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Eight assorted deals for VBlue, year 2. SA Version. Updated fall 2015.

Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KQT52		
	♥ 752		
	♦ T73		
	♣ AQ		
West		East	
♠ 4		♠ 98763	
♥ AJ943		♥ T6	
♦ KJ94		♦ A	
♣ 963		♣ T7542	
	South		
	♠ AJ		
	♥ KQ8		
	♦ Q8652		
	♣ KJ8		

This series of eight hands should cover old ground that you have met already in your earlier lessons.

Some of the hands may be straightforward and some ... may not be.

Here (Hand 1) you just have to be able to get at your top nine tricks.

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

Lead: ♥ 4

Bidding.

North deals and Passes and we open 1NT (15 to 17 points). North bids 2♥ (transfer to Spades) and we duly bid 2♠.

Partner now jumps to 3NT, offering us a choice of contracts. With no support for Spades we Pass, leaving it in 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥4 against our game and we pause to count our top tricks. No problem; we appear to have nine on top (five Spades, one, maybe two, Hearts, and three Clubs). The only problem is one of entries.

On the first Heart East produces the ♥10 so we take that with the Queen and realize that West almost certainly has the Ace poised over the top of the King. We need eight tricks quickly or East may gain the lead and shoot a Heart through the ♥K to defeat us.

Should we unblock the ♣A Q, come to the ♠A, cash the ♣K and then overtake the ♠J? That is a viable line of play but it relies on Spades breaking 3-3 or 4-2; a 5-1 break would kill the contract. In fact, 3NT is unbeatable if we time the play correctly.

we cash the two Spades in the closed hand first to unblock them. Then we cross to the ♠A (not the Queen!) and cash the remaining Spades. Finally we overtake the ♣Q with the King to be in the right hand at the right time to cash the ♠J.


Nine tricks come from five Spades, one Heart and three Clubs.



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 8743	
	♥ QJT86	
	♦ K3	
	♣ T4	
West		East
♠ A2		♠ J5
♥ 975		♥ A43
♦ AQJ4		♦ T9865
♣ AKQ5		♣ J82
	South	
	♠ KQT96	
	♥ K2	
	♦ 72	
	♣ 9763	

Sometimes you just have to trust partner.

The first time you do it, it's difficult, but after that...

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

After two Passes, West opens 2NT (20 to 21 points) and East raises to game.

Play.

North leads the ♥Q. Fearful of a shift to Spades, West decides to win trick one with the ♥A. How should we defend?

Well, it's easy when we can see all four hands, isn't it? On the ♥A we have to chuck away His Majesty the King. If we don't, West would try his luck with the Diamond finesse, losing to partner's King. Now North would continue the "Heart-attack".

It's us who'd have the coronary, though; after taking the King of Hearts, perforce, there would be a long pause followed by an icy reminder from North, "It's your lead, partner". Oh dear, how embarrassing. No Heart to lead...Oops!


This could all have been avoided if we had had the wit to chuck away the ♥K under dummy's Ace. This is safe enough as North has shown the ♥Q J 10 with his opening lead. Now when North wins the ♦K he can run off his remaining Hearts, without hindrance to defeat 3NT.



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ KJ763	
	♥ J2	
	♦ J63	
	♣ 942	
West		East
♠ Q94		♠ T85
♥ 865		♥ QT94
♦ Q84		♦ KT2
♣ KQJ8		♣ T76
	South	
	♠ A2	
	♥ AK73	
	♦ A975	
	♣ A53	

Here you are in an awful contract.

Well, it happens. Can you find the only way to make it?

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♦ with our balanced 19-count. Partner responds 1♠ so we jump to 2NT, showing 18 to 19 points.

Partner scrapes up a raise to game and 3NT becomes the final contract

Play.

West leads the ♣K against 3NT and we face a hideous prospect. There are just six top tricks (two Spades, two Hearts and two Aces), and nothing really to develop other than Spades.

Well, if our luck is in we might make five tricks in Spades. For that to happen West needs to have precisely ♠Q × ×, no other holding will do. That may not be very likely (the actuaries have it as 50% of a 3-3 break: about 18% overall) but there is nothing else to try.

So we may as well win the first trick with the ♣A, play off the ♠A and try a Spade to the ♠J. When that wins we cross our fingers and lead the ♠K. When the suit breaks 3-3 we breathe a prayer of thanks to the bridge gods and take our tricks to make the contract.

Nine tricks come from five Spades, two Hearts, a Diamond and a Club.


Lucky (very lucky) to be sure, but we must embrace Lady Luck when she walks past our door. Notice that if East has the ♠Q we wouldn't make 1NT, let alone 3NT. May as well be hung for lamb as for mutton.



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S By: South
Date: 03/07/2016	Board #: 4
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: All
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ 53	
	♥ 842	
	♦ KQJ	
	♣ AJ874	
West		East
♠ 6		♠ Q742
♥ AKQT		♥ 653
♦ 874		♦ T6532
♣ T9652		♣ Q
	South	
	♠ AKJT98	
	♥ J97	
	♦ A9	
	♣ K3	

Here you are in a decent contract that has plenty of chances on a different lead.

However, West finds your weak-spot with the opening shot and now you have to take the correct percentage play.

Which is...?

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

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

There are three Passes to us and we have an easy opening bid of 1♠. Partner responds 2♣ and we rebid 3♠ to show a good hand with a strong six-card suit.

North raises to 4♠ and that ends the auction.

Play.

West leads a top Heart and we pause to count *winners and losers*.

We can see three Heart losers (three **quick** Heart losers) so the hand hinges on *not* losing a trump trick. What is the best way to play the trump suit?

We might think of playing off the two top Spades but that would be a poor percentage shot; the ♠Q is unlikely to fall in two rounds. Much better is to take the trump finesse, playing East for the ♠Q: more or less a 50-50 proposition.

Note that playing off the ♠A first, before taking the trump finesse, is not the right play. The chance that the ♠Q will fall singleton is very low; meanwhile, if Spades are 4-1 (a 28% chance) we'd need two finesses to pick the suit up.

After the three top Hearts West leads a Diamond, which we take on table. Now we hold our breath and play a trump to the ♠8. If this critical finesse loses we are down. Nope, it wins so we are still in the game. We must, however, resist the urge to play a top trump now. Fine if Spades are 3-2, disaster if they are 4-1.

At trick six we cross to the ♣A (the ♣Q falling singleton is interesting but is of no use to us) and finesse Spades again. When that all passes off peacefully we draw the remaining trumps with the ♠A and ♠K and claim the rest. 4♠ home and dry.


We score six Spades, two Diamonds and two Clubs. Our losses are confined to three Hearts



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ K543		
	♥ Q42		
	♦ QJ3		
	♣ K32		
West		East	
♠ QJ86		♠ T9	
♥ T9653		♥ KJ7	
♦ 9		♦ AT65	
♣ 865		♣ QJT4	
	South		
	♠ A72		
	♥ A8		
	♦ K8742		
	♣ A97		

Here you reach a contract after partner bids cautiously.

How should you plan to play this one?

What should you do at trick one?

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

Partner Passes as dealer and we open 1NT in third seat. Partner raises to 3NT, completing a simple auction.

Play.

West leads the ♥5 as his opening shot. When we count our tricks we see five *top tricks* (two Spades, one Heart and two Clubs), leaving four tricks to be found elsewhere. Diamonds should provide the requisite four tricks, provided they break favorably.

Now, firstly, what should we do on the opening lead? Should we try the ♥Q from table?

The answer to that is **No**. A firm No. Why? Well, there are two main reasons. One is that the ♥Q is (probably) not needed as a trick to make the numbers up to nine (we have counted five top tricks and four slow tricks without needing the ♥Q). Secondly, we have three cards in Hearts in dummy so there is little urgency to play the ♥Q immediately. If the ♥K is with West we can afford to delay matters until later in the hand; the ♥Q will still take a trick if that were the case.

So the correct line is to play low from dummy and take East's ♥J with the ♥A to play on Diamonds. As the cards lie it is East who wins the ♦A and now he can do us no damage. The ♥Q is protected from attack if East is on lead – another Heart lead from that quarter will ensure a trick for the Queen, regardless of the Heart layout.

If West were on lead with the ♦A he could lead a Heart through the remaining ♥Q ×, at which point we would have to try our luck with the ♥Q, but as the cards actually lie we don't have any decision to make. Anyway, realizing that playing another Heart will be to our benefit, East shifts to the ♣Q so we can now get on with cashing the Diamonds.

Noting that the ♦9 went from West on the first round we set up a marked finesse on cashing the ♦Q. A Diamond to the ♦7 sees us able to cash four Diamond tricks and the aforementioned five top tricks.


It is now possible to try for an overtrick by leading up to the ♥Q. Not today, but really it doesn't matter in the least. Overtricks are just froth on the coffee.



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VB#2 Y2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ K84	
	♥ Q84	
	♦ 763	
	♣ KQJ2	
West		East
♠ QJT9		♠ 753
♥ T62		♥ J953
♦ Q9		♦ KT852
♣ AT87		♣ 9
	South	
	♠ A62	
	♥ AK7	
	♦ AJ4	
	♣ 6543	

Here you are in normal enough contract and just need your suit to behave.

Supposing they don't though?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

This is as easy as it gets. We open 1NT in second seat and partner raises to game.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q and we pause to **Count** and **Plan**. How should we play?

We can count six *top tricks* easily enough (two Spades, three Hearts and a Diamond), so need three more. They can come from Clubs with a 3-2 break, once the ♣A has been knocked out. However, what if Clubs are 4-1? Well, if East has four Clubs there's nothing we can do. But if West has four Clubs he can be held to a single trick (the Ace) with accurate play. We must force him to play the Ace on air.

We take the first Spade in the closed hand and play a Club to the ♣J. That wins but we still don't know where the Ace is (East may have it, but be too mean to play it). We might think of leading a Club honor next from dummy to force the ♣A, but that would rely on a 3-2 Club break.


Better play is to return to hand with the ♥K and play another Club up to the ♣K Q. West can't gain by playing the ♣A so the ♣Q scores the trick. Now (after East shows out) all is clear; we return to hand with another Heart and play a third Club up to dummy, guaranteeing a third Club trick. West takes his ♣A, on air, but we have enough tricks now.

Nine tricks come from two Spades, three Hearts, one Diamond and three Clubs.



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N By: West
Date: 03/07/2016	Board #: 7
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: All
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ 96	
	♥ J9652	
	♦ 94	
	♣ QJ74	
West		East
♠ AK2		♠ J75
♥ Q73		♥ AT
♦ 752		♦ KQT83
♣ AKT5		♣ 963
	South	
	♠ QT843	
	♥ K84	
	♦ AJ6	
	♣ 82	

Here is a common layout of the cards.

Can you make the most of it in defense?

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

We Pass as dealer and the opponents have a rapid sequence. West opens 1NT and East raises to game.

Play.

Partner leads a low Heart and we can see a useful 10 points on table. Still, the Diamonds are well-placed for our side, so we have prospects. Declarer runs the opening lead to the ♥Q in hand; we must take the King and should hasten to play back a Heart, taking the ♥A off the dummy. This removes an essential entry to the long Diamonds.

Declarer crosses to his hand with a Club and plays a Diamond to the ♦K. Tempting, is it not, to take the ♦A and fire back a third Heart? After all, partner may have the ♥Q. Well, even if he has, it can hardly hurt to duck the Diamond. The effect of this is to *kill the dummy*.

Declarer makes one Diamond trick and no more. After our killing defense, West crosses to a top Spade and tries his luck in Diamonds again, this time, after looking suspiciously at both us and our partner, inserting the ♦10. We carefully take the ♦J, cash the ♦A and exit with our last Heart. Trapped in hand West has nowhere to go but down; two down, in fact.


Had we taken the ♦A immediately, and played a third Heart, declarer would have made his contract. After taking the ♥Q West would lead another Diamond to the ♦10 and our ♦J and now what could we do? Declarer would win any black card we led and would make three Diamonds, two Hearts and four black winners for nine in all.

It is usually the right defense to play small when holding the A J × over the top of the K Q ×, after declarer plays low to the Queen.



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Y2 VBlue #2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ Q3		
	♥ AKQ		
	♦ Q873		
	♣ 9763		
West		East	
♠ JT985		♠ K742	
♥ J76		♥ 9852	
♦ KJ95		♦ A6	
♣ 4		♣ JT8	
	South		
	♠ A6		
	♥ T43		
	♦ T42		
	♣ AKQ52		

This is an easy hand; well, it may appear so when dummy goes down.

There are no bad breaks, so what prevents you from taking your top nine tricks?

Maybe you need to look more deeply than you initially thought...

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♣, rebidding 1NT over partner's 1♦ response. North raises to 3NT, leaving us in the world's most popular contract.

Play.

Annoyingly, we are both short in Spades and the ♠J lead traps dummy's ♠Q. When we try the effect of playing the ♠Q on the opening lead (nothing ventured, nothing gained) we are disappointed, but hardly surprised, when East crushes it with the ♠K. Now what?

Well, we mustn't forget to **Count** and **Plan**. On the sight of dummy there are, apparently, nine top tricks (one Spade, three Hearts and five Clubs). The only obvious problem is if Clubs break 4-0, which would give us only three Club tricks. If Clubs are 4-0 then 3NT is simply doomed to fail. *That's the way the cookie crumbles...*

There is, however, a sting in the tail if Clubs are 3-1. Try cashing the ♣A K Q and doing the "obvious" thing of following suit from the dummy with the ♣3, then the ♣6 then the ♣7. Now our last two Clubs in hand are the ♣5 2 and dummy's is the boss ♣9. The next Club would be won on the table and the last, winning, Club would be in our hand. Oops! The last Club would be stranded in the closed hand with no hope of making a trick. It may as well be in deep space, on Voyager 2, for all the good it would do us.

The correct line to avoid this embarrassment (and partner's disgusted stare) is to jettison dummy's blocking ♣9 7 6 under our ♣A K Q leaving the ♣3 as the last Club on the table. This falls on the ♣5 and we can then cash the ♣2.

Easy when you **see** it...