the possibility of a spade shift should have been given more weight by West; whenever South has a doubleton spade, the spade return will be best. That is why selecting a low spade as the first discard was a poor idea. West's first pitch should have been the heart nine, a card which East would have understood as neutral. The actual discard was a virtual command for a club return. To be fair, I don't think the message of neutrality would have been sufficient to persuade East to risk the spade return this time. Only the club 9 could do that and West does not know enough about the deal to make a unilateral determination.

The club return should have been good enough. West's first three pitches, two spades and one heart, were innocuous. East got to make only one discard and his choice was the club 10. This card may have been intended to convey strength in both majors, but a better choice was available. With his partner having thrown two spades already, East knew that declarer had been dealt a doubleton. He should have thrown the spade 6, which would unambiguously show a high card in the suit. This information would have made West's life easy.

Still, West made the last, and the most egregious, error. He could not defeat the hand if South had the ace-queen of spades and the heart king, although a spade through earlier might have worked. If South has the heart king but not the spade queen, the defense can prevail only if the king is singleton, but not if he throws the heart ace. If South has the spade ace-queen but lacks the heart king, West must keep the guarded spade king and ace and another heart; therefore he must pitch a club. That defense works on the actual hand, also. The crucial issue is thus whether South has the heart king or doesn't. If he does, West must blank his heart ace. If East has the heart king, West must keep two hearts. How can West tell? If East had only small hearts, his first (and second) pitch would surely have been his smallest heart(s). The "dog that didn't bark" reasoning is the toughest kind, but it is a necessary bridge skill. Here it would have led West to the correct end-game. The dramatic discard of the heart ace could never have been the winning play. West earned the charge by not thinking the situation through in detail.