

Restricted Choice? . . .with John Koch

Playing in a team event with a regular partner, I hold:

♠K J 7 4 ♥9 ♦K Q 10 2 ♣K Q J 8

With both sides vulnerable, I am the dealer and open **one diamond**. West, on my right, jumps to **four hearts**. Partner **doubles**, negative in our style. East passes, and I bid **four spades**. Partner now bids **five clubs**, a cuebid in support of spades. Our agreement is that a five-level cuebid shows three first round controls. We make this bid in two contexts: typically when holding a void (when an ace-ask is ineffective), or when we have two or more losers in the enemy suit. Assuming partner has three first round controls, I have a very suitable hand, particularly with the singleton heart. I cue bid **five diamonds**. Partner now jumps to **six spades**. The full auction:

South	West	North	East
1♦	4♥	Dbl	Pass
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♠	All Pass

West leads the ♥A and I hold my breath as partner tables the dummy:

♠ A Q 9 8
♥ J 6 2
♦ A J 9 4
♣ A 4

♥A led

♠ K J 7 4
♥ 9
♦ K Q 10 2
♣ K Q J 8

Preliminary analysis:

Partner has exactly what I expected. His 5♣ cuebid promised three aces and his jump to slam showed two top trumps. West begins with the ace and king of hearts, and I ruff in hand. It seems that all I have to do is pull trumps and claim. On the ♠K, however,

West discards a heart and the contract has become testy. *What now?*

East is marked with five trumps and two hearts. That leaves six minor-suit cards, and I need to guess his distribution. The odds slightly favor West to be 7-4-2-0 than 7-3-3-0. It is more likely that three rounds of clubs will stand up than three diamonds. So I start with three top clubs. Both defenders play up the line. On the third round, West plays the 7 and East the 10. *Is there anything significant here?*

This is a restricted choice situation. With ♣109, East could have played either the 10 or the 9. His play of the ♣10 suggests that he does not have the 9. This is a slender reed. I turn to diamonds and play two rounds. West plays the 5 and 8 and East the 3 and 7, leaving the ♦6 is outstanding. *Who is more likely to have it?*

Neither defender can be trusted at this point; either can have the ♦6. My only clue comes from the restricted choice implications of the ♣10 and my early assumptions that West's jump to four hearts was more likely from 7-4-2-0 than 7-3-3-0. Trusting West to have the fourth club, I play a third diamond to dummy's ace. West discards a heart and East follows. My contract is now secure. This is the position:

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

I lead the ♥J from the board. East ruffs with the ♠3 and I overruff with

the ♠7. At this point, I claim with three high trumps. Making six.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- The bidding contains three notable features. The first relates to the ceilings that players place on their negative doubles. Some establish limits of 3♠, others 4♦. But when partner opens one of a minor and an opponent preempts to 4♥, what is more useful, a penalty double or a negative double to show four spades? If your ceiling is four diamonds, there is no convenient way to show a good hand and four spades.

- The five-level cuebid showing three first-round controls is useful but requires clear understandings. Partner must ask why you are not trying Roman Keycard. The answer is that the hand is not appropriate because you have a void or two or more losers in the enemy suit.

- When South cue bids 5♣ and North expresses interest with 5♦, the focus shifts to the trump suit. With only one top trump, North signs off in five spades; with two he jumps to six. South has to be on the same page after the apparent signoff, recognizing that the focus is on the trump suit.