

Excess Of Zeal. . .with John Koch

Playing in a team game against strong-club opponents, I hold as second hand:

♠ Q 9 7 6 2 ♥ J ♦ A 10 8 6 5 2 ♣ 8

The opponents are vulnerable; we are not. East, on my right, opens **two clubs** showing clubs with 15 points at most. I pass, and West responds **two hearts** non-forcing. Partner passes and East raises to **three hearts**. My shape is too inviting to remain silent: I interject three spades. West does not hesitate in bidding four hearts. Partner bids **four spades**, and East makes a fast **double**. I sit back and exhale and prepare my apologies for partner. The full auction:

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

West leads the ♥K and partner puts down the bare minimum:

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

Preliminary analysis:

We have a combined 14 points, so my goal here is to hold down the damage. I suspect that the ♠K is with the opener, so the opponents surely can make ten tricks. I have to somehow find a way to scratch seven tricks out of this combination to hold our losses to 500 points.

East plays the ♥8—upside-down—and West shifts to the king and another club. I play low from dummy and East inserts the ♣7, which I ruff. With a two-suiter, it is almost always right to start on the second suit, so I play the ace of diamonds, seeing the king from East, and continue with a low diamond, which West wins with the queen while East throws the ♣9. West exits with a small heart to East's ace, and I ruff again. It is time to reconstruct the hand. West's two-heart showed a five- or six-card heart suit with 8-11 points. He is marked with four diamonds; his play of the king and another club, followed by the heart exit, indicates a doubleton club; East's fast double suggests four trumps; that leave's West with a singleton spade and six hearts. This is my view of the remaining layout:

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

I have taken three tricks and need four more. All will have to come from the trump suit because, if I am right about trumps, East has more than I do. I lead a diamond. If I ruff this with the jack, East will overruff and take out two of my trumps. That will limit me to five trump tricks in all for -800, and unhappy teammates. I think I will ruff with the ace of trumps. East

throws a club. I now come off dummy with another heart. East thinks a long while before discarding the ♣10. I ruff with the seven of spades, and lead the ten of diamonds ruffing with the jack of spades. East overruffs with the king, and leads the ace of clubs. I am under no pressure here and throw a diamond. Now East leads the three of spades. I imagine that East is down to three spades and West has only his singleton. If that singleton is the ten, I have to rise with the queen. But the odds are three to one that East holds the ten. That would also make his double more attractive, although I don't put much stock in that: he undoubtedly would have doubled with *any* four spades. I play the nine of spades and West plays the eight. I have seven tricks and my excess of zeal has escaped punishment.

The full deal:

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