

# A Tale At Two Tables. . .with John Koch

Playing with an expert partner against a professional and his client at a recent Iowa regional, I hold:

♠A 6 3 ♥K 10 5 4 3 2 ♦K 9 6 ♣Q

At favorable vulnerability, partner and I reach **six hearts** after a straightforward auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♦	Pass	6♥
All Pass			

Client leads the ♣7 and partner tables a nice dummy:

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

### Preliminary analysis:

There are good prospects for 12 tricks. I don't think Client is leading away from a king, so I rise with the ♣A. Pro plays the 3. I am not going to read anything into that card. Pro undoubtedly thinks that a true signal would benefit me more than partner.

I start with the ♥A. Pro plays the 8 and Client the jack. The appearance of the ♥J creates a restricted-choice situation. If Client began with ♥QJ, she could have played *either* queen or jack. In fact, I would expect her to play the queen most of the time. On the assumption that Pro is twice as likely to have ♥Q98 as Client is to have exactly ♥QJ, I finesse the ♥10. It wins. This gives me twelve tricks, so the rest of the hand is for bragging rights. I pull the last

trump, and play the ♠AK. East follows with the 8 and 10. This creates a second restricted-choice position on the same deal. With ♠J108, East could have played either ♠J or ♠10 on the second round. This makes the third-round finesse of the ♠9 almost a two-to-one proposition.

Good odds—but a more satisfying ending works whenever Pro has the ♣K (my initial assumption). I cash the ♠Q; Pro discards a diamond. I ruff a club in my hand and play another heart, throwing a small diamond from dummy, reaching this position:

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

On the last heart, Client must keep her ♠J, so she throws a diamond. I no longer need the ♠9 in dummy. Pro is under the same pressure. He can't throw his high club, so he also discards a diamond. The ace, king and eight of diamonds win the last three tricks.

The full deal:

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

### Points of Interest:

- This hand was played as described by Keith Connolly.

- The Rule of Restricted Choice says that if a player has a choice of plays, he may elect the other option. Therefore, there is a presumption he does *not* have a second option. On this hand, the appearances of West's ♥J and East's ♠10 each brought the Rule into application.

- The contract was the same at the other table, and was declared by a leading professional (LP)—top 70 on the all-time ACBL masterpoint list, top 10 in the 2009 Barry Crane list, and tied for the top masterpoint winner at this year's Gopher. He received the ♠4 lead, 5, 8, ace. He disregarded the Rule twice, playing ♥AK, and then ♠KQ. A third heart threw East on lead, but East had an easy exit in diamonds, upsetting the timing for the double-squeeze. LP was reduced to the losing club finesse.

- Even after going wrong on the restricted choice in trumps, LP had virtually a sure read on the spade suit. His defenders were using *third-and-low* leads against suits. The lead was the ♠4, followed by the ♠7 on the second round and the ♠2 on third. The defenders were not playing MUD (although West was desperately trying to muddy the waters by his spot-card plays). When West produced the ♠2, he became a prohibitive favorite to have *four* spades. That along with East's restricted-choice ♠10 presented a roadmap to the winning solution.