

Deferred Ending. . .with John Koch

Playing in a pairs' event against strong opponents, I hold as South:

♠ A 10 6 4 3 ♥ Q J 8 5 ♦ — ♣ J 7 6 2

With no one vulnerable, partner opens **one club** in first position, and we reach **four spades** after this auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♦6 and partner puts down a good hand:

♠ K 5 2
♥ A K 7
♦ Q 9 4
♣ A K 4 3

♦6 led

♠ A 10 6 4 3
♥ Q J 8 5
♦ —
♣ J 7 6 2

Initial impressions:

I can't expect much more from partner, particularly with most of his points in my long suits. On the diamond lead I play low and ruff East's jack. Now a spade to the king brings the jack from West.

My choices at this point are to try to drop the queen-jack of spades, or to play West for the singleton jack by finessing the ten on the second round. If I succeed in finding the queen-jack, a favorable club break will give me *six*. But if the queen doesn't fall, I am at risk of losing control. In pairs, do I go for the maximum or just try to make my contract?

This is largely a matter of percentages. In a restricted choice position, the finesse is almost twice as likely to succeed as the drop. So I lead a spade from dummy and insert the 10, and it wins. That is both good news and bad: the good news is that I am in control for the moment; the bad news is that I am at imminent risk of losing control. Can I afford another round of trumps?

No! After the initial ruff, East has as many trumps as I do, and if I lose a trick to the ♣Q, East may be able to draw my last trump and run diamonds. I decide to play on hearts. Both follow to the ace and king, and when I play a low heart from the board, East goes into a huddle. Finally, he discards a diamond. He apparently is afraid of squandering his sure trump trick on a loser if I have ♥Qx. I win the ♥Q. Is there any benefit of playing the ♥J at this stage? No, because East can ruff and play on diamonds. I will have to ruff and will be a step behind with the ♣Q still outstanding. So I cash the ace and king

of clubs and lead a third round. East wins the queen and plays a diamond, which I ruff in hand. This is the position after the tenth trick:

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

Now is the time for the ♥J, discarding the ♦Q from dummy. East ruffs but is powerless. If he returns a trump, the club is good. If he returns a diamond, I ruff in dummy and the ace of the trumps wins the last trick. This adds up to eleven tricks for a fine match point score.

This was the full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- Much has been written about risking the contract at match points for an extra trick or two. But these risks must be supported by sound bridge percentages. In this case, when the odds are almost two to one in favor of the restricted-choice play, declarer must take the percentage action.

- When trumps fail to break, it is often necessary to leave one or two outstanding. The danger is that a defender will be able to ruff, reach partner's hand, and get another ruff. Declarer's control of the side suits neutralized this risk.

- The ending materialized when declarer was able to discard dummy's last diamond on the trick East ruffed. East could have salvaged some match points by ruffing the *third* heart and leading a diamond. Then when he was in with the club, another high diamond would have forced declarer to ruff with his ace, and East's queen of trumps must win a trick.