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

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

	North		
	♠ 86		
	♥ AK4		
	♦ A7542		
	♣ 742		
West		East	
♠ KJ972		♠ T53	
♥ J975		♥ Q2	
♦ J6		♦ QT8	
♣ QT		♣ K8653	
	South		
	♠ AQ4		
	♥ T863		
	♦ K93		
	♣ AJ9		

This series is the second set of six deals in this issue of VBlue about developing tricks in No-trump contracts.

Here, in this set of hands, we are continuing to set up long suits. As in the first series we are seeking to take advantage of the way suits break.

Yes, we are back to the essential skill of counting.

Hand 1 sets the scene.

How might you seek the necessary extra tricks here?

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

After North Passes as dealer and East Passes as well we open 1NT with 14 points and a 4-3-3-3 hand.

With 11 points and a handy five-card Diamond suit partner raises to 2NT, inviting us to bid game. Well, with a maximum for 1NT how could we refuse? We continue to 3NT, making the auction 1NT – 2NT – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠7 – presumably the fourth-highest of his longest and strongest. We need – as ever – to **Count** our tricks and make a **Plan**.

Firstly, this lead into our Spade tenace guarantees us two Spade tricks, regardless of the location of the ♠K. As well as that we have two Hearts, two Diamonds and a Club. That makes a total of seven *top tricks*. Where are the extra two coming from?

Well, the answer is, as so often, the long suit – Diamonds in this case. We have eight Diamonds between us and it should be possible to set them up to make the long cards in the suit. To do this the suit would have to break in the most even way it could: 3-2. This is well within the odds, by the way. For those of you who find statistics fascinating (yes, both of you) the chance of a 3-2 break is around 68%.

We win trick one with the ♠Q and immediately play off the two top Diamonds. When both opponents follow suit we know that they must be breaking 3-2. We therefore concede a Diamond to the baddies, secure in the knowledge that the two remaining baby Diamonds on table (the ♦7 5, as it happens) are winners.

Having taken his Diamond trick East naturally returns a Spade but we have our contract now in top tricks. We take the ♠A, cross to the table with the ♥K and make the two master Diamonds.


After that it's just a case of cashing our remaining winners to secure the contract. The

opponents are welcome to the scraps.



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

	North	
	♠ 763	
	♥ K6	
	♦ AJ	
	♣ A97642	
West		East
♠ KT82		♠ Q95
♥ QJ84		♥ 952
♦ 764		♦ KQ98
♣ T5		♣ QJ8
	South	
	♠ AJ4	
	♥ AT73	
	♦ T532	
	♣ K3	

Here you arrive in the world's most popular contract after a rapid auction.

Dummy may cause you to raise an eyebrow but partner does know what he's doing.

Can you see the right declarer play?

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

Lead: ♠ 2

Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1NT with a minimum hand for the action – 12 points (and a 4-4-3-2 shape).

Partner has a slightly awkward hand in response – a 6-3-3-2 hand and 12 points.

North takes the not unreasonable view that the Clubs may well provide a useful *source of tricks* in No-trumps while 5♣ is a million miles away. Rather than raise conservatively to 2NT, partner goes the whole hog and bids game.

(By the way, you can check out the superiority of No-trumps over Clubs; how would 5♣ have fared? **Badly** is the short answer).

Play.

West leads the ♠2 – presumably the fourth-highest of his longest and strongest. This suggests, by the way, that West started with exactly four Spades – a point that may be important later.

Anyway, whatever we may think of partner's bidding we need to **Count** our tricks and make a **Plan**.

We have six *top tricks* (one Spade, two Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs) and have to develop our long Club suit to make the extras. This is possible only if Clubs break 3-2, anything else and 3NT would fail (actually, by quite a few tricks).

So we take the ♠A over East's ♠Q and try our luck with the ♣K and the ♣A. When both opponents follow suit it is clear that Clubs are breaking to our advantage (3-2) and that 3NT is likely to make. We concede a Club trick, setting up the ♣9 7 6 on the table.

East is the player who has the boss Club and he dutifully returns his partner's Spade suit, causing us temporary discomfort. If West were able to run off a hatful of Spades we'd be defeated. However, the opening lead of the ♠2 suggested that Spades were 4-3 and, indeed, West can only take three of them.


After West has had his fun-in-the-sun he has to hand the lead back to us and that is very much that. We have the rest and our contract.



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

	North	
	♠ AK743	
	♥ 74	
	♦ A8	
	♣ A863	
West		East
♠ J865		♠ T9
♥ QJT98		♥ 632
♦ KT9		♦ Q53
♣ 4		♣ QJT95
	South	
	♠ Q2	
	♥ AK5	
	♦ J7642	
	♣ K72	

In the bidding you have to arrive at the right contract.

In the play you have to choose the most promising source of extra tricks.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

After our opening bid of 1NT (13 points and a 5-3-3-2 pattern) as dealer, partner makes a *forcing* 3♠ response, effectively asking us if we can support his five-card suit.

As we have only two Spades there is no realistic option but to bid 3NT.

Play.

Against 3NT we get the ♥Q lead from West which has to be from the top of a sequence.

A **count of tricks** shows there to be eight *on top* (three Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs). Spades are our best bet for an extra trick or two as that is our longest and strongest suit.

We have seven Spades between dummy and the closed hand so our opponents have six. We hope the suit breaks 3-3 so our ♠A K Q would draw all the defenders' Spades leaving our ♠7 4 as masters. If that were the case we'd record an overtrick.

We cash the ♠Q (*play the honours from the short suit first*) and follow with the ♠A K to see how suit splits. Are they 3-3? Nope – East shows out on the third Spade, indicating a 4-2 break and telling us that West has the boss Spade. However, rather than turn our attention to another suit we simply continue with Spades, all the time throwing away our useless Diamonds.

This gives West his master ♠J but in return we make the ♠7 on table as the "long" Spade. We have two ways of reaching the master Spade on table – the ♦A and the ♣A so we are safe for nine tricks.


In all we make four Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs.



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VB Y1 #6 Setting up suits Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A6	
	♥ A42	
	♦ KT643	
	♣ 873	
West		East
♠ QJT82		♠ 954
♥ QT		♥ KJ86
♦ J972		♦ 85
♣ J9		♣ KQT5
	South	
	♠ K73	
	♥ 9753	
	♦ AQ	
	♣ A642	

You have a choice in the bidding; do you?
Don't you?

In the play you have to make best use of your assets.

Be careful, though, you have to make sure you can reach your source of tricks – you have to be able to be in the right hand at the right time.

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

After there are three Passes we open 1NT with 13 points and a 4·4·3·2 hand.

With 11 points and a handy five-card Diamond suit partner raises to 2NT, inviting us to bid game. What should we do? Well, with a maximum for 1NT (14 points) we'd bid 3NT, with a minimum (12 points) we'd Pass. What do we do with 13?

Well, the answer is that we'd usually Pass unless there were grounds for an upgrade. Such grounds would be a five-card suit (usually a **good** five-card suit) or perhaps a hand stuffed with intermediate cards (Tens and Nines).

In this case there are no grounds for upgrading our hand; indeed the holding of ♦A Q alone actually weakens the hand. So the prudent call is Pass, leaving the contract in 2NT.

Play.

West leads the top-of-a-sequence ♠Q and we can count seven *top tricks* (two Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds and a Club), which is one short of our target. Diamonds (dummy's long suit, note) is the most promising source of extra tricks.

If East-West's six Diamonds were split 3-3 then there would be five Diamond tricks available (and nine in all). However, we have to take notice that the Diamonds are tangled up (the technical term is **blocked**) – even with a 3-3 break we can't run off five consecutive Diamond tricks.

We should start off by taking the Spade lead in hand so that we have as many high cards as possible in the dummy as ways of accessing the long suit. Then we must untangle the Diamonds by cashing the ♦A Q before crossing to the table. Using up a major-suit Ace (to reach the Diamonds) opens us up in whichever suit we use but it can't be helped. We go over to the ♥A and try the effect of the ♦K.

Now, if Diamonds split 3-3 (or the ♦J has dropped early) the ♦10 would be a winner and

all would be sweetness and light. Not today, however. Our left-hand opponent still has the boss $\spadesuit J$ and we are short of a trick. Still, there is little to be done but to continue with the assault on Diamonds – switching suits is pointless. A Diamond is conceded to West's $\spadesuit J$ and this sets up the thirteenth Diamond as a winner.

West could play a Heart and allow his side to take a few Heart tricks but he is unaware of this and, anyway, the Heart suit is blocked for the defence.


Entirely logically West leads another Spade to drive out the $\heartsuit A$ so we take that on table with the $\heartsuit A$ and cash the last Diamond. The $\heartsuit A$ takes the eighth trick and East-West mop up the rest.

Eight tricks are made via two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and a Club.



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

	North	
	♠ 84	
	♥ A8	
	♦ K653	
	♣ KJ632	
West		East
♠ KQJ2		♠ 753
♥ Q64		♥ J532
♦ Q872		♦ JT
♣ 97		♣ AT85
	South	
	♠ AT96	
	♥ KT97	
	♦ A94	
	♣ Q4	

Having arrived in the right contract you have to find the best play.

Which suit should you play on?

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

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT with 13 points and a 4·4·3·2 hand.

With 11 points and a handy five-card Club suit partner raises to 2NT, inviting us to bid game. What should we do with our 13 points?

As in the previous deal we'd usually Pass unless we have grounds for upgrading our hand. We don't have a five-card suit but our hand is stuffed with intermediate cards (tens and Nines).

One authority (a World Champion of yesteryear) advocated adding half-a-point for a Ten. If you agree with that you'd make this hand worth 14 points and not 13. The Nines may also play a part too.

It may be ambitious but we decide to bid 3NT, purely because we like the "stuffing" this hand has.

Play.

West leads the ♠K from his sequence and dummy is a useful one.

The golden rule when dummy is displayed (after thanking partner courteously for his contributions, of course) is to **count** the *top tricks*. Here there are five (one Spade, two Hearts and two Diamonds). So we need four extras to make the contract.

A 3-3 Club break would be useful (although, at 36%, it is against the odds). However, it is the only suit we can play on. Note, though, that the Spade "backers" (the ♠10 9) have an important role to play in this deal. By leading Spades the opponents are giving us two Spade tricks and not just one. Of course, we wouldn't have bid 3NT without the ♠10 9, would we?

After taking the ♠A we play the ♣Q at trick two and East, irritatingly, holds up his Ace. Ho hum. We play another Club and this time East wins it to play a Spade – well, he would, wouldn't he? West innocently continues Spades and we win

the fourth round with the ♠10, to the chagrin of both East and West.

We cross to the table with the ♦K and test the waters with the ♣K. Are Clubs 3-3? Not today – East has the master Club. No matter. We continue with another Club, giving East his boss ♣10 and establishing the lowly ♣6 as the biggest Club in town.

What East does next is irrelevant. We win his actual Diamond lead with the ♦A, cash the ♥K, the ♥A and – at trick 13 – triumphantly make the last, baby Club.


Nine tricks come from *two* Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and three Clubs.



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

	North		
	♠ A2		
	♥ KQ953		
	♦ A764		
	♣ 64		
West		East	
♠ JT953		♠ 874	
♥ J		♥ T7642	
♦ KJ98		♦ Q	
♣ KJ3		♣ Q985	
	South		
	♠ KQ6		
	♥ A8		
	♦ T532		
	♣ AT72		

This appears to be a very similar deal to an earlier one.

Is it, though? Is it?

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1NT (13 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape). Partner knows of sufficient values for game but is unsure whether to play in Hearts or in No-trumps (North isn't interested in playing in 5♦; as usual eleven tricks is just too high).

To show his problem partner responds 3♥, forcing us to choose between 3NT and 4♥; with just a doubleton Heart we can only retreat to 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠J from his sequence and we take stock, assessing our prospects.

There are eight tricks *on top* – three Spades, three Hearts and two minor-suit Aces – so we require one more. It might be possible to generate a (very) slow Diamond trick by playing that suit to be break 3-2 but far better is to play on Hearts. A 3-3 break would give us five Heart tricks and a 4-2 break would allow us to make four tricks in the suit – after we have ceded one to the opposition.

So we take the ♠A (to avoid entangling the Spades) and then cash the ♥A (again, *playing the high card from the short side*). This brings the ♥J from West – an interesting card, to be sure. On the next Heart West shows out, indicating that Hearts are 5-1 – can we recover?

Well, this deal is about keeping our wits about us and taking careful note of the Heart spots. Without the ♥8 and the ♥9 we'd be in trouble but here – provided we don't panic – we are safe. We simply play a low a Heart from dummy and allow the ♥8 to force the ♥10. This has the effect of leaving dummy with three winning Hearts – the ♥K Q 9. (Note that **not** taking the ♥10 would do East no good at all – we'd still come to four Heart tricks).

After that it's just a matter of dotting *is* and crossing *ts*. East declines to return his partner's suit (West discards a Spade at trick three, showing no further interest there). No matter,

we take the Club switch with the ♣A, cross to the ♦A and cash the winning Hearts. After that it's easy.

In all we make three Spades, four Hearts, the ♦A and the ♣A.