




Four random deals to supplement David Bird's hands for VBlue, year 2. SA Version. These deals focus on defense. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #9 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ T83		♠ AKQ	
♥ Q96		♥ T7	
♦ J9764		♦ AKQ3	
♣ QT		♣ A754	
West		East	
♠ 75		♠ AKQ	
♥ AJ853		♥ T7	
♦ T85		♦ AKQ3	
♣ J63		♣ A754	
South			
♠ J9642			
♥ K42			
♦ 2			
♣ K982			

This set of four deals concentrates on defensive play.

The hands, though, are in two pairs, there being a link between Hands 1 & 2 and another link between Hands 3 & 4.

In Hand 1 you are defending against a game contract after an informative auction.

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

North Passes as dealer and East opens 2NT, in their style showing 20 to 22 points.

West offers East a choice of games (3NT or 4♥) by going via a transfer sequence. So West bids 3♦ to start with and converts the obligatory 3♥ response to 3NT.

East evidently has no truck with Hearts – he Passes out 3NT.

Play.

We start by leading our fourth-highest Spade and North's ♠10 at trick one tells us that declarer started with the ♠A K Q.

East's first play (having won the first trick with the mildly deceptive ♠K) is the ♥10. How should we defend?

Well, early in the piece or not, this is the crucial defense of the hand. We simply must cover that with the ♥K. There are two reasons to do so. One it adheres to the *cover-an-honor-with-an-honor* principle (yes, the Ten is certainly an honor under the meaning of the act) and secondly it isolates the Heart suit. Let's look at these points in turn.

Firstly, by covering the ♥10 with the ♥K we take out the ♥A and partner's ♥Q 9 are now promoted to winning rank. This is the rationale of covering honors with honors – trick promotion.


Secondly, by forcing the ♥A out early we isolate dummy. Imagine if declarer's Hearts were ♥10 9. Now we'd have only one Heart trick in defense whether we cover or not as partner's ♥Q 7 6 couldn't be promoted. However, the difference between covering and not covering is a staggering four tricks! If we let the Heart run to the ♥Q declarer has four Heart tricks in dummy awaiting his pleasure after taking a second finesse. However, by putting the ♥K on the ♥10 we disrupt communications and East can only make one Heart trick whether he ducks the ♥K or takes it with the ♥A.

After our devastating defense declarer has to hope that either Diamonds or Clubs break 3-3 to make 3NT. We have to be careful to discard accurately but assiduous counting saves the day. One down.



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Y2 VBlue #9 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

North		East	
♠ T83		♠ AKQ	
♥ 762		♥ T9	
♦ QJ974		♦ AK63	
♣ JT		♣ AQ54	
West		East	
♠ 75		♠ AKQ	
♥ AJ853		♥ T9	
♦ T85		♦ AK63	
♣ 763		♣ AQ54	
South			
♠ J9642			
♥ KQ4			
♦ 2			
♣ K982			

Again (cf Hand 1) you are defending 3NT after a big hand is announced on your right.

What should you do this time?

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

As dealer, East opens 2NT, showing 20 to 22 points in his methods.

West offers East a choice of games (3NT or 4♥) by going via a transfer sequence. So West bids 3♦ to start with and converts the obligatory 3♥ response to 3NT.

East evidently has no interest in the Heart game; he Passes out 3NT.

Play.

We lead our fourth highest Spade to partner's Ten and declarer's King. We are not fooled – it is obvious that East started with the three top Spade honors. East's first play is to lead the ♥10. How should we defend this time?

Here, it may appear obvious to cover with the ♥Q (or a deceptive ♥K) to dislodge the ♥A and disrupt the communication between dummy and declarer. Not so fast, though!

That play would certainly work if East were to win the ♥A and play another – we would take the second Heart and wave goodbye to dummy. Declarer, though, might be in desperate straits in this deal and may be forced to play for four Heart tricks. He could manage that by ducking our honor card at trick two and subsequently finessing on the second round.

True, by playing low on the ♥10 we may be giving declarer two Heart tricks instead of just one but – as against that – we are ensuring that East is prevented from making four Heart tricks.


After we let the ♥10 hold East has little choice but to play on Clubs and Diamonds for his extras. With Clubs 4-2 and the ♣K offside he cannot make the contract. Had we covered the ♥10, though, there was a chance that he might have done.

A tough defense? Well, this is a Year 2 deal. What did you expect?



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Y2 VBlue #9 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

		North		
		♠ QJT83		
		♥ 752		
		♦ T2		
		♣ Q94		
West			East	
♠ K95			♠ 76	
♥ AQT			♥ KJ4	
♦ 7654			♦ AQJ83	
♣ AK7			♣ J63	
		South		
		♠ A42		
		♥ 9863		
		♦ K9		
		♣ T852		

When in third seat there are defensive rules, correct? *Third hand high.*

Does that always hold true?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

We Pass as dealer and West opens 1NT. East raises immediately to 3NT, so no one is stopping to pick the daisies on this deal.

Play.

Partner leads the ♠Q against West's 3NT; how should we plan the defense?

Well, normal play when we have the Ace and partner has led the Queen is to make the Spade situation clear to partner by playing the ♠A and returning one. This would knock out declarer's ♠K and the defense would know where they stood.

Were we to play low then partner may well assume that declarer held the ♠A K and may decide to look elsewhere when on lead. Also, if partner has led from, say, ♠Q J 9 × × of Spades he may funk leading another one in case declarer started with ♠A K 10.

Well, that's on a normal day; this isn't one of those. Why not? Because dummy's source of tricks is Diamonds – that's where declarer is going for his extra tricks and we are the ones to be on lead in this hand with our well-placed ♦K.

Consider the full deal with hindsight. Suppose we took the ♠A and returned one. Declarer would – most likely – hold up his ♠K for a round. After taking the ♠K at trick three, West would take the Diamond finesse into our hand and we'd lead... what, exactly? We'd have no Spades by now and, as North has no entry, we'd have insufficient defensive tricks. You can't shoot a contract down if you've run out of ammunition...

The solution is to play a low Spade, smoothly, at trick one. Now declarer doesn't duck his ♠K – for all he knows, North started with ♠A Q J × and that he'd better make his ♠K now or never. Ducking risks North shifting suits and getting a Spade lead later in the game, **through** the King.

After he falls for this plan, taking the ♠K at trick

one, West is doomed. He has to play on Diamonds; when he does we take the ♦K and play off the ♠A and another Spade. North gratefully takes the rest of the Spades for a well-earned one down.



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Y2 VBlue #9 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West ♠ KT5 ♥ AQT ♦ 7654 ♣ AK7		East ♠ 76 ♥ KJ4 ♦ AQJ83 ♣ J63
North ♠ J9843 ♥ 752 ♦ T2 ♣ Q94		
South ♠ AQ2 ♥ 9863 ♦ K9 ♣ T852		

Not playing high in third seat is often a crime, often referred to as a *finesse against partner*.

Does crime sometimes pay?

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

West opens 1NT as dealer and East raises immediately to 3NT.

This pair are not in the mood to take the scenic route and admire the view.

Play.

Partner leads the ♠4 against 3NT (presumably his fourth-highest Spade) – how should we defend this one?

Well, the textbooks may say “*third hand high*” (or *somesuch*) and they tell us that we should take the ♠A and play back the ♠Q. Are they wrong?

The answer is that they are right – on most occasions. Not here, though. If we were to play the ♠Q and West were to play the ♠K partner (poor thing) would be confused about the location of the ♠A. He would naturally assume West had it after our failure to play it. So on most days, on most layouts – we advise you to follow the textbooks.

Here, though, on this deal partner's feelings and thoughts are not important – he is not getting on lead. We can see that he has garbage (2 to 4 points only), so is probably thinking more about where he parked his car than how this one is going off.

We can see that we have the sure entry for our side; we are going to take the ♦K very shortly (how else is declarer going to make 3NT if not with Diamonds?)

Now, were we to play the ♠A and follow with the ♠Q West would hold up his ♠K, take the third round of Spades and finesse Diamonds into our hand. Disaster (for us), triumph (for West). We'd be on lead with nary a Spade to lead and declarer would have the rest (or, at least, enough tricks for his contract).

Try the effect of inserting a sly ♠Q at trick one. In tempo, too (staring at the ceiling and squirming is likely to give the game away). Declarer daren't duck the ♠Q – he'd look a total lemon if North had led a Spade from ♠A J 9 × ×

as he'd now lose the first five Spade tricks.

No, he has to grab the ♠K and try the Diamond finesse. Now we take the ♦K and – with defensive links intact – we play the ♠A and another Spade to defeat the contract.

[Note: *This play costs us nothing. If North has the ♠K as his only high card then playing the the Queen is equally as effective as the Ace*].