

Double Inference. . .with John Koch

Playing in a team event against experienced opponents, I hold:

♠Q 10 9 7 5 4 ♥A 8 ♦6 5 4 3 ♣J

With our side vulnerable, East opens **one club** and I overcall **one spade**. West jumps to **three clubs**—preemptive. Partner **doubles**, which we play as competitive. East passes, and I rebid **three spades**. Partner raises to **four spades**, and everyone passes. The full auction:

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
3♣	Dbl	Pass	3♠
Pass	4♣	All Pass	

West leads the ♣7 and partner puts down a nice hand:

♠ K J
♥ K 7 6
♦ A Q 8 2
♣ 8 6 5 3

♣7 led

♠ Q 10 9 7 5 4
♥ A 8
♦ 6 5 4 3
♣ J

Preliminary analysis:

West's preemptive jump suggests five clubs, which means that East opened a three-card suit. When this happens, the opening bidder will inevitably have length in one major, and perhaps both. My guess is that East's distribution is either 4-3-3-3 or 4=4=2=3. West is somewhat distributional with five clubs and at least four hearts. With length in hearts, it is somewhat surprising he did not make a negative double. This suggests he felt he was too weak to investigate a heart fit.

East wins the first trick with the ♣K and continues with the ♣A. I ruff and consider my order of play.

There are two sure black-suit losers, and a diamond loser. My immediate concern is the diamond suit. The straightforward play is to finesse West for the ♦K, but a possible alternative is to play East for the doubleton king. East has shown up with ♣AK, leaving West with the ♣Q. If West also has the ♠A, he might have chanced a negative double with his four hearts. Assigning the ♠A to East would give him the ♣AK, ♠A, ♥Q and perhaps a red jack, not quite enough for a notrump opener. There is not much to go on here, but my instincts are to play West for the ♦K.

My next concern is whether to play on diamonds or trumps at this point. If East has four spades, there is risk of a trump force, so the aim is to give him his trick when he is out of clubs. This means that I have to contrive to lose the next trick to West. I finesse the ♦Q; it wins! Both follow to the ♦A, and the third diamond goes to West's king. As expected, he forces me with a club. I ruff and lead a trump to the king. East wins his ace, pauses—and returns a heart. I grab the ♥A, draw the last trump, and claim with a good diamond and the ♥K.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- An opponent who makes a preemptive jump in clubs invariably has five clubs. This allowed a double inference: East could be counted with three clubs and perhaps four cards in each major.

- Declarer's strategy was to lose the *second* trick to the hand with the long clubs, so that when East won the *third* trick, he would have no club to lead. Had declarer reversed the process, West would have had good clubs to cash when he won the ♦K.