

Instant Alert. . .with John Koch

In a team event against experienced opponents, I hold in fourth chair:

♠ J65 ♥ 7 ♦ Q10 ♣ AQ87432

With both sides vulnerable, West, on my left, opens **one heart**. Partner and East pass, and I balance with **two clubs**. West repeats his hearts, and partner tries **two notrump**. East passes. With seven potential tricks in notrump, my choices are between three clubs and three notrump. Partner's sequence shows 11-12 points in our methods, which means that we have no more than half the deck. A good share of my hand is in queens and jacks, so I am inclined to bid a conservative **three clubs**. Partner is not done; he raises to **four clubs**. This bid shows prime values, and his good cards are likely to be well-positioned. This is a team event, so I try **five clubs**. Everyone passes. The full auction:

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

West leads the ♥K and partner's hand is somewhat disappointing:

♠ A Q 7 4
♥ A J 6 5
♦ 9 3
♣ J 9 6

♥K led

♠ J 6 5
♥ 7
♦ Q 10
♣ A Q 8 7 4 3 2

Initial Analysis:

It appears I may have four losers here, two diamonds, a spade and a trump. I have to defer judgment about trumps until I make one about diamonds. Why didn't

West lead a diamond? The answer is that doesn't have both the ace and king. Assuming East has one of those cards, he can't have the ♣K in view of his initial pass. My first move is a club to the ace. I watch keenly and West grudgingly produces the king. Now I am back in the ballgame.

The strategy is to eliminate the minors. If West has to win the second diamond, he may be endplayed. I pull the last trump with dummy's ♣J, and lead a diamond from dummy and insert the 10. West wins the jack, goes into a huddle, and emerges with ♦5, which East wins with the king. Unfortunately, they managed that test nicely.

East returns the ♠9. Covering with the jack won't accomplish anything, so I let the ♠9 ride to the queen. The play is now to put pressure on West. I ruff a heart, and play three rounds of trumps. This is the position before the last trump:

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

On the ♣4, West has to give up.
The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- Missing both ace and king of a suit not led by the defenders places declarer on instant alert that the leader does not have both top honors. Giving a top diamond to East allows declarer to place West with almost every key honor.

- Declarer has no interior spots in spades but his combination is a powerful one so long as he has a threat in another suit. He simply runs his clubs and keeps an eye out for the ♥Q. When it doesn't appear, the ♠K is sure to fall under the ♠A.