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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 764	
	♥ KJ7	
	♦ T9763	
	♣ AQ	
West		East
♠ QT853		♠ A9
♥ T54		♥ 98632
♦ AKQ		♦ 42
♣ 83		♣ T974
	South	
	♠ KJ2	
	♥ AQ	
	♦ J85	
	♣ KJ652	

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	1♣
P	1♦	P	1NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ 5

Against your 3NT (reached after a 1♣ opening bid and a 1NT rebid) West leads the ♠5 to East's ♠A and East returns the ♠9.

It is dangerous to play the ♠J on this trick as the opponents may be able to take two Spade tricks and three top Diamonds. Besides, you can see nine tricks - five Clubs, three Hearts and a Spade. This assumes, of course, that the Club suit breaks 4-2 or better...

You take the ♠K, therefore and then...?

The winning line is to play a Club at trick three and cash both of dummy's Clubs. Now you must return to the ♥A (not the ♥Q!) and cash the remainder of the Clubs.

Having managed that you now need to overtake the ♥Q with dummy's ♥K and cash the ♥J for the ninth trick. Any variation in the order of play spells ruin.

Notice the *blockages* in both Clubs and Hearts – in Clubs there is the need of an outside entry (in Hearts) and in Hearts there is the necessity of an *overtaking play*.

Note, however, that you cannot afford to overtake the ♣Q with the ♣K at any time.



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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Here West plays in 3NT and North leads the ♥Q. Scared that either North or South might switch to Spades, West decides to win trick one with the ♥A. How should South defend?

Well, it's easy when you can see all four hands, isn't it? On the ♥A South has to throw away His Majesty the King. If he doesn't, West tries his luck with the Diamond finesse and North takes the ♦K and continues his "Heart-attack".

It's South who has the coronary, though - he wins the ♥K after which there will 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 South had had the wit to chuck away the ♥K on the ♥A. 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 Hearts uninterrupted to defeat 3NT.

North

♠ 9874
♥ QJT86
♦ K3
♣ T4

West

♠ AJ
♥ 975
♦ AQ84
♣ AKQ5



East

♠ 52
♥ A43
♦ JT965
♣ J82

South

♠ KQT63
♥ K2
♦ 72
♣ 9763

Sometimes you just have to trust partner and disembarass yorself of your blocking high cards.

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



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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

North
 ♠ KJ763
 ♥ J2
 ♦ J63
 ♣ 942

West
 ♠ Q94
 ♥ 865
 ♦ Q84
 ♣ KQJ8



East
 ♠ T85
 ♥ QT94
 ♦ KT2
 ♣ 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	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ K

North leads the ♣K against 3NT and you (South) 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 your luck is in he 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 you may as well win the first trick with the ♣A, play off the ♠A and try a Spade to the ♠J. When that wins you cross your fingers and lead the ♠K. When the suit breaks 3-3 you breathe a prayer of thanks to the bridge gods and take your tricks to make the contract.

Lucky (very lucky) to be sure but you must embrace Lady Luck when she walks past your door.


Notice that if East has the ♠Q you won't make 1NT, let alone 3NT. May as well be hung for lamb as for mutton.



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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	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 lead 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

You open 1♠ as South in fourth seat and then rebid 3♠ after partner's 2♣ response, which promises 10+ points. North dredges up a raise to 4♠ and West leads a top Heart.

You can see three Heart losers (three *quick* Heart losers) so the hand hinges on not losing a trump trick.

You 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 - 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) you'll need two finesses to pick the suit up.

After the three top Hearts West leads a Diamond, which you should take on the table. Now you hold your breath and play a trump to the ♠8.

When that holds you can cross to the ♠A (the ♠Q dropping is of no use to you) and finesse Spades again. When that all passes off peacefully you can draw the remaining trumps with the ♠A and ♠K and claim the rest. 4♠ home and dry.



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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

North

♠ A543
♥ Q62
♦ QJ3
♣ A93

West

♠ QJ86
♥ T9543
♦ 9
♣ 652



East

♠ T9
♥ KJ7
♦ AT65
♣ QJT4

South

♠ K72
♥ A8
♦ K8742
♣ K87

Here you are in a rapidly bid 3NT. 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: ♥ 4

You reach 3NT as South, having shown a balanced 12-14 points by opening 1NT. West, on your left, leads the ♥4 as his opening shot.

When you count your tricks you should be able to 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 favourably.

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

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 (you have counted five top tricks and four slow tricks without needing the ♥Q). Secondly, you have three cards in Hearts in dummy so there is little urgency to play the ♥Q immediately. If the ♥K is with West you 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 you 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 he could lead a Heart through the remaining ♥Q x, at which point you would have to try your luck with the ♥Q, but as the cards actually lie you don't have any decision to make.

Anyway, realising that playing another Heart will be to your benefit East switches to the ♣Q so you can now get on with cashing the Diamonds.

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


It is now possible to try for an overtrick by leading 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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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A84	
	♥ K84	
	♦ J63	
	♣ KQJ2	
West		East
♠ QJT9		♠ 753
♥ T62		♥ J953
♦ 97		♦ KQT82
♣ AT87		♣ 9
	South	
	♠ K62	
	♥ AQ7	
	♦ A54	
	♣ 6543	

Here you are in 3NT and just need Clubs to behave. Suppose they don't though?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

You (South) reach 3NT and West leads the ♠Q. How should you play?

You 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 you can do. But if West has four Clubs he can be held to a single trick (the ♣A) with accurate play.

You take the first Spade in the closed hand and play a Club to the ♣J. That wins but you still don't know where the ♣A is (East may have it but be too mean to play it). You might think of leading a Club honour 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 ♥Q and play another Club up to the ♣K Q. West can't gain by playing the ♣A so the ♣Q scores. Now (after East shows out) all is clear. You return to hand with another Heart and play a third Club up to dummy, guaranteeing a third Club trick. West takes his ♣A but you have enough tricks now.



8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Here you are defending 3NT after West has shown 15-16 points and a balanced hand. North leads a low Heart and declarer runs that to the ♥Q.


You must take the ♥K and hasten to play back a Heart, taking the ♥A off the dummy (removing an entry to the long Diamonds).

Declarer crosses to 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 your killing defence, West crosses to a top Spade and tries his luck in Diamonds again, this time - after looking suspiciously at both you and your partner - inserting the ♦10. You carefully take the ♦J, cash the ♦A and exit with your last Heart. Trapped in hand West has nowhere to go but down – two down.

Had you taken the ♦A and played a third Heart declarer would have made his contract. Next would have come a Diamond to the ♦10 and your ♦J and now what? Declarer wins any black card you lead and makes three Diamonds, two Hearts and four black winners for nine in all.

It is usually the right defence to play small when you have A J × over the top of K Q × and declarer plays low to the Queen.

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


Here is a common lie of the cards. Can you make the most of it in defence?



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8 general hands for VB 2

VB#2 Y2 General hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	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 appears 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 deeper than you initially thought...

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

Lead: ♠ J

You open 1NT and partner raises to 3NT and there we are - the world's most popular contract.

Annoyingly, you are both short in Spades and the ♠J lead traps dummy's ♠Q. When you try the effect of playing the ♠Q on the opening lead (nothing ventured, nothing gained) you 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 you only three Club tricks. If they are 4-0 then 3NT is simply doomed to fail. *C'est la vie*.

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 your last two Clubs in hand are the ♣5 2 and dummy's is the boss ♣9. The next Club will be won on the table and the last, winning, Club will be in your hand. Oops! The last Club will 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 will do you.

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

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