

Discovery Play – with John Koch

Playing in a pairs' game, I am the dealer in first position:

♠A 9 5 ♥A 8 ♦9 7 ♣A K 9 8 3 2

With 15 points, prime cards and a good six-card minor, my choices are one notrump, suppressing the minor, or one club planning to jump on the next round. Right or wrong, I start with **one notrump**. West passes and I hear **four notrump** from partner—quantitative. I am on minimum count but I have extra playing strength and great top cards, so I take the gamble to six notrump. The auction has been short and simple:

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	4NT	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

West leads the queen of spades and it soon becomes obvious that we are missing almost all the minor honors:

♠ A K 8
♥ K 10 3
♦ K J 10 7 4
♣ 6 5

♠Q led

♠ 9 7
♥ A 8
♦ A 9 5
♣ A K 9 8 3 2

Initial Impressions:

Six diamonds would have required only reasonable breaks in the minors. In this contract, assuming clubs behave, I have eleven tricks and need to find the queen of diamonds.

I win the ace of spades and duck a club. West continues with the ten of spades to dummy's king. The run of the clubs will give me some idea of the layout, but first I have nothing to lose by checking hearts. I try a low one from the board and East inserts the jack. I win the ace and return to the king, East following low. That was revealing. Next the clubs from the top: fortunately both follow to the second round, and on rounds three through five, West throws two spades, and East two hearts and a spade. West has the top spade left and East is virtually marked with the queen of hearts. This is the suspected layout:

	♠ 8	
	♥ 10	
	♦ K 7	
	♣ —	
♠ J		♠ —
♥ x		♥ Q
♦ (Q) x		♦ (Q) x x
♣ —		♣ —
	♠ —	
	♥ —	
	♦ A 9 5	
	♣ 2	

On the last club, West can spare a heart and dummy a spade, but East is forced to throw a diamond. With West marked with the jack of spades and East with the queen of hearts, the queen of diamonds is no longer important. I play king and ace of diamonds and the queen comes tumbling down. Six notrump bid and made is worth a shared top.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

- If declarer plays all his top cards and comes down to ♦A95 in hand opposite ♦KJ10 in dummy, he will learn that West started with two diamonds and East with three. The 60% finesse will end in two down.

- East's splitting his heart honors may have been technically correct, but as a practical matter it made the double squeeze a sure thing. From the defenders' standpoint, diamonds were always declarer's main chance. There was no need to safeguard against a desperation play in hearts that had the effect of giving declarer a blueprint of the hand.