

Averting Disaster. . .with John Koch

Playing in a pairs' event, I am third to speak:

♠A1064 ♥A754 ♦J52 ♣43

We are vulnerable and the opponents are not. After two passes, I also pass. South opens **two hearts**. Partner and North pass. I have nothing to add, so auction has been quick:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

Partner leads the ♣Q, which appears to be disastrous when dummy appears:

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

Initial analysis:

Fourth-hand two bids are often made with good suits and opening-bid values, so I expect declarer will have most of the high hearts, the ♣K and one other key card.

I play the ♣4 and declarer wins the ♣K. Declarer now leads the ♥K. When I duck he continues with the ♥Q, which I win the ace as partner plays the ♥10. It now looks like declarer

has five heart tricks, along with the entire club suit. *What is the best plan?*

It is necessary to continue the attack on clubs before declarer pulls trump and claims nine or ten tricks. So I lead the ♣3; partner covers declarer's ♣8 with the jack and dummy wins the ace. Now the ♠2 is led. If I duck and declarer wins the ♠K, he will pull trumps and run the rest of his clubs, making eleven tricks. But I don't think declarer has the ♠K because that would give him 12 points with the top hearts and both black kings. That would leave partner with the ♦AK, when he surely would have preferred a diamond lead over the ♣Q. I am inclined to place declarer with the ♦K. So I duck. Partner wins the ♠8, and gives me a club ruff. *What now?*

The easy defense is a low spade toward partner's ♠K, but declarer will ruff, pull my last trump, and lead a diamond toward dummy's queen for nine tricks. To prevent this, I lead the ♦J, which rides to dummy's ♦Q. A club is played from dummy. I ruff and declarer overruffs, but he is left with two diamond losers. Two hearts for -110 is an average, but at least we avert a disaster.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- Clubs are worth five tricks for declarer after partner's ♣Q lead, so immediate attention must be given to cutting declarer's communications with dummy.

- When a low spade is led from dummy, a simple count shows that declarer can hardly have the ♠K. He has already shown up with the ♣K and all the picture cards in trumps, and must have a high diamond because of partner's failure to lead that suit.

- Too often a defender goes on autopilot after doing something good. It is not enough to cut declarer's communications in clubs but East must cut them in diamonds as well. The right card is the ♦J to preserve partner's diamond tenace.