

192. Oh, Honey

Playing in a regional KO semi-final against a husband and wife who have the irritating habit of conducting non-stop analysis between hands, I hold as South:

♠A 9 7 6 4 ♥K 10 9 ♦Q 9 7 ♣A 3

With no one vulnerable, partner deals and opens **one diamond**. With the opponents silent, our side quickly reaches **four spades** after this auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	4♣
All Pass			

West leads the two of hearts and it is immediately apparent that the hands do not fit very well:

♠ K Q 8 5
♥ J 5 3
♦ A 8 6
♣ Q 9 7

2♥ led

♠ A 9 7 6 4
♥ K 10 9
♦ Q 9 7
♣ A 3

Initial Evaluation: There are five potential losers and there doesn't appear to be much play unless East has the queen of hearts. The ace of hearts wins the first trick and East returns the four without thought. I sit for a moment and finger the ♥10 but eventually play the king.

I draw trumps in three rounds; West follows once and discards two hearts. It is natural at this point to exit with a heart. West wins her queen, which gives me some consolation. At least I didn't finesse a heart at trick two, losing the first three tricks.

West is not very happy with being on lead; she finally selects a club. I call for the ♣Q, and smile when it wins. It almost instantly occurs to me that she would not have led a club away from the king unless she also held the king of diamonds. If her partner had the ♦K, she would have exited with a diamond, and there would have been no way to avoid four losers.

I cross to my hand with the ace of clubs and see only low clubs. My best chance at this point is to try to throw West in with a high club and hope for a diamond lead. Unfortunately, the only entry to the throw-in card is in trumps, so I lead the seven of spades and overtake with eight. West thinks momentarily and discards a small diamond.

This introduces a diversion. If West has two clubs remaining, she might have felt that she had to keep both to avoid being forced to lead away from her ♦K. If that is so, she started with ♣KJxx and ♦Kxx. By discarding a diamond, she left herself with a club exit but she has come down to ♦K-doubleton.

I decide to test this theory: ace of diamonds followed by low diamonds from both hands. Sure enough, West has to play the king. The queen of diamonds becomes the tenth trick.

There is momentary silence in the enemy camp. Then I hear the wife's twang: "Oh, honey, do you think I should have thrown a club instead of a diamond?" He clears his throat—and begins to discourse in gravelly tones. I feel like puking, and tune out.

The full deal:

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

Points of Interest:

• After the first two rounds of clubs, this was the position:

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

On the seven of spades, West is squeezed. Throwing a club results in her being endplayed in clubs; throwing the diamond promotes the queen of diamonds. West could have avoided this fate by keeping a small club to play under partner's ten.

[Part two next week]