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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KJ54		
	♥ 54		
	♦ 986		
	♣ AQ73		
West		East	
♠ 97		♠ A	
♥ JT98		♥ 7632	
♦ AQ53		♦ K42	
♣ T85		♣ K9642	
	South		
	♠ QT8632		
	♥ AKQ		
	♦ JT7		
	♣ J		

This series is about *timing the hand*. All the deals are played in trump contracts and you have to decide what to do.

Do you draw trumps?

Do you play to ruff losers?

Do you plan to discard your losers?

Remember, all you can do with excess losers is **trump them** or **dump them**.

On this first deal you have to identify the right losers to eradicate and when. Don't worry, it's not difficult...

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ J

As South you reach 4♠ after partner gives you an invitational raise to the three-level. West prefers a *passive* Heart lead from his sequence to lead away from his Diamond tenace. Right in principle, wrong (make that "unlucky") on this deal. An unlikely Diamond lead would give you no chance of making the contract.

Anyway - on the sight of dummy you must pause to **Count and Plan**. Winners - well, we've got a few. To be specific we have *nine* (five Spades, three Hearts and a Club). Losers? Well, there are obviously *four* - three Diamonds and the Ace of trumps. At least the arithmetic balances on this deal - nine winners and four losers.

If you were to make the mistake of attempting to draw trumps East will certainly find the Diamond switch to defeat you. (What else would he lead, looking at that dummy?)

Should we try the Club finesse then? After all, if West turns up with the ♠K then we have an extra winner and also we have a **dumping ground** for one of our Diamond losers. Sounds like a plan - but is it a good one?

A better idea (better because it gives us more than the 50-50 odds of a finesse) is to *dump* one of dummy's losers on the three top Hearts. That reduces the loser count (only three now) but what about the number of winners? Isn't that still nine? Well, because we have oodles of trumps between us (that's one of the reasons we bid 4♠) we can make *six* trump tricks, not just five. The sixth trump trick comes from ruffing a Club on table - in the *short trump hand*. Notice, for the umpteenth time, that ruffing Clubs in the closed hand (the *long trump hand*) is a waste of time.

So... in detail. We must take three rounds of Hearts immediately, pitching a Diamond from dummy. Now you can play a trump. East wins and gets off lead with a Diamond.

West wins his ♦Q and tries a Club but you resist the siren call of the Club finesse by winning the ♠A and persist with your plan - draw the last trump and play another Diamond. The defenders win that but have to concede the


rest. Contract made.



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Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ A863	
	♥ T842	
	♦ T2	
	♣ AQJ	
West		East
♠ KQJT		♠ 95
♥ 63		♥ A5
♦ A86		♦ J974
♣ 9653		♣ T8742
	South	
	♠ 742	
	♥ KQJ97	
	♦ KQ53	
	♣ K	

Here is another deal with too many losers.
How can you eliminate them?

Do you trump them or dump them?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

As South we reach 4♥ after another invitational sequence and West has an easy lead of the ♠K from his powerful sequence.

After the mandatory show of gratitude to partner for his sterling work in both his bidding and the displaying of his hand we should settle down to work. We must **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners... we can see one Spade, four Hearts (once the ♥A has been dislodged from its hiding place), one Diamond (again, once the ♦A has gone) and three Clubs. That totals ten winners. Not only that but we should be able to ruff at least one Diamond on table (in the *short trump hand*, note) so we are looking at overtricks.

When we have sufficient tricks for the contract we draw trumps, right? Not so fast! First you must look at losers...

Losers... there there is the obvious ♥A and ♦A to lose. What else? Well, after this dastardly lead, dislodging the ♠A, there are two Spade losers as well. So we are staring at four losers (or we will be, after trick 1).

Hmmm... ten winners, four losers. Not so good - firstly the arithmetic doesn't balance. Secondly, we cannot afford to play on trumps or the opponents will gather in four tricks quickly before we have ten. So we need a **Plan**, and that Plan involves *dumping losers*.

What we have to do is to **dump** Spade losers on winning Clubs. To do this we must lead the ♣A (*crashing* the ♣K in the closed hand); this releases the ♣Q J, which come next. On these we dump our Spades losers.

Having done this preliminary work we still have to rid ourselves of the two small Diamonds. We can ruff these on table - however, it might be unwise to play trumps just yet. First things first - we play a Diamond to the ♦Q to dislodge the ♦A. West plays a trump (he can see our **plan**) and East returns one after taking the ♥A.

Nice try, guys - no cigar. It is a simple matter now to ruff the two losing Diamonds on table


and make an overtrick.



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Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ T643		
	♥ KT4		
	♦ K85		
	♣ 872		
West		East	
♠ 82		♠ A7	
♥ 853		♥ A9762	
♦ QJT3		♦ 962	
♣ A954		♣ T63	
	South		
	♠ KQJ95		
	♥ QJ		
	♦ A74		
	♣ KQJ		

On this deal you need to appreciate that the opponents are in a race to set up a trick in their suit.

What can you do to counter this?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

As South we reach 4♠, this time bid on the basis of high card strength rather than on any distributional quality. West leads the ♦Q from his sequence and we must go through the old routine. **Count** and **Plan** (Count and Plan, Count and Plan...)

Winners... You can see only two *top tricks* (the ♦A K) but we should look deeper than that. There are four Spade tricks (once the ♠A has gone) two Heart tricks (once the ♥A has gone) and two Club tricks (once the ♣A has gone). So we can see two Spades, four Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs. A total of ten. (That's good news, in a contract of 4♠!)

Losers... Well it's easy to see that we have to lose three Aces. What is harder to appreciate is that we have a Diamond loser as well. Not only that but the opponents have attacked the walls of our castle by leading a Diamond at trick 1. Not good.

So we have ten winners and four losers. What happens if we draw trumps? Let's see... We win the Diamond lead and play a trump. The opponents take the ♠A and continue with Diamonds. When we lose the lead to another Ace the opponents cash the other Ace and take a Diamond trick. They also have silly grins on their faces. Aaaarrggghhh. So the solution is NOT to draw trumps. It must be to **dump a loser** on something. What, though?

The answer is to look for a "long" suit somewhere. Clubs are useless - we have three cards in each hand. What about Hearts? Ah yes! We can set up a Heart for a Diamond discard. This must be done at once, though. So, win the Diamond lead - crucially with the ♦A in the closed hand. Now play a Heart. The opponents take the ♥A and shoot down the ♦K. We can take that and play off the ♥K (dropping the ♥J) and the ♥10 pitching that irritating Diamond.

Now we are in the clear. We can draw trumps (losing to the ♠A *en route*) and set up two Club tricks (losing to the ♣A *en route*). Ten tricks.

Can you see how the opponents could beat you if you took the ♦K at trick one? (They don't take

the ♥A on the first round of the suit. Now you can't reach the ♥K).

Can you see how the opponents could beat you if dummy didn't have that precious ♥10? (They take the ♥A on the first round of the suit and play back a Diamond. Now the Hearts are tangled and you have no entry to dummy).


Can you see the importance of careful **Planning??**



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AQ5	
	♥ J983	
	♦ Q62	
	♣ Q74	
West		East
♠ KJT963		♠ 872
♥ A4		♥ 62
♦ JT9		♦ K874
♣ A9		♣ 8653
	South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ KQT75	
	♦ A53	
	♣ KJT2	

On this deal the winners and losers aren't immediately apparent. However, if you play properly early on in the piece you will discover exactly what you need to do.

West	North	East	South
1♠	P	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ J

We reach 4♥ as South after West has opened the bidding with 1♠. West chooses the ♦J as his opening lead - we can see now that he has done so because he has a nice sequence in the suit (*God dealt you a sequence so you wouldn't have a problem with your opening lead*).

Right... **Count** and **Plan**. We may have mentioned this small strategic point before... (!)

You can see a Spade trick, four Hearts, a Diamond and three Clubs. Given time and space you could draw trumps, knock out the ♣A, throw a Diamond on the long Club and – eventually – ruff a Diamond on the table. After the ♦J lead, though, you may have too many losers. Where, for instance, is the ♦K? Players have been known to lead the ♦J from ♦K J 10 (albeit rarely) and West has enough to open the bidding so must have most of the missing high cards. So the first point is to resolve the Diamond layout by trying our luck with the ♦Q. Does it win? Does it heck! East produces the ♦K and we have to reappraise the hand.

You can now see four quick losers (two Diamonds, the ♥A and the ♣A). In terms of winners there are four Hearts, one Diamonds, three Clubs and, therefore, two required Spades. Before playing trumps you must **dump** one of your losing Diamonds. The way to do this is to take the Spade finesse at trick two (West has bid the suit, don't forget) and then throw a losing Diamond on the ♣A. Now (and only now) trumps can be drawn safely and the Clubs set up.


This way you lose a Heart, a Diamond and a Club.



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ J87		
	♥ AJ2		
	♦ A52		
	♣ QJ85		
West		East	
♠		♠ 9654	
♥ K964		♥ QT85	
♦ JT98		♦ Q7	
♣ A9432		♣ KT6	
	South		
	♠ AKQT32		
	♥ 73		
	♦ K643		
	♣ 7		

These last two deals are a little trickier than the first four.

Here you have (as usual) the dilemma of deciding whether to draw trumps or not. How can you tell? Well, as usual you have to *count winners and losers*.

If there are too many losers you have to find a way of disposing of the excess ones.

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	P	4♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ J

As South you reach 4♣ after North has opened 1NT and contemplate dummy after the ♦J opening lead.

As ever, you must **Count** and **Plan** before playing a card. As usual, this *counting* and *planning* concerns *winners* and *losers*.

In terms of winners there are six Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds – a total of nine. In terms of losers there are no Spades, one Heart, one Diamond and one Club – total of three. Hmmm – something doesn't add up here: nine winners and three losers. How do we square this circle?

Well, take a closer look at the Diamond suit – in fact, there are **two** losers there – or there would be if we denuded dummy of trumps. If, on the other hand, we kept dummy's trumps *in situ* and disposed of the last Diamond by trumping it on the dummy we'd actually make **seven** Spade tricks – six in hand and one ruff in the short hand.

Right, then, the details. Let's dot the *is* and cross the *ts*. Win the Diamond lead (it doesn't much matter where) and – without pulling trumps – play off the other top Diamond and concede a Diamond to the enemy. The defenders play a Heart back (as good as anything) so we take the ♥A, come to hand with a trump, ruff a Diamond on table (careful now! We must ruff with the ♠J to avoid East getting in an over-ruff) and now (and only now) draw trumps.


The last two cards (a Club and a Heart) can cheerfully be conceded to the opponents as we have made ten of the first eleven tricks.



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Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ K98	
	♥ J73	
	♦ AK9	
	♣ Q753	
West		East
♠ 542		♠ 63
♥ K8		♥ QT95
♦ T632		♦ 754
♣ JT98		♣ AK62
	South	
	♠ AQJT7	
	♥ A642	
	♦ QJ8	
	♣ 4	

Here you find yourself in a game contract but one trick short of the required number of winners. Where is the extra trick coming from?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

As South you reach 4♠ and West leads the ♣J, making mincemeat of dummy's ♣Q. Now, how should you approach this deal? Well, first things first. **Count** and **Plan**.

What do we have in terms of *winners*? Five Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds and no Clubs – that totals nine. Not bad, but we need ten. What about *losers*? Well, there are no Spade losers, two Heart losers, no Diamond losers and one Club loser. As in Hand 5 there is a discrepancy (nine winners, three losers) and, as in Hand 5 it's all to do with a weak four-card suit. In this deal it's Hearts we have to look at more closely.

If we were to draw trumps (unwise when we have insufficient winners) then we would have **three** Heart losers. However, if we keep dummy's trumps we only have two Heart losers – and the way to make the tenth trick is to trump the last Heart on table (in the short trump hand).

So... we win trick two by trumping a Club. We must then set about Hearts by playing the ♥A and another to set up a Heart ruff on table. The defenders can see the plan and try the effect of leading trumps to prevent it. Nice try – no cigar.

We win the trump switch and patiently concede a second Heart to the enemy – our third loser. A second trump lead reduces dummy's trumps to one – but that's all we need. We can ruff a Heart on table, cross to hand with the ♦Q, draw the last trump and claim the rest.


Ten tricks come from **six** trump tricks, the ♥A and three Diamonds.



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Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ AK74		
	♥ AJ7		
	♦ A65		
	♣ 642		
West		East	
♠ J82		♠ Q963	
♥ 54		♥ 632	
♦ Q732		♦ KT94	
♣ KQJT		♣ 98	
	South		
	♠ T5		
	♥ KQT98		
	♦ J8		
	♣ A753		

This set of deals is all about disposing of excess losers (or trying to increase an inadequate number of winners).

3NT is an absurdly easy contract on this deal. Unfortunately that's not where you end up. *'Twas ever thus*. Where is your tenth trick on this deal?

West	North	East	South
-	1♠	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ K

As South you declare 4♥ and West leads the ♣K. This deal is similar in nature to Hands 5 and 6 of the previous series so by now you might know what to do. Obviously, though, you must start by making a **Count** and **Plan**...

Winners – well, there are two Spades, five Hearts, one Diamond and five Clubs, a total of nine. *Losers?* No Spades, no Hearts, one Diamond and two or three Clubs. Clubs is the critical suit here – if you draw trumps then there would be three losers. If, however, you delay the drawing of trumps you could trump the last Club on the table.

That's the **Plan**, then. Win the ♣A and immediately play back a Club, conceding the trick to West. That defender tries his best by leading a trump but you have the all-important *tempo*.

You can win the Heart switch (in either hand) and play another Club. You take the next Heart lead in hand to ruff a Club on the table (in the *short trump hand*, note) and you are now in a position to claim the contract. You have to come back to hand to draw the last trump so you have to play off the ♠A K and another Spade but when that all passes off peacefully you have your ten tricks.


These ten tricks are made up of two Spades, six Hearts, one Diamond and one Club.



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ KT3		
	♥ K74		
	♦ K84		
	♣ A753		
West		East	
♠ 8542		♠ 6	
♥ QJT9		♥ 853	
♦ 62		♦ AJT9	
♣ KJ8		♣ QT962	
	South		
	♠ AQJ97		
	♥ A62		
	♦ Q753		
	♣ 4		

This deal is similar to the first one of this series. If you have coped with that you can cope with this one. No problem!

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ Q

As South you declare 4♠ and West leads the ♥Q. Now, you know the routine with these hands by now – you have to **Count** (winners and losers) and **Plan** (what to do about the excess losers).

Winners: There are five Spades, two Hearts and a Club “on top” and it’s easy to set up a Diamond by knocking out the ♦A. That makes nine winners. Of course, a weak defender might play his ♦A on “thin air” and solve all of our problems – but you can bet that he won’t! Aces are meant to kill Kings (or Queens) and that’s what one of the defenders will be hoping to do.

Back to the plot... How many **losers** are there? No Spades, one Heart, possibly three Diamonds (if the defenders keep their powder dry) and no Clubs. That’s one too many losers.

However, by keeping the three trumps on table we can hold the Diamond losers to two – eventually we can trump the last Diamond on the table.

Allow us to keep beating the drum. You shouldn’t draw trumps unless you can see sufficient tricks for your contract. Also, you should aim to trump losers in the *short hand*. Here, ruffing Clubs in the closed hand (the long trump hand) is the wrong play – you don’t gain extra tricks that way.

So, the play in detail... Win the Heart lead (in the closed hand, with the ♥A, although it doesn’t really matter) and immediately attack Diamonds by leading one to the ♦K. As the cards lie that gets bashed by the ♦A and a Heart is returned, knocking out the ♥K.

You must now play off the ♦Q and another Diamond, giving up the trick to East but setting up a ruff in the dummy. The defenders can cash a Heart but that’s the end of the party. You can win the trump return, ruff the last, losing, Diamond on table, draw trumps and you have the rest.


Ten tricks come from six Spade tricks, two Hearts, one Diamond and the ♣A.



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 9
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ KQ64		
	♥ QT		
	♦ AQ84		
	♣ 863		
West		East	
♠ AT73		♠ J98	
♥ 43		♥ 652	
♦ T63		♦ KJ92	
♣ KQJ7		♣ T94	
	South		
	♠ 52		
	♥ AKJ987		
	♦ 75		
	♣ A52		

Having played two similar deals we are now branching out into more difficult territory.

Good luck with these last four deals...

Just remember to **Count** and **Plan**. Oh - did we mention *Counting*?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
P	1♠	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ K

As South you reach 4♥ and West leads the ♣K. It looks obvious to draw trumps (just look at those lovely Hearts!) but such temptations should be resisted until you have performed the ritual of thanking partner and **Counting** your tricks. What is your **Plan**?

Here, you can see six Hearts and two Aces "on top" – so eight tricks are assured. There is also a slow but certain Spade trick to go with the others, so you are guaranteed to make nine tricks.

What about losers? Well, there is a Spade loser, no Heart loser, a possible Diamond loser (just where is that ♦K??) and two Club losers. So the deal appears to hang on the layout in Diamonds and on the Diamond finesse.

However... appearances (as someone wrote) can be deceptive. Why could you not make *two* Spade tricks? True, this entails West having been dealt the ♠A but why shouldn't he have it? If you can lead up to dummy twice in Spades you will make both of the ♠K Q, provided West has the ♠A.

If this is the case you don't need the Diamond finesse – the Diamond loser can be **dumped** on the ♠K. So you draw trumps and play a Spade? Oh no! That way spells defeat. With a capital D. *Why*? Play the hand through in your mind and see. You draw trumps and lead a Spade and West cannily ducks. You win the ♠Q and – oops! – find yourself stuck on table. You play something – a Club? – and West meanly wins and shoots a Diamond through the ♦A Q, forcing you to take the finesse before you are ready. When East has the ♦K you are dead as you have four losers (two Clubs, a Diamond and a Spade).

This hand is all about *good timing*. Win the ♣A and play a Spade at trick 2 (oh, all right, you could cash one high Heart in hand if you really must). What does West do? If he takes the ♠A you have ten tricks so he must duck. You win the ♠Q and NOW you draw trumps before leading a second Spade, neatly cooking West's goose. When he takes the ♠A you have your

tenth trick. (If he ducks his Ace you still have your tenth trick).


If East had turned up with the ♠A you would have had to resort to the Diamond finesse. Still, this way you have two chances instead of one.



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 10
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ JT8		
	♥ 943		
	♦ AK2		
	♣ 9864		
West		East	
♠ Q64		♠ AK7532	
♥ T8		♥ QJ6	
♦ J9643		♦ QT7	
♣ A52		♣ 3	
	South		
	♠ 9		
	♥ AK752		
	♦ 85		
	♣ KQJT7		

In this deal you are caught up in a "momentum auction" and find yourself in a precarious spot. How should you play the hand?

West	North	East	South
P	P	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	3♣	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 4

These competitive deals are tricky. East opens 1♠ and you overcall 2♥ (a better bid than 2♣). West supports his partner with 2♠ (what else?) and North has the choice of Passing (feeble) or supporting your known five-card (or longer) suit. Reasonably enough he supports your suit. East competes to 3♣ (a contract he might make unless you are sharp in the defence) and you decide to take the plunge and bid game in Hearts. No one really knows who can make what on this type of deal when you spin the roulette wheel.

When dummy goes down you can see immediately that you have a Spade loser and the ♣A to lose. If you were to lose two trump tricks you'd be going off so you must hope for a 3-2 trump break so that you only have one Heart loser. What about winners? Well, you have four Hearts (assuming trumps behave nicely and split 3-2) two Diamond winners and four Club winners once the ♣A has gone. So there are ten tricks there.

East-West start by playing two rounds of Spades, forcing you to ruff. You must make some effort to draw trumps (you have enough winners, remember) so you cash the ♥A K. Now, it is important not to drive out the boss Heart as that would leave you short of trumps. You should leave the ♥Q outstanding and turn your attention to your side-suit by driving out the ♣A.

West takes the ♣K with the ♣A and plays yet another Spade, leaving you worryingly short of trumps. However, you can now simply lead off your winning Clubs, happy enough to let either defender ruff in with the ♥Q whenever he wishes. When he does, you have the rest of the tricks with winning Clubs, the ♦A K and two boss trumps (one in each hand).

It is normal play to ignore an outstanding boss trump - especially if you have a side-suit to run off. In these cases you can play winners, allowing an opponent to take his trump trick as and when he wants it. There are exceptions to this "rule" but that is a common strategy.

Note also that East could have played a Club at trick two to his partner's ♣A and received a ruff


at trick three. That would, however, have helped his cause not one jot as he would have been ruffing with his *natural trump trick*. There is no defence to 4♥ after a Spade lead.



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 11
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J6	
	♥ K8754	
	♦ QJ3	
	♣ Q73	
West		East
♠ KQT3		♠ 9
♥		♥ JT963
♦ AT94		♦ 65
♣ JT985		♣ AK642
	South	
	♠ A87542	
	♥ AQ2	
	♦ K872	
	♣	

Some simple-looking deals, played in modest part-scores, are not always as easy as they look. This one needs care and attention

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ J

On this deal you play in a modest part-score after you open 1♠ and partner replies with 1NT.

West leads a Club and you take stock. This sort of deal is difficult to play in that you can't quite count winners and losers. Also, with a moth-eaten trump suit, you don't know how many trump losers you have. On a normal 3-2 break you will lose just two trump tricks (you play off the ♠A and another Spade, leaving East-West with the master trump). However, what if trumps aren't 3-2?

Let's have a stab at counting winners and losers, though. Winners first... There are at least three Spade winners (unless Spades are 5-0 – forget that unlikely possibility). There are three Heart winners, and may be more if that suit breaks 3-2. There are two Diamond winners once the ♦A has gone (and maybe a third Diamond if the suit splits 3-3). No Club winners are possible.

Losers? Two Spades at least, maybe three. No Heart losers. One Diamond loser, maybe two, no Club loser. So, at worst, there appears to be three trump losers (on a 4-1 break) and two Diamond losers (on a 4-2 or 5-1 break). So only five losers – good news.

Now, what is wrong with playing off the ♠A and another Spade? Well, that will work fine if trumps are 3-2. It will be disastrous, though, if trumps are 4-1. Why? Because West will play off the rest of his trumps (leaving you with just one) and will play another Club, removing your last trump. Now when the opponents come in with the ♦A they will have Clubs to cash – lots of them.

To prevent this you should cash the ♠A and turn your attention to your side suit by knocking out the ♦A. This way, the opponents don't get in the position of being able to draw your trumps (humiliating when the defence draws trumps!) and cashing Clubs.


As the cards lie, you must make eight tricks, even with the evil breaks (Hearts 5-0, Spades 4-1, Diamonds 4-2).



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This series continues from the previous V-Blue series on timing and setting up discards.

Timing (harder examples) ACOL version	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 12
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ 7532	
	♦ AKQJT53	
	♣ T	
West		East
♠ KQJ9		♠ T642
♥ 9		♥ KQJT
♦ 97642		♦
♣ K43		♣ Q9862
	South	
	♠ 8753	
	♥ A864	
	♦ 8	
	♣ AJ75	

This - be warned! - is not an easy hand. However, if you have absorbed the lessons of the previous deal or two you may well be able to unlock its secrets.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	P
P	1♦	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

Here you end up in 4♥ and dummy is something of a shock. You realise that 3NT is actually idiot-proof (with seven Diamonds and three Aces) but 4♥ is anything but. Still, as the bard said, "*'Twas ever thus*".

Now, how do we play 4♥ after the ♠K opening lead? Start to ruff black losers in the dummy? Draw trumps? Well, lost with a bewilderingly difficult hand you may lose sight of the necessity of **Counting** and **Planning**. Let's take a deep breath and do that.

Winners? Well, there is one Spade, at least one Heart, seven Diamonds and one Club. So we have enough winners. **Losers?** No Spades, at least two Hearts, no Diamonds and no Clubs.

So we can see that all we have in terms of losers are in trumps and that we have sufficient winners. This argues for drawing trumps – but how? We could play off the ♥A and another, hoping for a 3-2 split. That way all we would lose is two trump tricks. A good idea if the contract were 5♥ but it isn't – it's 4♥. You can afford to lose three trump tricks and you cannot afford to play off the ♥A and another hoping for a heart break. If you tried that you'd get the "heartbreak" all right – East would draw trumps (how humiliating!) and West would have Spades to cash. Aaarrggghhh! Three down.

The way to play the hand is similar (identical?) to Hand 4. Cash the ♥A and play on Diamonds, not caring if any of them gets ruffed. After the ♥A the opponents have three Hearts between them – let them make those tricks by trumping your winning Diamonds. You don't need to **trump** any losers in hand – they can all get **dumped** on those magnificent Diamonds. True, you will have to ruff something on table to gain access to the Diamonds but that doesn't ruin the point of the argument.

