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Setting up suits by knocking out Aces and by using suit length.
Part 1 of 2. ACOL version. Updated winter 2015

VB Y1 #6 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ K98		
	♥ Q53		
	♦ K62		
	♣ KT87		
West		East	
♠ Q643		♠ JT2	
♥ JT97		♥ A86	
♦ T7		♦ A95	
♣ Q42		♣ J963	
	South		
	♠ A75		
	♥ K42		
	♦ QJ843		
	♣ A5		

This set of six deals (the first of two series in this edition of VBlue) is all about developing tricks in No-trump contracts.

In this set of six deals we are looking at that perennial source of extra tricks – long suits.

The "twist" here is that we need to do two things to set these suits up – one is to drive out the opponents' high cards, the other is to count the suit so that we can take advantage of the way the suit breaks.

Yes, we are back to counting. Sorry, but it's a subject that is never far from our minds. In fact, it's an essential skill of the game.

Hand 1: In this deal you have to bid to the right contract (familiar ground, we think) and then you have to locate your source of winners.

Remember to keep track of your main suit.

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT as South with a 5-3-3-2 hand containing 14 points. In general this is a better choice than 1♦ as it is a *limit bid* and puts partner in control.

Holding 11 points North feels that he is too good to Pass but not good enough to bid 3NT. He raises invitationally to 2NT, allowing us to bid game with a maximum. We are delighted to accept the invitation.

So the auction is 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥J from his sequence and we must settle down to think, to **Count** and to **Plan**.

We play low from dummy (there can be no advantage in playing the ♥Q) and East keeps his ♥A back – so we win the ♥K. This, incidentally, is good defence by East. He is making sure that the ♥A remains poised over the ♥Q to nullify Her Majesty for the rest of the hand.

A count of *top tricks* shows there to be just four (two top Spades and two top Clubs). As we have already banked a Heart trick that means that we have to find four tricks from somewhere. That "somewhere" can only be Diamonds; we'd be able to make four tricks if the suit breaks 3-2 – once the ♦A has been knocked out, of course.

This series is all about developing suits such as the Diamonds in this deal. We need to knock out the opponents' high cards but also take advantage of the way the suits break.

Apart from the possibility of a 3-2 break there is also the chance that one of the defenders would foolishly put the ♦A on a small Diamond lead. This would be inept defence but you never know... There may be a village somewhere that is missing its idiot.

With that in mind it is best with this sort of combination to start off with a low Diamond

from hand towards the ♦K. What we would like to see is West blunder in with the ♦A on our ♦3. Not today – West plays the ♦7 and we need to play the ♦K to force the ♦A. East happens to have that card and he plays it.


East cannot now lead a Heart without allowing us to score the ♥Q so he switches suits and tries his luck with a Spade. We take that with the ♠K on table (we could equally well have won it with the ♠A) and revert to Diamonds. When everybody follows to the ♦J we know the suit is breaking 3-2. We cash the ♦Q, secure in the knowledge that the remaining ♦8 4 have been promoted into winners.

At this stage our contract is home and dry. We have four Diamonds, one Heart and four black-suit winners. We now take our top tricks and allow the opponents the remaining crumbs.



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VB Y1 #6 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KQJ43		
	♥ A74		
	♦ J85		
	♣ Q6		
West		East	
♠ 96		♠ A875	
♥ QJT93		♥ 6	
♦ QT63		♦ 974	
♣ 98		♣ KJT43	
	South		
	♠ T2		
	♥ K852		
	♦ AK2		
	♣ A752		

The bidding is slightly less routine than on Hand 1. However, you should be familiar with the idea.

When it comes to the card-play you need to be aware of your *source of tricks* and to keep track of what is a winner.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

East Passes as dealer so we open 1NT in second seat with a 4·4·3·2 hand and 14 points. Partner, anxious to be in game but unsure of the correct strain, responds with a jump to 3♠ to show exactly five Spades and a game-going hand.

Our duty is to tell partner whether there is a Spade fit or not. With three (or more) card support for partner, we'd oblige by raising to 4♠. With a doubleton Spade, as here, we have to retreat to 3NT as we have no fit with partner's suit.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT and we already face our first problem. Do we win it in dummy or do we win it in the closed hand?

Answering that question is a little more complicated than that as the answer depends on the rest of the hand. By counting our *top tricks*, we see two Hearts, two Diamonds, and one Club for a total of five top tricks.

The four extra tricks need to come from the Spade suit. Now, it is important to realise how many tricks may be available in Spades. Sure, three tricks in the suit are certain – we can lead the ♠10 to force the ♠A and the ♠K Q J would all be winners. But what about a fourth? Well, that is in the hands of the Great Dealer in the Sky and rests on the spilt in the suit.

That baby Spade might get promoted into a winner if the opponents' Spades break nicely for us. To know this we must count the suit. Here Spades need to break 4-2 or 3-3. If Spades are 5-1 (or 6-0) 3NT would fail as we could only generate three Spade tricks.

Now, to answer the question we posed above. *Where do we win the first Heart?* Well, we have to take trick one in hand with the ♥K. This preserves the ♥A as a means of getting back to dummy's Spades later in the game. At trick two we must develop the Spades – by leading the ♠10 (*play the high cards from the short suit first*).

When the opponents stubbornly refuse to take the ♠A we persist with the suit and East takes the second round. We take the Diamond switch (East would have led a Heart had he held one) and then pause to take stock.

We cross to dummy with the ♥A and cash the top Spades (the ♠K Q) but is the last Spade (the ♠4) a winner? The answer is Yes – because Spades split 4-2 and the play of the top Spades extracted them all from the opponents.

Cashing the last, baby, Spade on the table gives us our seventh trick and all that we need to do is to cash the ♦A and ♣A for nine.


After that we simply allow the opposition their fun, mopping up the last few tricks. No matter, we have secured the contract.



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VB#6 Y1 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ K4	
	♥ J74	
	♦ KQJ8	
	♣ QJ54	
West		East
♠ QJT863		♠ 952
♥ A86		♥ KT9
♦ 4		♦ 9752
♣ 982		♣ AT6
	South	
	♠ A7	
	♥ Q532	
	♦ AT63	
	♣ K73	

You are about to play in your favourite contract. (Who said "again"?)

What is the best chance to bring it home?

Is there any way you might induce the opponents to do something foolish?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1NT (13 points and a 4-4-3-2 pattern). Partner, holding 13 points and a balanced hand as well, raises that straight to game.

A routine auction.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q from his lovely sequence and we must **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see just six tricks *on top* (two Spades and four Diamonds). Two more could easily be generated from Clubs by knocking out the ♣A but what about the ninth trick?

It would take too long to get a Heart trick going; East-West would be in with their long Spades and have (at least) five tricks before we got going. The best (indeed, only) play is to hope that the Club suit provides three tricks – and that means that they have to break 3-3.

We win the Spade lead (actually in the closed hand with the ♠A) and immediately lead a low Club towards the table. Why lead a low Club? Well, we must give West the chance of committing *felo de se* by blundering in with the ♣A on air. As the cards lie, West doesn't have the ♣A (so no blundering-in is possible – a pity) and East takes dummy's ♠J with the ♣A.

The defence play back a Spade (of course! What else?) and now we have to hope Clubs break 3-3. We should try the effect of running off four Diamond tricks first (to give the opponents another chance to blunder – maybe a co-operative defender will throw away some Clubs?) but in the end it all comes down to the Club break.

We cash the ♣K and the ♣Q and are relieved to see that everybody follows. This means that Clubs do split evenly and that dummy's last, baby, Club is a winner.


We cash the ♣5 for the ninth trick and are content to concede the rest.



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VB#6 Y1 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ Q42		
	♥ KQ2		
	♦ K8542		
	♣ J3		
West		East	
♠ T95		♠ KJ63	
♥ JT97		♥ 643	
♦ A9		♦ JT	
♣ Q972		♣ K865	
	South		
	♠ A87		
	♥ A85		
	♦ Q763		
	♣ AT4		

What is the source of your extra tricks on this deal?

It may surprise you to see just how many tricks you can make from a tatty suit when you have a following wind.

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1NT as South with a 4-3-3-3 hand containing 14 points.

Holding 11 points (and a five-card suit) North makes an invitational raise to 2NT, allowing us to bid game with a maximum. We duly accept the invitation.

Play.

West leads the ♥J from what can only be the ♥J 10 9.

Our **count of tricks** shows there to be just five *on top* (one Spade, three Hearts and one Club). We need to establish the long suit (Diamonds) for some extras – we hope we might make four Diamond tricks. Can this be done? Yes, indeed! To make four Diamond tricks the suit would have to break 2-2 – either that or one of the opponents would have to play the ♦A on thin air.

To give the opposition the maximum opportunity for foolish play we take the Heart lead in hand with the ♥A and try a low Diamond – perhaps West would care to play the ♦A (solving our problems)? Or perhaps West was only dealt the singleton ♦A – in which case he'd be forced to play the Ace...? No, on both counts – he plays the ♦9.

We try the ♦K, which wins. Carrying on the Diamond attack we play another Diamond and cover the ♦J from East with our ♦Q. This *does* force the ♦A and also exhausts the opponents of Diamonds. They were 2-2 all along.

West, realising that leading Hearts again is akin to flogging a dead horse, tries his luck with Spades. The ♠10 switch is good for the defence but comes too late for East-West. We try the ♠Q from the table (you never know, it might hold the trick...) covered by the ♠K and ♠A. At this point we are able to claim enough tricks for our contract. All the Diamonds are good and we still have two boss Hearts and the ♣A on top.

Nine tricks come from one Spade, three Hearts, four Diamonds and the ♣A.



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VB#6 Y1 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: \spadesuit Q

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT as South with a 4-4-3-2 hand containing 14 points.

Partner raises invitationally to 2NT with his 11 points and five-card Club suit and we accept the invitation, making the auction 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the \spadesuit Q (advertising the \spadesuit Q J 10 and others) and we pause to take stock.

We can count five *top tricks* (one Spade, two Hearts and two Diamonds) so need to set up four more. Clubs is the most likely source of extra tricks – what exactly do we need in the suit in order to make four tricks?

Well, the answer is that a 3-3 Club break would be very nice. However, a small but important extra chance exists – if the \clubsuit 10 falls in two rounds that would do just as well.

So we win the \spadesuit K at trick one and lead the \clubsuit K at trick two (much as we'd like to lead a low Club we cannot afford to do so. It risks tangling the suit up) and see what happens.

The King wins so we play another Club to the \clubsuit J and East's \clubsuit A, noting the fall of West's \clubsuit 10. The fall of the Ten puts us in Easy Street provided we realise that the \clubsuit 8 is boss (we started with \clubsuit K 9 in hand, remember) and that the \clubsuit 4 will soon be the biggest Club in town.

East finds a useful (for his side) switch to the \spadesuit 7 and the \spadesuit Q forces the \spadesuit A. Now we are wide open in Spades. No matter... We cash the \clubsuit 8 and the \clubsuit 4 and now it's a simple mopping-up operation.

Having taken six tricks (a Diamond, a Spade and four Clubs) we need just three more and they are easy enough. We cash the \heartsuit A K, the \spadesuit A and throw the rest to the wolves.

North		East
\spadesuit AJ		\spadesuit KT97
\heartsuit K42		\heartsuit QT83
\diamondsuit 975		\diamondsuit 4
\clubsuit QJ842		\clubsuit A763
West		South
\spadesuit Q54	\spadesuit 8632	
\heartsuit J96	\heartsuit A75	
\diamondsuit QJT82	\diamondsuit AK63	
\clubsuit T5	\clubsuit K9	

Easy bidding, less easy play.


What break do you need in your long suit here? Are you simply reliant on an even split?



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VB#6 Y1 Setting up suits Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ A64		
	♥ 743		
	♦ KQ653		
	♣ A9		
West		East	
♠ QT75		♠ 983	
♥ KQJ9		♥ 652	
♦ A84		♦ T92	
♣ 82		♣ QJT6	
	South		
	♠ KJ2		
	♥ AT8		
	♦ J7		
	♣ K7543		

You bid in routine fashion to your the world's commonest contract.

What layout do you need to bring it home?

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

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding.

We open 1NT in second seat with a 5-3-3-2 hand and 12 points. Partner, with 13 points has an easy raise to game.

Play.

West leads the ♥K from his sequence and we are obliged to **Count** our tricks and make a suitable **Plan**.

There are just five *top tricks* (two Spades, one Heart and two Clubs) so four more need to be developed. Where from? Well, Diamonds seem to be our best friend on this deal. Knocking the ♦A out will ensure two extra tricks at least and then maybe the long Diamonds will come into the game.

With this combination it is **not** advisable to start off with a low Diamond on the first round. If we do, we are likely to tangle the suit up. So, having taken the ♥A, we lead the ♦J (*play the honours from the short suit first*) and see what happens.

Slightly surprisingly West grabs that with the ♦A and we have that sinking feeling as we know that West is about to play off his Hearts. If West started with five (or six!) Hearts we are about to go down in 3NT as we are wide open in the suit. Well, what will be, will be.

Fortunately, the Heart suit divides 4-3 so West can only cash three rounds (on which we pitch a Spade from table and a Club from hand). So now we need the rest. West gets off lead with a Club and we take stock.

We have two Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and two Clubs so only have seven tricks to take. The only hope is that Diamonds split 3-3, leaving the long Diamonds on table as winners.

Well, we may as well cash the top Diamonds and learn our fate. When everybody follows to the ♦K Q we know that this is our lucky day. The ♦6 5 become established as two winners and the contract makes.

Nine tricks come from two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs. Note that if Diamonds had broken 4-2 we would have been defeated.