

## TWO CLUES – from John Koch

Playing in the final session of the GNT superflight, our side is vulnerable and I hold in second chair:

♠A 9 6 3 ♥J 10 7 4 ♦Q J 8 ♣9 8

East on my right opens **one heart**. I pass, and West responds **one notrump**. Partner **doubles**, and East bids **two clubs**. I have enough for a free bid of **two spades**. West passes, and partner raises to **three spades**. East competes to **four clubs**. I have the makings of four useful features, so I try **four spades**. Everyone passes. The full auction:

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

West leads the five of clubs and this is what I see:

♠ K J 8 7 4  
♥ 8  
♦ A K 10 7  
♣ Q 4 2

5♣ led

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

*Initial analysis:* This is a relatively simple deal. My sole aim is to find the queen of trumps. East surprises me somewhat by winning the top clubs and switching to a low heart. I play the ten and West wins the queen. West exits with the two of diamonds. It occurs to me that East may be ruffing this card. I hold my breath, but East follows with the *nine*.

The time has come for a trump decision. Both follow to the ace, and West plays the ten on the next round. Do I finesse or play for the drop?

Let's consider the auction and play so far. East's bid at the four level after his partner's one notrump response shows very good distribution, probably eleven cards in his two suits. They are playing third- and-low leads, and West's five and six of clubs must be from jack-third. East apparently decided he couldn't risk inserting the ten from ♣AK10xx. East's nine of diamonds is the highest outstanding, and is undoubtedly a singleton.

What about hearts? East returned his lowest heart and West won the queen. East would not have underled the ace of hearts. That means that West started with the ace and queen of hearts.

With ♥AQx, would West have preferred one notrump to a heart raise? Hardly! A raise would have been automatic with three hearts. This limits him to two, and confirms his partner's 1=6=1=5 distribution. It must be right to finesse the jack of spades. When I do, East discards a heart. I have ten tricks and an 11-IMP pick-up.

The full deal:

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

*Points of Interest:*

- There are two clues to the location of the queen of trumps. East's four-level bid indicates great distribution. 6-5-1-1 would fit the bill.

- East's low heart lead denied the ace. When West showed up with the queen, it was easy to place him with ace-queen doubleton, and his partner for six.