

Extra Emphasis - with John Koch

Playing in a sectional tournament in southern Minnesota, I hold in fourth seat at favorable vulnerability:

♠K 5 4 3 ♥9 6 5 ♦A K J 6 5 ♣4

West on my left opens **one spade**, and partner bids **two spades**—Michaels for hearts and a minor. South **doubles**, showing defense in one of his suits. The double relieves me from bidding. West also passes, and partner bids **three clubs**. I convert to **three hearts**, and when the bidding reverts to East, she extracts another **double** card and presses it to the table with her thumb as if to add extra emphasis. What has partner done to me? The full auction:

| | | | |
|------|-------|------|----------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♠ | 2♠ | Dbl | Pass |
| Pass | 3♣ | Pass | 3♥ |
| Pass | Pass | Dbl | All Pass |

West leads the queen of clubs and partner puts down a pair of aces:

♠ 8 7
♥ A 10 8 4 3
♦ 9
♣ A 10 9 8 5

♣Q led

♠ K 5 4 3
♥ 9 6 5
♦ A K J 6 5
♣ 4

Initial evaluation:

The bidding suggests that East has all five trumps. This may actually represent an advantage because I don't intend to draw trumps anyway. West probably only has five spades because he did not rebid them. That leaves him with eight cards in the minors,

which may also be beneficial to me.

I win the ace of clubs in dummy. It is premature to take club ruffs in my hand, so I start with the top diamonds, and ruff a diamond in dummy. I am rewarded when West drops the queen. If I am right about the trump break, this is a great beginning. I cross to my hand with a club ruff, East dropping the king. If that is an honest card, it confirms that West started with 5-5 in the blacks, three diamonds, and *no* hearts. I back this judgment by playing the jack of diamonds. East follows while both West and dummy discard spades.

I have won the first six tricks, and have a complete count on the hand:

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ♠ — ♥ A 10 8 4 ♦ — ♣ 10 9 8 ♠ A x x x ♥ — ♦ — ♣ J 7 6 ♠ K 5 4 3 ♥ 9 6 ♦ 6 ♣ — | ♠ x x ♥ K Q J 7 2 ♦ — ♣ — |
|--|------------------------------------|

I cross to dummy with a spade ruff, and lead a club. East ruffs with the jack, and plays the king of trumps. I win dummy's ace and play another club. East ruffs with the queen and draws a round of trumps with her jack. This holds me to one club ruff, four trumps in dummy, three diamonds and a club: nine tricks for +530 and a shared top. The full deal:

| | |
|---|---|
| ♠ A J 10 9 4 ♥ — ♦ Q 7 4 ♣ Q J 7 6 2 | ♠ 8 7 ♥ A 10 8 4 3 ♦ 9 ♣ A 10 9 8 5 ♠ Q 6 ♥ K Q J 7 2 ♦ 10 8 3 2 ♣ K 3 ♠ K 5 4 3 ♥ 9 6 5 ♦ A K J 6 5 ♣ 4 |
|---|---|

Points of Interest:

- Sometimes trump stacks are actually counterproductive! On this hand, the defense would have been better off with a four-one break. In the endgame, West was reduced to emasculating her trump power to prevent declarer from getting cheap club ruffs. Declarer, in essence, was able to draw the outstanding trumps without leading the suit.

- Although North's Michaels was threadbare, his suits were headed by aces, providing control and fluid communications between the hands, despite holding only 19 combined points with a badly placed king and a 5-0 trump break.