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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: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	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?)

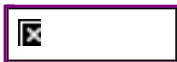
Should we try the Club finesse then? After all, if West turns up with the ♠K then we have an extra winner and also we have a **dumping ground** for one of our Diamond losers. Sounds like a plan - but is it a good one?

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: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

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.

North  
 ♠ A863  
 ♥ T842  
 ♦ T2  
 ♣ AQJ

West  
 ♠ KQJT  
 ♥ 63  
 ♦ A86  
 ♣ 9653



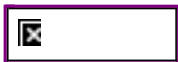
East  
 ♠ 95  
 ♥ A5  
 ♦ J974  
 ♣ T8742

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?





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Timing (harder examples) SA version	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

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. Aaaaarrggghhh. 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

North  
 ♠ T643  
 ♥ KT4  
 ♦ K85  
 ♣ 872

West  
 ♠ 82  
 ♥ 853  
 ♦ QJT3  
 ♣ A954



East  
 ♠ A7  
 ♥ A9762  
 ♦ 962  
 ♣ 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?

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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Timing (harder examples) SA version	Contract: 4H
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

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 Diamond, 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.

North  
♠ AQ5  
♥ J983  
♦ Q62  
♣ Q74

West  
♠ KJT963  
♥ A4  
♦ JT9  
♣ A9



East  
♠ 872  
♥ 62  
♦ K874  
♣ 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.



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Timing (harder examples) SA version	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	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
-	1♣	P	1♠
P	1NT	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: D

As South you reach 4♠ after North has opened 1♣ and rebid 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. Hmm – 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) SA version	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	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	2NT	P	3♥
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.