

# Dirty, Filthy Spot Watcher. with John Koch

Playing in a club game with a regular partner, I hold:

♠K Q 10 7 ♥9 7 ♦K 9 3 ♣A 8 5 4

With no one vulnerable, partner is dealer and opens **one heart**. East passes and I respond **one spade**. West passes, and partner bids **two diamonds**. I have a decent 12-count with nice intermediates, and we are close to three notrump. But partner is an exponent of light openings, so I decide not to hang myself out. I settle for **two notrump**, and everyone passes. The full auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2NT
All Pass			

West leads the eight of spades and partner puts down a sub-minimum:

♠ 6 3  
♥ Q 8 6 4 2  
♦ A Q 8 5  
♣ K 9

♠ 8 led

♠ K Q 10 7  
♥ 9 7  
♦ K 9 3  
♣ A 8 5 4

### Initial analysis:

On the lead, East plays the five and I win the ten. I have six tricks, and good chances in spades and diamonds. There is no rush to test diamonds. The lead is apparently fourth-best, so West has all the important cards in spades. East's play of the *five* is significant. He couldn't improve on his partner's eight, and obviously doesn't want the suit continued.

The five looks like his lowest card in the suit, which means it is a singleton. That suits me fine because if West continues with the spade attack, he gives me a third trick in the suit.

Keeping diamonds in reserve, my alternative trick source is hearts. I start with a low heart from hand. West plays the five and East wins the jack. East shifts to the queen of clubs which rides to dummy's king, and a second heart fetches the three, nine, and *ace*. West persists with another club, to East's ten and my ace. There are two hearts outstanding, the king and the ten. Can both be in one hand? If West has them, it means he played low from ♥AK105 on the first trick and the ace on the second from ♥AK10. Zia might do that, but would this defender? If East has them, he started with ♥KJ103 and won the first trick with the jack and then ducked the second round. Not likely! My guess is that hearts are breaking three-three. I cross to dummy with a diamond and lead a third round of hearts. All is well when both follow. East slips by cashing the jack of clubs, and I end with nine tricks—even without an extra spade or diamond trick.

### The full deal:

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

### Points of Interest:

- In the 2004 Nationals, vugraph commentator Tom Sanders dubbed my partner Tony Ames a "dirty, filthy spot watcher." Spot watching is like forensics; it seldom

lies. On this hand, the heart plays were mostly intuitive, but the spots in both major suits told declarer that plunging ahead in hearts carried relatively little risk.

- The winning defense was for West to rise with the ace of hearts and shift to a club. Leading *through* an honor doubleton is often a killer, while leading *up to* honor doubleton is often questionable.

- Several years ago Zia encountered this suit combination in the Blue Ribbon Pairs:

	♣ A 8 7	
♣ ??? 6 4 2		♣ ?
	♣ Q 9 5	

His contract was six notrump and he found himself in the South hand after taking the first ten tricks. He had observed discards from West of the 2, 4 and 6 of clubs, and he knew that the suit was breaking six-one. East's singleton could be the king (when it is right to play the ace); the jack or 10 (when it is right to play the queen); or a small card. Zia concluded that West was a straightforward player who was likely to have played his clubs up the line, which meant that East's singleton club was the missing *three-spot*. Zia's solution was a low club. West won the ten but was endplayed:

	♣ A 8 7	
♣ K J 10 6 4 2		♣ 3
	♣ Q 9 5	