



This is a set of eight general deals. Four defensive hands end the selection. SA version. Updated winter 2015/16.

Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A5	
	♥ AK964	
	♦ 752	
	♣ 863	
West		East
♠ QT72		♠ K963
♥ QT3		♥ J85
♦ T964		♦ QJ
♣ Q5		♣ JT97
	South	
	♠ J84	
	♥ 72	
	♦ AK83	
	♣ AK42	

Here are eight general practice hands. There is no particular theme to them although the first four deals feature declarer play and the last four feature defense.

Hand 1. You are at the wheel in a game. What is your best chance of making this contract?

In fact, what is your *only* chance of making this contract?

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

Lead: ♠ 2

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT with our 4-4-3-2 hand containing 15 points.

Partner bids 2♦ as a *transfer* (showing at least five Hearts) and we duly bid 2♥, as requested.

North now jumps to 3NT, offering us a choice of games. With no liking for Hearts we Pass, leaving it in 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠2 and we take time, as ever, to **Count** our *top tricks* and make a **Plan**.

Firstly, we should note that the eight missing Spades are very likely to be splitting 4-4. This has nothing to do with odds, probability or statistics. West has led the ♠2 and this proclaims a four-card suit. True, we cannot compel the opposition to tell the truth (West may be one of those wise-guys who would lead the Two from a five-card suit), but the indications are there and we should bear in mind that defenders have to signal to each other. In practice, defenders are more concerned about giving false information to each other than fooling us. Anyway, that's a diversion.

The first play is to try our luck by ducking the Spade on table, running the lead round to hand. Every now and again West will have underled the ♠K Q and we'll be allowed a cheap trick with the ♠J. Not today, though. East takes the ♠K and – of course – fires one back to remove dummy's ♠A. Note that he chooses the ♠3 to do this – again suggesting that he has three remaining and that Spades are 4-4. Now what?

Our mandatory **count of tricks** shows there to be just seven *on top* (one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs). Not enough; two more have to be set up from somewhere. The only chance is a 3-3 Heart break and the only way to play for that is to duck a Heart at trick two.

West wins that (we don't care with what Heart) and cashes his Spades. If he did start with five we can only shrug our shoulders and congratulate him on his cunning deception. As it is, Spades are 4-4 (as we deduced) and the enemy swiftly runs out of ammunition.

A shift to Diamonds holds no terrors; we take the ♦K and try our luck in Hearts. When that suit breaks in friendly (and fortunate) fashion we are home and dry. We cash the rest of the long suit and have the balance. We make one Spade, four Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs.


3NT bid and made.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 863	
	♥ A53	
	♦ 73	
	♣ AK764	
West		East
♠ 2		♠ J954
♥ KQJ96		♥ T4
♦ T642		♦ KQ985
♣ J85		♣ QT
	South	
	♠ AKQT7	
	♥ 872	
	♦ AJ	
	♣ 932	

Again you find yourself in game.

Here, you have to time the hand precisely to bring it home.

One false step and you would go down.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3♠	P	4♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1♠ with our lovely five-card suit. North responds 2♣ and we show a minimum balanced hand by rebidding 2NT.

Partner now raises us to 3♠, (passing the buck) and we go on to game. After all, within the context of a minimum rebid (12 to 14 points) we do have a maximum.

Play.

West attacks 4♣ with a Heart lead, leading the King from his sequence. We thank partner for his dummy and settle down to count **winner**s and **loser**s.

Assuming trumps behave, there are only nine obvious *winner*s available (five Spades, one Heart, one Diamond and two Clubs). On the other side of the coin we can see four *loser*s (two Hearts, a Diamond and a Club), so have to find a way of getting rid of (at least) one of them.

When faced with excess losers we either have to **dump** them or **trump** them – here, though, there can be no trumping. After all, what could we trump and where?

With no ruffing to be done we may as well draw trumps. So – having grabbed the ♥A at trick one – we immediately play to extract the poison from the enemy. This process comes to an abrupt halt after two rounds as we see that Spades break 4-1, albeit onside. To pick the trump suit up without loss we have to cross to table with a top Club at trick four and then take the *marked finesse* of the ♠10.

With all trumps safely pulled we have to find another trick – and that can only come from the long Clubs. In similar vein to Hand 1 we need to duck a Club to keep communications intact. If Clubs are not 3-2 we have no chance, but luckily they are.

East takes the Club lead at trick seven and

plays a Heart to his partner, allowing West to cashes two winners there. That, though, is the end of the party. We take the Diamond shift with the Ace and revert to Clubs, dumping the losing ♠J on the long Club.


That's one fewer loser and one more winner. Ten tricks made – as required.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ K52		
	♥ J3		
	♦ AK2		
	♣ QT843		
West		East	
♠ 743		♠ 86	
♥ T842		♥ A976	
♦ QJT9		♦ 865	
♣ K5		♣ AJ97	
	South		
	♠ AQJT9		
	♥ KQ5		
	♦ 743		
	♣ 62		

How do you handle this deal in another game contract?

Is it just a case of "draw trumps first and then look around"?

If not, why not?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	4♣	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♠ with our lovely five-card suit. North responds 2♣ and once again (cf Hand 2) we show a minimum hand with a 2NT rebid.

In contrast to the previous deal partner takes us straight to the Spade game.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q against 4♠ and we pause to make a **Plan**.

We can count nine **winners** (five Spades, two slow Hearts and two Diamonds), so have to decide how and where to go for a tenth trick. If we count **losers** we can see that there are four – one Heart, one Diamond and two Clubs.

We have no chance of getting Clubs going – before we get them set up the opponents would establish a Diamond winner for themselves, the opening lead having given them a *tempo*.

What is the solution? Well, it's certainly not to be found in drawing trumps. We have to dump a Diamond loser and we have to do that fast. To this end we have to set up a Heart winner as a discard for dummy's little Diamond. That's not all – having pitched the low Diamond from the table we still need to ruff our last Diamond on table.

So... we win the Diamond lead and play the ♥J. East innocently ducks (maybe this is a finesse?) but puts the ♥A up on the second round. A Diamond continuation takes out the ♦A and sets up a Diamond trick for West. We have to come to hand with a trump so we can cash the top Heart, dumping the last Diamond, and ruff a Diamond on table.

As a point of technique we should ruff this Diamond high (with the ♠K) to avoid any possibility of an over-ruff. We have solid Spades in hand and can afford to be flash. *If you've got it, flaunt it!*


At this point the hand is effectively over. True, we have two losing Clubs in hand but that is all.

Contract made. We take **six** Spades (five in hand and a Diamond ruff in the short hand), two Hearts and two Diamonds.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ Q764		
	♥ 8632		
	♦ KJ		
	♣ 984		
West		East	
♠ JT92		♠ K853	
♥ 94		♥ AT	
♦ 7653		♦ 842	
♣ AJT		♣ K753	
	South		
	♠ A		
	♥ KQJ75		
	♦ AQT9		
	♣ Q62		

Here you have to take advantage of the opportunity that has been presented to you.

Can you take it?

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♥
P	2♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1♥ and partner raises us to 2♥. With a 5-4-3-1 hand containing 18 points we decide to advance immediately to game.

Play.

West (naturally enough) leads the ♠J against 4♥ and we pause to consider our options.

With hindsight (and a view of all four hands), West would have led a low Club to East's ♣K and a Club return would have netted the first three Club tricks with the ♥A to come. Yeah, right. Here on Planet Earth no one defends like that – a "low" Club lead from ♣A J 10 could prove to be very foolish on other layouts of the cards. The ♠J (top-of-a-sequence) is a standout lead.

We take the ♠A, perforce, at trick one and have to decide how to proceed. A trump? No, certainly not! Should we try that line East would win and would shift to a Club, allowing East-West to take three tricks there. No, we must dump our Club losers as soon as we can – and there's no time like the present.

So, at trick two, we cash the ♦K, then we overtake the ♦J and cash the ♦A to dump a Club. That makes only three apparent losers (two Clubs and the ♥A). So is it time to draw trumps now?

Nope! Not yet. If we do that there is a risk of a Diamond ruff. Whichever defender takes the ♥A might be able to lead the last Diamond and see his partner ruff with a trump higher than dummy's ♥8. Here, on this layout, East could win the Ace of trumps, cash two Club tricks (ending in West) and ruff the Diamond return for one down. Oops!

The solution is to play off the last, winning, Diamond and chuck another Club away. True, that is sure to get ruffed but it crucially reduces the number of losers by one.

There was a hand with a not dissimilar theme in

the series on *Negative Doubles*, you may recall. Try looking at Hand 5 in the first series. Declarer also had to throw a loser on a winner, knowing it would be ruffed. It's a common ploy.


Anyway, having played four rounds of Diamonds, dumping two of dummy's Clubs, the defenders are helpless. They make two trump tricks and must come to a Club trick but that is all – contract made.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 2	
	♥ K853	
	♦ J76	
	♣ J8742	
West		East
♠ KJ986		♠ AQT753
♥ 942		♥ A6
♦ K854		♦ Q92
♣ K		♣ QT
	South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ QJT7	
	♦ AT3	
	♣ A9653	

A defensive hand for you on this deal.

It's not difficult, but it **is** important.

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♠	X
4♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

North Passes as dealer and East opens 1♠. With a good 11 points (here at Vubridge we like 5-4-3-1 hands) we make a thin take-out Double. Who knows? Maybe the deal belongs to our side?

West contemptuously brushes that aside by leaping to 4♠ and that is too high for anybody. 4♠ it is.

Play.

We have an obvious lead in the guise of the ♥Q, so we make it. Dummy is a curious mixture of the good and bad. Five lovely trumps and a 5-4-3-1 shape but a singleton King is always something of an unknown quantity.

East thanks his partner gravely and takes trick one with the ♥A, partner contributing an encouraging Eight. Next comes the ♠A followed by the Ten of Clubs. Well, we have to take the Ace and have to take stock.

On some deals we might think of attacking Diamonds, maybe via a cunning underlead of the ♦A. Here, that's just foolish. We simply play another high Heart, to see how many tricks we have there. The ♥J holds, so partner's Eight showed that he held the King. We play another Heart and declarer ruffs. Pity...

Next comes the Queen of Clubs (dummy pitching a Diamond) and a low Diamond towards the table. This is the important part of the deal, although no one is tapping us on the shoulder to say so. Too many defenders make the foolish play of the Ace here, arguing that the King will score on table if they play low. True, it will. **And your point is?**

It is usually weak defense to play Aces on air. Here, declarer would table his cards and claim the rest. Equally poor defense, by the way, is the all-too-common play of the Ten "to force out the King". The King does not need forcing out – declarer is hardly likely to call for dummy's Eight and, even if he were to do so, surely partner could beat that.

The whole point of this deal is to illustrate the

principle (yet again) of **second hand low**. Yes, it's not an inviolable law but this hand illustrates why it is important. Declarer has two Diamond losers if the defenders adhere to the time-honored principle of playing low cards on low cards and high cards on high cards. (So if declarer led the Queen we'd kill it with the Ace).


After the ♦K scores on table East plays off a few trumps just in case we should throw away a Diamond. Nope. We keep the Ten and declarer concedes defeat.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ J875	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A95	
	♣ A7532	
West		East
♠ A94		♠ KT
♥ KJ75		♥ AQ9632
♦ Q642		♦ J73
♣ J6		♣ KQ
	South	
	♠ Q632	
	♥ T4	
	♦ KT8	
	♣ T984	

You have a poor hand here and are on lead to an opponent's contract.

How do you plan to beat this one?

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

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

East-West have a routine, invitational sequence of 1♥ – 3♥ – 4♥.

Play.

We are on lead to 4♥ with an uninspiring collection of dross. Well, we do have a sequence in the guise of the Ten-Nine-Eight of Clubs, so we lead the ♣10. Dummy appears precisely as described – 11 points and four trumps.

Partner takes the ♣A and returns the suit. Interestingly, East follows with the Queen and King. As our Nine is now master it makes it safe to deduce that East started with a doubleton Club and is not false-carding.

Two rounds of trumps (North discarding a Club) make it clear that East started with six trumps. Next come three rounds of Spades, East ruffing in hand. This play (**a ruff in the long hand**) gains declarer nothing, so it must be some sort of attempt to eliminate the suit, making it impossible for the defense to lead them again.

In hand, declarer leads a Diamond towards dummy's Queen. We play? As in the previous deal (Hand 5) this is the important part of the deal, although no one is tapping us on the shoulder to say so.

Let's analyze this one, looking at all four hands. Diamonds are **frozen**; whichever side leads the suit first loses out by doing so. East has a sure Club loser and two certain Diamonds to lose, so losing three Diamonds would spell defeat. Unfortunately for him, he is obliged to lead Diamonds before we do.

At the critical point (when declarer plays a low Diamond towards the Queen) if we were to rise with the ♦K we'd allow East only two Diamond losers. When we do play low, the ♦Q is taken by North's Ace and we have the ♦K 10 over declarer's ♦J 7. That makes three Diamond winners for the defense, so 4♥ fails.

How do we know **not** to play the King? Well...


we know we have no Spade trick, no trump trick and only one Club trick. How could we possibly defeat this one without making three Diamond tricks? In any case, this is only another application of **second hand low...**



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 64	
	♥ Q65	
	♦ T952	
	♣ KQ95	
West		East
♠ AT93		♠ KQJ52
♥ J98		♥ A43
♦ KQ8		♦ 4
♣ J64		♣ A872
	South	
	♠ 87	
	♥ KT72	
	♦ AJ763	
	♣ T3	

Once more you are on lead. Your selection?

And how might you go on to defend this contract?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
P	P	1♠	P
3♠	P	4♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♠ 8

Bidding.

East-West have a routine, invitational sequence of 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠.

Play.

We have a horrible choice of leads against 4♣. A Diamond (away from the Ace) is not to be contemplated; a Heart is dangerous and a Club is a random shot with little justification. Unwilling to risk opening up any of the other suits we try a trump

Declarer takes the opening lead in hand and immediately gives us a crisis by leading a Diamond towards the King-Queen on table. What should we do? Is this Diamond a singleton? After all, why else play the suit so soon?

Well, even if the Diamond were a singleton it may well be the right defense to play low. It's a case of one trick now or two tricks later. One horn of this dilemma is definitely less sharp than the other.

Declarer ruffs a Diamond in hand (partner giving us an unwarranted glare) and plays another trump. Another Diamond ruff follows, so all Diamonds have been eliminated. Hoping we will have to open up Hearts to his advantage, declarer exits with the ♣A and another Club.

Well, if Clubs were 3-3 East would be able to throw a losing Heart from dummy on the long Club. *Not today, José.* North defends accurately by playing all of his Clubs, making East ruff on table. Forced to play Hearts himself, declarer loses two Heart tricks and goes down.

Now, we want you to note the following points...

- 4♣ went down even though we made no Diamond trick in defense;
- Had we played the ♦A, on the other hand, 4♣ would have made (declarer would have dumped his Heart losers on the ♦K Q);

- An initial Heart lead to the Eight, Queen and Ace would have opened the suit up to declarer's advantage. The suit is **frozen**.

- An initial Club lead (the ♣10) covered by the Jack, Queen and Ace would have allowed East to establish a slow Club trick for a Heart discard.


This deal is a slightly strange example of **second hand low**. However, this Diamond position is not uncommon.



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Y2 VBlue #8 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ 94		
	♥ J7532		
	♦ K76		
	♣ 974		
West		East	
♠ AJ5		♠ 632	
♥ AT98		♥ K	
♦ 932		♦ QJT85	
♣ QT5		♣ AKJ6	
	South		
	♠ KQT87		
	♥ Q64		
	♦ A4		
	♣ 832		

Elsewhere in this edition of VBlue we warned you that this hand would reappear.

And here it is...

If you haven't played the two series on the *Negative Double* yet we urge you to do so.

Otherwise you might miss the "point" of this hand.

West	North	East	South
P	P	1♦	1♠
X	P	2♣	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Lead: ♠ 9

Well, you may recognize this deal. It's Hand 5 from series 2 on *Negative Doubles*. The "twist" is that the hand has been rotated 90 degrees clockwise so that you are in the defending seat.

Bidding.

North Passes and East opens 1♦. We seize the opportunity to show our Spades with a 1♠ overcall and West Doubles. This, of course, shows four Hearts – a classic *negative Double*.

Partner Passes and East shows his Clubs. Too strong to Pass that (or give simple preference to 2♦), West bids 2NT and East goes on to game.

Play

Partner, dutiful to the last, leads the ♠9 and we contemplate a useful dummy with 14 good points.

The first thing we need to do is to Read the Lead. The ♠9 can only be from precisely ♠9 × or (just about) a singleton ♠9. That places declarer with ♠A J × (×). So how should we defend?

Well, we just have to hope that partner has the ♦K along with another Spade. Nothing else is of any help to us. With that in mind the card that we mustn't play is the "automatic" one of the ♠Q. Why? Well, any declarer who is not wet behind the ears will duck this, keeping the ♠A J poised over our remaining ♠K 10. Now we'd struggle to get our Spades going.

Instead, we make the odd-looking play of a small Spade at trick one! Declarer can't afford to duck and has to take the ♠J. His only source of tricks is in Diamonds and he attacks those immediately. Partner – bless his cotton socks! – goes in with the ♦K to continue the Spade attack, driving out the ♠A. And this defense effectively cooks declarer's goose; 3NT is no longer makeable. The ♠A is driven out and we have the *tempo* in defense.

We come on lead with the ♦A and cash our Spades while a frustrated declarer chucks

winners away from dummy. After that, West has the rest but it's still one down.