




This series is the second of two about elementary card-play and the knocking out of high cards to set suits up. This section includes leads into tenaces. Part 2 of 2. ACOL version.
Updated spring 2015.

Y1 VBlue #2 The play of the cards in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ A4		♠ 863	South
♥ Q72		♥ A9853	
♦ T853		♦ KJ74	
♣ AJT3		♣ 4	
West			
♠ QJT972			
♥ T6			
♦ A6			
♣ 862			
South			
♠ K5			
♥ KJ4			
♦ Q92			
♣ KQ975			

This set of six deals continues from the previous set of six in this issue of VBlue – it is all about developing tricks in No-trumps.

Remember, in No-trumps most hands contain *top tricks* and suits that need setting up for the extras. Your main aim is to get your "slow tricks" established as soon as you can.

Here, on Hand 1, the line of play should be straightforward enough if you **Count** and **Plan**.

However, the source of your extra tricks may not be so obvious here; you have to keep your wits about you.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

As South, we open 1NT (much the best call with a 5-3-3-2 hand and 14 points) and North raises to 2NT. This invites us to bid on to game and, holding a maximum 14 points, we accept the invitation with alacrity.

Play.

West, holding a long Spade suit headed by a sequence, kicks off with the ♠Q and we settle down to **Count** and to **Plan**. Here, we can count seven *top tricks* (two Spades and five Clubs). Accordingly, we must develop two "extras" to make our contract.

The usual place to look for extra tricks is in our long suit but here that isn't the case. We have already counted five tricks in Clubs (we can't get any more) and the Diamonds are so feeble that we can't realistically expect anything from that quarter.

However, two extra tricks are easily available in Hearts after the ♥A has been knocked out. After winning the opening lead of the ♠Q (with either of the ♠A or the ♠K, it doesn't matter) we should immediately play a Heart to knock out the ♥A. Since the ♥K, ♥Q and ♥J are all *equals* it does not matter much how we handle the suit (as long as we remember to contribute an honour to the first round of the suit, that is...!)

Here it is as good as anything to lead the ♥4 and play dummy's ♥Q. As the cards lie it is East who has the ♥A and he takes the ♥Q with it to return a Spade (note how the defenders cooperate in shooting down our stoppers in Spades).

Although we are now wide open in Spades we can see the finishing line so should sprint for home. So, after taking the second Spade lead, we should cash the next seven tricks (the remaining two Hearts followed by all five Clubs) for nine in all.

The opponents are welcome to mop up the last three tricks; we have fulfilled our contract and that is all that matters.



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Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

<p>North</p> <p>♠ A84</p> <p>♥ KQT2</p> <p>♦ 743</p> <p>♣ A64</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ J93</p> <p>♥ A8643</p> <p>♦ J95</p> <p>♣ 98</p>	
<p>West</p> <p>♠ T762</p> <p>♥ 5</p> <p>♦ KT862</p> <p>♣ KQT</p>		<p>South</p> <p>♠ KQ5</p> <p>♥ J97</p> <p>♦ AQ</p> <p>♣ J7532</p>	

On this deal you have to **Count** and **Plan** (no change there, then!), but there is a small twist.

What difference does the opening lead make to your counting?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ 6

Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1NT with our 13 points and 5-3-3-2 shape and North raises that immediately to game. Simple stuff.

Play.

West fishes out the ♦6 lead, the fourth-highest of his longest suit, and we settle down to do some **Counting** and **Planning**.

Firstly, we have to see that we have two certain Diamond tricks after this lead. It doesn't matter whether West or East has the ♦K, possession of the ♦A Q in our hand guarantees us two tricks.

[Diversion... Honour combinations where there are two honours with one missing in between (such as the A Q or the K J or the Q 10 and so on) are known as *tenaces*, supposedly from the Spanish *tenaza* meaning pincers or tongs.

Whenever we have a tenace combination (and they occur frequently) it is best for us if the suit is led from our left (so that we are last player to play to that trick). The worst thing we can do is to lead the suit ourselves.

Take the current Diamond holding as an example. Now that West has (in all innocence) led the suit we are sure of making two Diamond tricks regardless of the layout of the suit. We just wait to see what East does and are certain to have a counterplay.

If, however, we happened to be the first player to lead the suit we'd only take one trick (the ♦A) as the ♦K would take the ♦Q].

Back to the plot...

In looking for *top tricks* we can count three Spades, two Diamonds (after the opening lead) and a Club so have six *on top*. This tells us that we need three more tricks from somewhere.

We might think of looking to our longest suit (Clubs) to provide the necessary extras but that would be an error – they are too weak. On this layout we can set up three Heart tricks very easily by knocking out the ♥A and three tricks here would swell the total to nine.

So we play a low Diamond from dummy and wait patiently to see what East does. When he can only produce the ♦J we take the ♦Q and immediately lead Hearts, the ♥J for choice.

[By leading the ♥J we are adhering to the "lead the high cards from the short suit" principle. It's not essential here, but it is good practice].


East does his awkward best by withholding the ♥A for a couple of rounds but eventually takes it to play back a Diamond. We take the ♦A and, following our plan, place the lead in dummy to cash the last Heart. Now it's an easy matter to take the remaining top tricks in the black suits.

Game over, contract made (with three Spades, three Hearts, two Diamonds and one Club).



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VB#2 Y1 The play of the cards in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ A73	
♥ A53	
♦ A8	
♣ JT982	
West	East
♠ T8652	♠ Q9
♥ Q7	♥ JT96
♦ 742	♦ KT53
♣ A53	♣ K74
	
South	
♠ KJ4	
♥ K842	
♦ QJ96	
♣ Q6	

Well, by now you should know the story.

Count – Plan – Execute.

How many top tricks can you see? Where are the others coming from? How are you going to play?

Oh, the contract? Go on, have a guess!

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1NT with 12 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape. With 13 points and a balanced hand partner raises that immediately to 3NT. To nobody's surprise that ends the auction.

Play.

West has nothing really good to lead from but has to try something. Despite its poor quality Spades looks to be the most promising source of tricks for the defence so West tries his luck in that suit by leading the ♠5.

Firstly we have to see that we have three certain Spade tricks after the lead (provided we play low from the dummy at trick one). It doesn't matter whether West or East has the ♠Q, possession of the Spade **tenace** (here it's the ♠K J) in the closed hand guarantees us three tricks.

So a count of *top tricks* shows there to be six, made up of three Spades, two Hearts and one Diamond. Therefore it is necessary to set up some extra tricks somewhere and that somewhere is our old friend, the long suit; Clubs in this case. To do this we have to be patient and must knock out both the ♠A and the ♠K.

We should see that all of the ♠Q, ♠J, ♠10, ♠9 and ♠8 are equals, so, having won the first trick with the ♠K over the ♠Q, we must lead the ♠Q (*Play the high cards from the short suit first*).

Now, it would be nice if one of the wretched opponents were to take the ♠Q with the Ace or King but they are not here to make our life easy and they really don't like parting with their honours. (It's something we should remember when the boot is on the other foot and we are defending). So the ♠Q is allowed to hold the trick.

Plodding patiently on, we play another Club and this time East takes it to play a second Spade. We win that in dummy so we can keep playing Clubs and finally the second high Club is driven out. Another Spade removes our last stopper in the suit and we are now in the closed hand.


We then have to cross to the table to take the winning Clubs. We can go to dummy with either red Ace, we chose the ♥A, and when we are over there we cash the remaining Clubs. Now we are home and dry.

3+2+1+3 makes 9 (that's three Spades plus two Hearts plus one Diamond plus three Clubs totals nine tricks), so our 3NT contract makes on the nose.



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VB#2 Y1 The play of the cards in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

<p>North</p> <p>♠ QJ</p> <p>♥ T873</p> <p>♦ AT75</p> <p>♣ A65</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ 9852</p> <p>♥ QJ942</p> <p>♦ 4</p> <p>♣ KT3</p>	
West		South	
♠ A64		♠ KT73	
♥ A		♥ K65	
♦ 9632		♦ KQJ8	
♣ J9742		♣ Q8	

The opening lead here gives you some food for thought.

How many tricks can you see when dummy goes down?

What suit should you play on for extras?

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	2NT	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ 4

Bidding.

With 14 points and a 4·4·3·2 shape we open 1NT after three Passes. Partner raises to 2NT and we have to decide whether to stick or twist (um – whether to Pass or to bid game).

With a full 14 points we should accept partner's invitation and bid 3NT.

Play.

West kicks off with a low Club lead (the ♣4), following the usual rule of leading the *fourth-highest-of-your-longest-and-strongest*. So, how many tricks can we see? It's time to **Count** and **Plan**.

Well, in terms of top tricks, there are just five – four Diamonds and a Club. However, this Club lead guarantees that we will make a second Club trick, regardless of the location of the ♣K. How? Well, play it through and see.

Firstly, we must **not** play dummy's ♣A – we must let the lead “run round” to our hand and the all-important ♣Q. Now, where is the ♣K? If West has it (quite likely, given that he has led from a long suit) then East is about to produce a miserable middling Club and our ♣Q would score the first trick. As it happens, it is East who has the ♣K and he takes the first trick with it. No matter. We still have the ♣Q and ♣A intact as winners – two tricks to be taken as and when we care to.

This position (having the Ace and Queen in separate hands) is known in the trade as a **split tenace** and it is always best (for us!) to have the lead come around to the Queen.

Back to the plot...

We have six tricks (not quite top tricks but no matter) in the form of two Clubs and four Diamonds so need three more. We can easily establish the Spades for three tricks by knocking out the ♠A.

Having taken the ♣K, East leads a Club back at trick two (this is natural defence – *return your*

partner's suit) so we win the ♣Q and immediately switch our attention to Spades.

The ♠J and ♠Q are allowed to win (aren't these pesky opponents just loath to part with their Aces?!) so we have to come back to the closed hand with a Diamond to continue the attack on Spades. West finally takes his ♠A and plugs away in Clubs. We have, however, nine tricks now.

We cash the remaining Diamonds and the master ♠K and that's sufficient for the contract. West has the last two tricks but we couldn't care less as we have secured our game.




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Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ Q6		♠ AKJT	
♥ A84		♥ K2	
♦ KJ95		♦ 742	
♣ KQ82		♣ 6543	
South			
♠ 984			
♥ Q9			
♦ AQT8			
♣ AJ97			
West			
♠ 7532			
♥ JT7653			
♦ 63			
♣ T			

Once again you are in 3NT and once again you have a *split tenace* (see Hand 4 for comparison).

So you know what to do, right?

Well, maybe...

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ 6

Bidding.

Short and (for us) very sweet. We open 1NT with 13 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape and North raises that to game.

Play.

West (with a dismal hand) tries his luck with a low Heart lead (the ♥6) from his longest suit.

Now, having absorbed the lesson of the previous deal we may well play quickly (too quickly) to trick one and mumble "Thank you, partner, play small please". After all, this Heart layout is a classic **split tenace** where two tricks are guaranteed sooner or later.

Well, up to a point, Lord Copper. Up to a point.

The most important point is to **count our tricks** and here we can count nine (four Clubs, four Diamonds and the ♥A. True, if West has the ♥K (as he may well have) then running the Heart lead to the ♥Q would give us an overtrick.

However, danger lurks around every corner at this game. If East were allowed to take the ♥K he would hasten to cash all four of his Spades – in double quick time. That would be one down (losing four Spades and a Heart) instead of making.

This is not worth the risk – an overtrick in most forms of bridge is an insignificant extra. So, correct play is to grab the ♥A at trick one and then hastily cash four Diamonds and four Clubs.


Contract made, on the nose.



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Y1 VBlue #2 The play of the cards in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 1N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ A42	
♥ 853	
♦ K73	
♣ JT98	
West	East
♠ J83	♠ QT96
♥ J976	♥ KT2
♦ J94	♦ QT62
♣ AK4	♣ Q6
	
South	
♠ K75	
♥ AQ4	
♦ A85	
♣ 7532	

Just for a change you are in a part-score rather than a game.

This can make the play more challenging in a way – where is your extra trick coming from here?

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

Lead: ♥ 6

Bidding.

Here we open 1NT with 13 points and a 4·3·3·3 shape and no one else feels like bidding.

Play.

1NT is often a difficult contract to play as the points are often quite close (here they are split 21 to 19 in our favour) and counting tricks can be awkward. The subsequent play and defence can be a real minefield as well.

In this case, however, it is simple to see that we have six *top tricks* after a Heart lead into our tenace. We can see two top Spades, the ♥A Q and two top Diamonds so the problem is to develop one extra trick.

Well, for sure, it is rarely right to cash our top tricks hoping that an extra one will emerge somehow from the mists – instead, we just have to work on one of our suits.

Here, we have to set up a Club trick. Now, this takes time and (a lot of) patience as the opponents have the ♠A K Q between them but as long as we keep plugging away at Clubs we are destined to make a trick there eventually.

West leads a Heart to the ♥K and our ♥A. We play a Club, won by East's ♣Q. He (naturally enough) returns a Heart so we take the ♥Q and revert to Clubs. West cashes a couple of Hearts while we put some rubbish in the bin (a Diamond from dummy and a Spade from hand) and then West switches to Spades.

We take the ♠K and plug away doggedly in Clubs. Finally, we establish the ♣J on the table as a trick and the opponents can do nothing about it. A Spade lead is taken by dummy's ♠A, we cash that precious Club trick and take the rest of our top tricks.

Contract made. Just.