

Outside The Box. . .with John Koch

Playing in a team game, I hold as South:

♠Q6 ♥AKQ105 ♦104 ♣10653

With no one vulnerable, I open **one heart** after three passes. West, on my left, bids **two notrump**—unusual. Partner jumps to **four hearts**, and everyone passes. The full auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♥
2NT	4♥	All Pass	

West leads the ♣A and this is what I see:

♠ K 10 7 5
♥ J 9 6 3 2
♦ A 9
♣ Q 7

♣A led

♠ Q 6
♥ A K Q 10 5
♦ 10 4
♣ 10 6 5 3

Preliminary analysis:

I have three black-suit losers and limited possibilities for a tenth trick. On the ♣A, East encourages with the ♣8, and West continues with the king and another club. I ruff with the ♥9, and pull trumps beginning with the ace and by overtaking the ♥10 with the jack. East follows and West discards a diamond. Assuming West is five-five in the minors, he must have two spades. If these include the jack, the ♠10 will provide a discard for my

diamond loser. However, the odds against finding West with the ♠J are 2½ to one. Not only is East more likely to have the jack among his five spades, but the ♠J might have given West the nudge to open the bidding in first chair. Instead, chances of finding West with doubleton ♠8 or ♠9 must be more promising. I call for the ♠10 from the table. East covers with the jack and I win the ♠Q. When I play the ♠6, West contributes the ♠8—happy sight—and dummy’s king is won by East’s ace. The diamond shift is won by dummy’s ace, and the ♠7 is led. East covers with the ♠9. I am careful to ruff with the ♥Q, and use my ♥5 to cross to dummy’s ♥6. The ♠5 is my tenth trick.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest

• East avoided the phantom save in diamonds but didn’t follow up with effective defense. His high-low in clubs is an instinctive mistake that many players make—it encouraged a third round of

clubs even when he had no interest in one. And who can blame West for leading a third round of clubs? If East had a singleton king or queen of hearts, overruffing the dummy would have been a gift trick. Instead, East should have signaled with a low club. West would have made the obvious shift to a diamond to defeat the contract.

• Declarer’s play in spades was “outside the box.” He recognized that there was a good chance that dummy’s ♠5 was higher than East’s fourth highest spade. His goal was to pin West’s intermediate spot card while developing the ♠5 as the high spade.

• Establishing dummy’s suit required three entries to dummy. One came from the ♦A, but the others were timely managed—first by overtaking the ♥10 with the jack and later the ♥5 with the six.