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Eight "General Hands" for Issue 6 of V-Blue (Year 2); clone of 604 (SA version)

VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ 986	
	♦ KJ943	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ T9876		♠ 542
♥ AJ		♥ KT542
♦ 875		♦ AQT6
♣ JT3		♣ 8
	South	
	♠ KJ3	
	♥ Q73	
	♦ 2	
	♣ 976542	

Here are eight general practice hands. There is no particular theme to them although *blocked suits* and *entries* are topics that feature in some of them.

Hand 1 requires you to plan thoroughly at trick one (which you should be doing in every hand, right?)

After you have formulated a sound **Plan** you can take your tricks, if you are sufficiently careful.

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

Lead: ♠ T

When partner (North) opens 1♦ you have an awkward response to make as South. You shouldn't really Pass with 6 points but you have no four-card suit to bid at the one-level. Additionally, you also cannot sensibly bid your suit at the two-level (2♣) since that would promise 10+ points.

With little choice you have to fall back on the "dustbin response" of 1NT. (Why "Dustbin response"? Because it's where you put the rubbish hands...)

West leads the ♠10 against 3NT, which looks like being the top of a sequence. You can count nine top tricks (three Spades and six Clubs), assuming that both defenders have at least one Club. (Put another way: assuming Clubs split 2-2 or 3-1).

The problem on this hand is being able to reach all the long Clubs and this requires some planning. (Have we ever mentioned about making a **Plan**?) To ensure you have the *entry* to the Clubs you must play the ♠A from dummy to the first trick before you cash the top Clubs. Try the effect of winning the first trick with the ♠Q. Now try reaching the South hand later in the game...

This then is the play. You win the first trick on table with the ♠A. You then *unblock* the Clubs by playing the ♣A K Q being pleased to note that this exhausts the defenders' supply of Clubs.

You now have four tricks and have five waiting (the ♠K J and the ♣9 7 6) in the closed hand. All you need to do is play the ♠Q making sure you overtake with the ♠K and cash your winners. After that you have little interest in the deal - you have your nine tricks and don't care much that the defenders are feasting on the scraps.

With 20-20 hindsight and a view of all four hands the defenders could have beaten 3NT by leading a Diamond initially and by switching to Hearts. However, what West did what was entirely reasonable and led his longest suit. Had he led a Diamond initially there could well have been a stewards' enquiry...



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♥ Q

With a balanced 21 count you open 2NT and partner raises that to game.

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT from the top of his sequence. You can count eight top tricks (two Spades, two Hearts, three Diamonds and a Club) and, logically enough, need one more.

Diamonds are the most likely source of an extra trick (or two) and you would like to play three rounds then surrender a fourth round (if needed) to *establish* your fifth Diamond as a winner. However there is a catch in that you only have one side-entry to dummy - the ♠K - so it looks as if you need Diamonds to break 3-3. However, initial appearances can be deceptive; the ♦9 8 7 are important spot-cards.

This is the play. You win the lead in hand with the ♥K. Now you cash the ♦K Q to unblock the suit. On the ♦Q West drops the ♦10. Suddenly, this means you can safely *overtake* the ♦Q with North's ♦A. You can then play one of the ♦9 8 7 to knock out the ♦J and make your third and fourth Diamond tricks.

As it happens, the ♦9 is ducked but that is only delaying the inevitable. You continue with the ♦8 which draws the ♦J. East continues with the ♥9 which you win with the ♥A.

You now have five tricks and have done the hard work. All that remains is to cross to dummy with the ♠K, cash the ♦7, then come back to the ♣A and take the ♠A to make your contract. After that you lose interest in the hand as the defenders scoop up the rest.

North

♠ K42
♥ 642
♦ A9876
♣ 82

West

♠ J6
♥ QJT53
♦ T2
♣ KT97



East

♠ QT987
♥ 98
♦ J543
♣ Q6

South

♠ A53
♥ AK7
♦ KQ
♣ AJ543


Here you will have to adopt a flexible **Plan** to take account of changing circumstances.



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

	North	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ AJ7	
	♦ QT753	
	♣ KT	
West		East
♠ 64		♠ JT982
♥ T9853		♥ Q62
♦ 64		♦ AKJ8
♣ A753		♣ 8
	South	
	♠ 753	
	♥ K4	
	♦ 92	
	♣ QJ9642	

This deal is once again about **counting** and **planning** to identify where your tricks are coming from.

Success depends upon also being able to reach these tricks with limited access to one of the hands.

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

Lead: ♥ T

This hand has strong echoes from Hand 2 - at least in the bidding. When partner opens 1♦ you have to find a response with 6 points and nothing to bid at the one-level. As so often with hands like this you have to fall back on 1NT. Partner raises you to 3NT and you await the dummy with interest.

West leads the ♥10 from his sequence and you can count five top tricks (the ♠A K Q and the ♥A K). These can be supplemented with five tricks from Clubs after the ♣A has been knocked out. You must check your *entries* to the Clubs and should see that you need to be careful to preserve the ♥K. So at trick one you must play the ♥A from dummy.

So... you win the first trick on table with the ♥A, keeping back the ♥K as an **entry** to your Clubs for later. You have a weakness in Diamonds but you can do nothing about that and your priority is to knock out the ♣A to set up the rest of the suit.

To follow that plan you play the ♣K (*high from shortage*) and, when the ♣A is not forthcoming, you follow that up with the ♣10 which you have to *overtake* with the ♣J. If you don't do this the ♣10 will be allowed to win and now you would be in the wrong hand to continue playing Clubs. Oops!

In fact, West produces the ♣A on your ♣J and switches to a Diamond. You play low from dummy and East, on your right, produces the ♦J. East cashes the ♦A K but then is forced to relinquish the lead to you somehow - in this case with the ♥K.


You have won three tricks and lost four. Fortunately you can take the rest by cashing your Clubs and the ♠A K.

You make this contract by carefully planning and checking you have the entries you need. This prevents you from making a costly mistake at trick one.



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 2	
	♥ Q543	
	♦ AK	
	♣ QJ5432	
West		East
♠ JT943		♠ 8765
♥ KT2		♥ A98
♦ 432		♦ 87
♣ T6		♣ AK98
	South	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ J76	
	♦ QJT965	
	♣ 7	

This deal allows you to practise your plumbing skills so your play can flow unhindered, without any blockage.

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

Lead: ♠ J

Here your partner opens 1♣ and rebids 1♥ after you respond 1♦. With Spades securely held and values for game (13 points facing an opening bid) you decide to have a punt at 3NT.

West leads the ♠J against your game contract, probably from a sequence. You appear to be able to count nine winners (three Spades and six Diamonds) but there is a problem with *entries*. The lead leaves you in hand with the Diamonds **blocked** by dummy's ♦A K with no obvious way back to to the closed hand.

You cannot create a second entry to your hand but there is a way to unblock the Diamonds, although it is radical. You need to play the ♠A K, before you play the Diamonds, discarding the ♦A K from dummy! It may feel strange but it is essential, the only winning line.

This then is the play. You win the lead in hand with the ♠Q. You next play the ♠A discarding the ♦K from diummy. The Diamonds are still blocked so you play the ♠K discarding the ♦A from dummy.

The hard work is done. You have three tricks and all that remains is to cash your six Diamond winners and make your contract.


This is one of those *when-you-see-it-it's-easy* hands. The problem is "seeing" it early enough...



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J97	
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ AQ T5	
	♣ K42	
West		East
♠ K54		♠ AT83
♥ 62		♥ J9754
♦ K876		♦ 32
♣ QJT9		♣ 87
	South	
	♠ Q62	
	♥ T83	
	♦ J94	
	♣ A653	

Planning the play is only half the battle - the other half is in recognizing *how* you will plan it.

In particular, working out what you need in order for your contract to succeed, or making sure you are in the right place at the right time - effectively, it's the the order of the play that matters.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

When partner opens 1♦ you have to respond 1NT. With 7 points you should bid and without either 10 points or a suit biddable at the one-level your only option is to fall back on 1NT. Partner raises you to 3NT with what turns out to be a balanced 19 count.

West leads the ♣Q against 3NT. You can count six top tricks (♦A, ♥A K Q, ♣A K) and your best chance is to finesse the Diamonds, hoping to find the ♦K on your left and to repeat this as often as needed. The ♣A is the only side-suit entry to your hand so you need to be very careful when playing the Diamonds. You may need to finesse Diamonds three times.

With this in mind you win the first trick in hand with the ♣A and take the Diamond finesse. **Watchpoint!** Which Diamond do you lead to take this finesse? If you try the ♦J then it will hold the trick. The next Diamond will be won by dummy's ♦10 and you will be in the wrong hand at the wrong time. Oops!

To avoid embarrassment you must lead the ♦9 on the first round - no other card will do. This way you can repeat the finesse three times if needed. This is a frequently misplayed suit combination.

[Did someone say... "Why not lead the ♦J and throw dummy's ♦10 on it if West plays low"? Clever, but not clever enough. When you next lead the ♦9 West covers with the ♦K and - amazingly - eventually makes the ♦8 for a vital trick. Close, but no cigar.]

Here, the ♦9 holds, then the ♦J is led and wins (it can do West no earthly good to cover either of these cards with his ♦K). The lead is still where you need it - in hand - and the third Diamond finesse secures four tricks in the suit. After that it's a simple matter to cash the remaining top tricks and get on with the next deal.

What if East held the ♦K? Then you would fail in 3NT - sometimes bridge is as simple as that. It would be embarrassing, though, to fail in 3NT when a crucial finesse worked, wouldn't it?



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	2♦	P	3♦
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ T

You choose to open the bidding with 1♥ on a minimum hand with a decent suit and easy rebid. When partner responds in your second suit you must find a rebid and make a simple raise to 3♦. Partner now knows you have five Hearts and, with opening values, bids game in Hearts.

West leads the ♠10 and you take stock. You can count eight top tricks with at least three more to come from trumps once the ♥A J are gone.

Fortunately you know by now the importance of counting and planning before executing so you check if there is a reason to delay drawing trumps. You can see immediately that you have two Club losers and, potentially, two Heart losers. If you start by drawing trumps you must surrender the lead and, when you do, the defence could well take two Clubs leaving you possibly heading for defeat.

Simply put, you need to **dump** a Club before drawing trumps. The opponents have found the wrong opening lead, you mustn't give them a second chance. In passing, no one could possibly blame West for leading from a solid Spade sequence rather than from an extremely dangerous tenace holding in Clubs.

So, having assessed the hand, you must win the first trick in hand with the ♠A in order to play three rounds of the suit, dumping a losing Club. Now you can start drawing trumps and play small to the ♥K Q. When this wins you cross to the ♦A and play the ♥9. When East plays low you are guessing whether to play the ♥K or the ♥5 - in the event it doesn't matter as West - the dog! - has both the Ace and the Jack.

When West takes the ♥J he switches to Clubs but this defence comes far too late. You can ruff the second Club and revert to your side suit. Contract made.

North

♠ KQ4
♥ 986
♦ AKT94
♣ J7

West

♠ T987
♥ AJ4
♦ 82
♣ AQ92



East

♠ J532
♥ 32
♦ 73
♣ K8653

South


♠ A6
♥ KQT75
♦ QJ65
♣ T4

The challenge in the play is to decide whether to draw trumps at once or whether there is something more important to attend to first.



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AQT	
	♥ 853	
	♦ 752	
	♣ 8642	
West		East
♠ 432		♠ 8765
♥ QJT96		♥ 72
♦ 3		♦ K9864
♣ KT73		♣ A9
	South	
	♠ KJ9	
	♥ AK4	
	♦ AQJT	
	♣ QJ5	

In this deal you need to work out where you need to be when.

It's all a matter of *timing* and *entries*.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

The bidding is a straightforward 2NT opening bid by you followed by a game-raise. West kicks off with the ♥Q from his fine sequence.

You can count six top tricks (three Spades, two Hearts and the ♦A) and the Diamond finesse is your best hope for three more, but you may have to take it three times. Spades are your only *entry* to dummy so you will need to be careful in the precise order that you play this suit.

You win the opening lead in hand with the ♥K. Now, there are three Spade entries on table if you are careful. When you lead the ♠9 you must play the ♠10 on that, preserving the ♠A Q as second and third entries to repeat the Diamond finesse. Once in dummy you play a small Diamond to your ♦10 and are relieved when it holds.

You now need to repeat the whole process so play the ♠J from hand overtaking with dummy's ♠Q and playing a low Diamond from dummy to your ♦J. Once again it holds, West showing out.

At this point everything is easy. You can cross back to table for a third time (on this occasion it happens to be by using the ♠K to the ♠A) and take the marked Diamond finesse for the seventh trick.


Dotting the *is* and crossing the *ts* you cash the red Aces for your nine tricks and concede the rest.



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VB#6 Y2 General Hands (ACOL)	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A2	
	♥ J6	
	♦ AK9876	
	♣ 752	
West		East
♠ JT96		♠ Q84
♥ 942		♥ KQT3
♦ T532		♦ J4
♣ KT		♣ Q964
	South	
	♠ K753	
	♥ A875	
	♦ Q	
	♣ AJ83	

This deal involves looking at the best way of maximising your chances.

On a sunny day you might make an overtrick here. However, can you make your contract if it starts to rain?

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

Lead: ♠ J

You are South with 14 points and are pleasantly surprised when partner opens the bidding. However, as usual, partner bids your worst suit (Diamonds) and then rebids it. Giving up on higher things you take a pot at the most likely game contract - 3NT.

West leads the ♠J and you can count seven top tricks. You need two more and it looks like they should come from Diamonds. You could play for the Diamonds to split 3-3 (incidentally, making six Diamond tricks *en route*) but that will happen only about one time in three.

*[If you love probability and statistics the odds on a 3-3 break are 36%. Remarkably, the odds on a 3-3 break are the same even if you **hate** probability and statistics.]*

It is a better chance to *overtake* the ♦Q hoping either the ♦10 or the ♦J drops on one of the first two rounds, whilst preserving the chance of a 3-3 break as well. Note that you cannot now make six Diamond tricks but you increase your chance of making five Diamond tricks - and five tricks would be enough for your contract.

If one of the Diamond honours were to drop on the ♦A K you would be able to use the power of the ♦9 8 7 6 to knock out the other missing high Diamond and establish the suit. You have to be careful with entries to the table as well. Playing the ♠A too early (at trick one) would be a bad mistake.

Having assessed matters carefully you should win the first trick in hand to preserve the ♠A as an entry to your Diamonds. You then play the ♦Q, *overtaking* with the ♦K. You next play the ♦A and are pleased to see that the ♦J drops on your right. You now know that you made the right choice of play and now you continue the Diamonds to knock out the ♦10.

West takes the ♦10 and returns a Spade but the hand is all over bar the shouting. You cash dummy's remaining Diamonds and just require two more tricks. With two Aces lurking in the closed hand that isn't a problem and you claim your game.

