

## Thumper - with John Koch

Playing in a club game against two old foes, I hold:

♠A J 9 3 ♥K J 7 6 ♦Q 4 ♣10 5 3

With no one vulnerable, South on my right extracts a bidding card, makes a move to use it, catches himself, and then replaces it with the **one diamond** card, thumping it for emphasis. With our side silent, North responds **one spade**, and South now beats the **one notrump** card on the table. North raises to **two notrump**, and South, less certain now, retreats to **three diamonds**. North resignedly bids **three notrump**. The complete auction:

| South | West | North | East     |
|-------|------|-------|----------|
| 1♦    | Pass | 1♠    | Pass     |
| 1NT   | Pass | 2NT   | Pass     |
| 3♦    | Pass | 3NT   | All Pass |

I have no reason to lead anything but the six of hearts. North displays a minimum dummy:

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

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

### Preliminary analysis:

The opponents are playing a weak notrump, so South's sequence shows the equivalent of a strong notrump. What about South's antics in changing on the opening bid? Perhaps he forgot his system, although I don't think that is not

likely. The three-diamond rebid was strange, implying six diamonds.

Anyway, declarer wins partner's ♥10 with his ace, and follows with the king, ace and another diamond, partner winning the *ten*. Partner still has the jack of diamonds, limiting declarer to *five* diamonds. Partner returns the *three* of hearts, declarer plays low, and I win the king.

I can be sure of five tricks by developing a second heart trick. But can we do better? I try to reconstruct South's hand. He has five diamonds and four hearts. (Partner's ♥3 clearly shows two because with ♥109xx he would have played the nine on the first trick). That leaves declarer with two-two in the black suits. For points, he has the red aces and the ♠Q. He needs ♣KQ for 15, but with that holding, he might have started by knocking out the ace of clubs. Perhaps he upgraded a 14-point hand with the ♣A-doubleton. He may have thought he was too good for a weak notrump with a 2-4-5-2 14-count. That might also explain the retreat to three diamonds.

We may already have a good board with a one-trick set, but I am going to take a slight risk and try for more. To clarify matters, I advance the ♣10. This collects the jack, queen, and ace. Declarer leads a diamond to partner's jack. A spade to my ace and another club finds partner with the ♣K8 for down two and a tie for a top.

The full deal:

♠ K 10 7 2

♥ Q 8 2

♦ K 9

♣ J 9 6 4

♠ A J 9 3

♥ K J 7 6

♦ Q 4

♣ 10 5 3

♠ 6 5 4

♥ 10 3

♦ J 10 6 5

♣ K Q 8 2

♠ Q 8

♥ A 9 5 4

♦ A 8 7 3 2

♣ A 7

### Points of Interest:

- South's bad habits of replacing bidding cards and thumping them on the table convey valuable information to the defenders. As usual, the reasons are clear after the hand. The profit is in figuring them out during the play.

- There were multiple card-reading inferences on this hand. Declarer would likely have started on the clubs if he had ♣KQ. The ♥3 return showed two hearts, not four, because East did not play the ♥9 on the first round. Declarer's bidding indecision suggested he had borderline values.