




This series is about the choice of drawing trumps or ruffing losers in dummy. Part 1 of 2. SA version. Updated summer 2015.

Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 1
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ 42		
	♥ Q53		
	♦ AK975		
	♣ Q84		
West		East	
♠ AJ86		♠ KT93	
♥ 986		♥ T	
♦ Q8		♦ JT63	
♣ JT92		♣ K653	
	South		
	♠ Q75		
	♥ AKJ742		
	♦ 42		
	♣ A7		

This set of deals (and a second series of six in this edition of V-Blue) is all about the draw-trumps-or-not dilemma.

When dummy goes down in a suit contract you have to decide whether to immediately extract the opponents' trumps or not. For some this is easy – they have been told, "*Always draw trumps!*"

Well, as General Pierre Bosquet might have said: *C'est magnifique, mais ce n'est pas le bridge: c'est de la folie.* ("It is magnificent, but it is not bridge: it is madness". Reference – the Charge of the Light Brigade).

Bridge is not played by hard and fast rules (or shouldn't be, at least). On some deals it is important to draw trumps and on others you have more important matters to attend to first. Often you have to dispose of your losers by ruffing them in dummy.

So (and this is the key question): *How can you tell?*

The answer usually comes from *counting your tricks*. If you can see enough winners for your contract (and have a sound plan)

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

Lead: ♣ J

### Bidding.

We open 1♥ after two Passes and North responds 2♦.

Our natural rebid of 2♥ shows a minimum opening bid with long Hearts.

North raises that to 3♥ as a game try and we give that a fourth Heart on the grounds that we have a full 14 points and a fine six-card trump suit.

### Play.

West leads the ♣J against 4♥. We may as well try the ♣Q from the dummy (you never know...) but East crushes those hopes by covering that with the ♣K. Now – how do we assess our chances?

What is the best line of play to land our contract? It's time to **Count** (our tricks) – to **Plan** (what we are going to do) and then to **Execute** that plan.

We can see nine tricks easily enough. We have six Hearts (even with a downright unfriendly 4-0 split), two top Diamonds and the ♣A. So one more trick has to be found from somewhere.

Let us beat this drum again – it is not sensible to ruff Diamonds (or Clubs) in the South hand (the *long trump hand*) as that would gain us precisely nothing. We have counted six Heart tricks already and using them to ruff dummy's low cards would not swell that number.

Our attention should shift to trying to make ruffs in the *short trump hand* – dummy. If we could trump a loser on table we'd make **seven** trump tricks to go with the aforementioned top Diamonds and ♣A.

The only suit that offers any prospects of a ruff on table is Spades – so we should focus on that strategy. We should take the ♣A and immediately play (and lose) a Spade. East takes this and – aware of our plan – returns a trump. We take this (on table, although it

then go ahead and draw trumps. If, on the other hand, you have insufficient winners to fulfil your contract then you may well need to do something else and that "something else" may well be to ruff a loser on table.

**Note that ruffing losers should only be done in the *short trump hand*. It is generally a waste of time and effort to trump losers in the *long trump hand* – you are likely to make those tricks anyway.**

In Hand 1 you should be able to see what to do after you have counted your easily available tricks.

doesn't matter much) and we continue with another Spade, creating a void in dummy.

West cashes a top Club before playing another trump. We take this in hand and ruff a losing Spade, extending the length of our trump suit by a trick (if you see what we mean). Now we have to return to the closed hand (with a Club ruff) and draw the last trump.

Ten tricks are made up from **seven** Heart tricks (that's six in hand and a ruff in dummy), the ♦A K and the ♣A.

You should note that the play of drawing trumps would have sunk our own contract. Sure, we would have been fine if Hearts had broken 2-2 but the actual 3-1 break would have meant dummy would have been denuded of Hearts and we would have lost three Spade tricks and a Club.


Also, note the defense. When it is wrong for us to lead trumps it is usually in the interests of the defenders to lead them instead.



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Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ JT	
	♥ Q53	
	♦ AK975	
	♣ Q84	
West		East
♠ K86		♠ A9432
♥ 6		♥ T98
♦ QJT86		♦ 3
♣ K652		♣ JT93
	South	
	♠ Q75	
	♥ AKJ742	
	♦ 42	
	♣ A7	

Well, this may appear to be the same hand as Hand 1.

However, as you may have guessed, it isn't.

How should you play this deal?

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

Lead: ♦ Q

### Bidding.

We open 1♥ after two Passes and North responds 2♦.

Our natural rebid of 2♥ shows a minimum opening bid with long Hearts. North raises that to 3♥ as a game try and we give that a fourth Heart on the grounds that we have a full 14 points and a fine six-card trump suit.

### Play.

We may peer at dummy suspiciously – is this not Hand 1 all over again? Well, the opening lead is different for starters – West has opted to lead dummy's suit by placing the ♦Q on the table.

How do we assess our chances? What is the best line of play to land our contract? It's time to **Count – Plan – Execute**.

The difference (the crucial difference) between this deal and Hand 1 is that we can see our way to ten tricks on this deal without having to ruff a loser on table. We have six Hearts, two Diamonds and the ♠A (as before) but now, decisively, we have a certain Spade trick. Sure, it's a slow trick but it's worth just the same as a quick trick.

Before we execute any plan it's worthwhile having a quick check on losers to make sure that the books balance. Here, a rapid audit reveals there to be just three losers (two Spades and a Club) so everything is hunky-dory.

With sufficient tricks for the contract we are best advised to draw trumps – and pronto. So we grab the ♦K at trick one and hasten to draw trumps. The 3-1 break means that we have to play three rounds of Hearts to pull them all. Now we must turn our attention to our side-suit and get a Spade trick established.

The opponents can have the ♠A K and – in the interim – manage to get a trick going with the

♣K but that's all we lose. We contracted for ten tricks and that is what we make.

Note what would happen if we played a Spade early, before extracting the poison from East-West (if we heeded the siren calls to "draw trumps"). West would take his ♠K and would play another Diamond, allowing our ♦A to be ruffed by East. Nasty.


When we can see the finish line we should not stop to pick the daisies. Make a beeline for it.



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Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4S By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 3
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ Q753		
	♥ J		
	♦ A932		
	♣ QJ74		
West		East	
♠ J		♠ T98	
♥ KT98742		♥ Q	
♦ 6		♦ JT8754	
♣ T962		♣ AK5	
	South		
	♠ AK642		
	♥ A653		
	♦ KQ		
	♣ 83		

There are some cheap and easy looking tricks on this hand.

Should you grab the low-hanging fruit?

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

Lead: ♦ 6

### Bidding.

We reach 4♠ as South after the common, invitational bidding sequence of 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠.

### Play.

Dummy is about par for the course (10 points and a 4·4·4·1 shape) and we have to decide what to do after West leads an unreadable ♦6 at trick one.

**Count – Plan – Execute.** What tricks are on view?

Well, on the assumption that trumps are not 4-0 there are five Spades, one Heart and three Diamonds. An extra trick easily comes from ruffing a Heart on table (in *the short trump hand*) and that swells the total to ten.

Problems? Well, there is a Diamond *blockage* that has to be overcome. So that has to be catered for. Should we draw trumps, therefore, or should we go immediately for Heart ruffs?

Well, it would be greedy play to play for Heart ruffs immediately. If trumps break then we need one Heart ruff precisely and that will be available after drawing trumps. If trumps are 4-0 we'd need a Plan B but Plan A is certainly to draw trumps and to take the ten easy tricks we have been dealt.

Having taken out three rounds of trumps (to cater for the 3-1 split) we unblock the pesky Diamonds, take the ♥A, ruff a Heart and cash the ♦A. Contract made.

What if we had taken a Heart ruff in dummy at trick two? Disaster, that's what. East would over-ruff the second Heart and West would ruff away the next Diamond. East-West would simply smirk as they added the ♣A K to the bag. Ugh.

Now it may be unlucky (very unlucky) to run into a 7-1 Heart split and a 6-1 Diamond split. However, drawing trumps acts as a marvellous prophylactic against the most spiteful adverse distribution.


When there are sufficient winners available to make the contract – draw trumps!



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Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4S By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 4
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: All
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ KJ53		
	♥ Q		
	♦ AT93		
	♣ QJ53		
West		East	
♠		♠ 9842	
♥ 742		♥ KJT98	
♦ QJ8764		♦ 5	
♣ T862		♣ AK9	
	South		
	♠ AQT76		
	♥ A653		
	♦ K2		
	♣ 74		

On this deal an overcall marks the location of many of the opponents' high cards.

Does that help, though?

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

Lead: ♥ 4

### Bidding.

North, holding a pesky 4-4-4-1 hand, chooses to open the bidding with 1♦.

East overcalls with 1♥ and we bid the obvious 1♠, raised to 2♠ by partner.

With 13 points (an opening bid in its own right) we are full value for a shot at game. 4♠ it is.

### Play.

West dutifully leads his partner's suit against 4♠ and – following the modern style of leading second highest from trashy suits – he selects the ♥4.

We survey the dummy and apply the principle of **Count – Plan – Execute**. We can count five Spade tricks, one Heart trick (the ♥Q is certainly not going to win trick one!) and the ♦A K. That totals eight tricks. So... should we draw trumps or not?

This deal is a ruff-in-the-dummy hand. We are two tricks short of our contract and the best way of making those tricks is to ruff losing Hearts in dummy – in the *short trump hand*. Note that we cannot afford to draw trumps before ruffing Hearts – we need ruffs on table and cannot afford to take out three rounds of Spades. Sure, trumps might be 2-2 (in which case drawing trumps would be fine) but they could be 3-1 or – as here – even 4-0.

So we take the ♥A and immediately ruff a Heart in dummy. This is a risk-free play, note, as East cannot over-ruff this (he bid Hearts, after all!) We need to return to hand to repeat the dose so we lead a Spade to the ♠10 in order to ruff another Heart. The 4-0 trump break comes as a surprise but our trumps are powerful enough to withstand this split. We ruff another Heart, cash the ♠K, come to hand with the ♦K and complete the job of drawing trumps.

Ten tricks come from **seven** Spade tricks (five in hand and two ruffs on table), the ♦A K and the ♥A.








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Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ KJ63		
	♥ A843		
	♦ Q83		
	♣ 97		
West		East	
♠ T987		♠ AQ52	
♥ Q		♥ JT	
♦ AT2		♦ K9765	
♣ QT842		♣ 63	
	South		
	♠ 4		
	♥ K97652		
	♦ J4		
	♣ AKJ5		

You have a bare minimum opening bid here (12 points).

How far should you be prepared to bid?

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

Lead: ♠ T

### Bidding.

We reach 4♥ after an invitational bidding sequence of 1♥ – 3♥ – 4♥.

Accepting partner's invitational raise with a minimum 12 points may seem strange but only at first glance. The shape of our hand (6·4·2·1) makes it worth more (much more) than its nominal point-count.

### Play.

Dummy is displayed and we can see that many of the high cards on table are wasted. Still, our concern is to make ten tricks, not to bemoan our misfortune. **Count – Plan – Execute**. What tricks can we count?

With ten trumps between dummy and the closed hand we can count six Heart tricks on a likely 2-1 break and the ♠A K. A 3-0 trump break would be unfortunate (and probably fatal to the cause) as we would have four inescapable losers (a trump, a Spade and two Diamonds).

Anyway, we appear to have eight tricks. Where are the extras? Should we draw trumps?

Well, East takes the ♠Q over dummy's ♠J and plays a Club, won by the ♣K. We can see that ruffing Clubs on table will generate extra tricks but when should it be done? Now or later?

The answer is later – priority number one is to draw trumps. Yes, we are going to ruff losers in the dummy but we can still afford to play two rounds of trumps first. The crucial point here is that we will still be left with two trumps on the table to take care of the losing Clubs.

With that in mind we cash the ♥A K (a play which does indeed pull all the missing trumps) and then ruff the two losing Clubs on table.

Ruffing Spades in hand is a waste of time, of course, but by ruffing Clubs we make **eight** trump tricks (six in hand and two ruffs in the short trump hand) and the ♠A K.

**Postscript.** Can you see how the **shape** of your hand and the fact that your side had ten


trumps made the play easy? In fact, you made 4♥ on a combined 22 points with many of them wasted. Had you chucked the ♠K J, the ♦Q J and the ♣J in the trash-can (and replaced them with low cards) you'd still have made game. These honors were superfluous to requirements.

Food for thought?



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Y1 VBlue #12 Take a ruff or draw trumps? Part 1 SA	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 6
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North	
	♠ KJ63	
	♥ AQJ	
	♦ Q863	
	♣ 97	
West		East
♠ T987		♠ AQ52
♥ 3		♥ 542
♦ AT2		♦ K975
♣ QT632		♣ 85
	South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ KT9876	
	♦ J4	
	♣ AKJ4	

This deal is similar to the last one (weird how such things happen in VuBridge, isn't it?)

So does that mean that the play is the same or is it different?

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

Lead: ♠ T

This collection of South cards bears an amazing resemblance to the South collection of Hand 5. Odd that...

### Bidding.

We open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠. We show our second suit by bidding 2♣ and partner leaps to 4♥.

### Play.

We receive the ♠10 lead through dummy's ♠K J. As in Hand 5 we can see that many of the high cards on table are waste paper. Still, can we see our way to making ten tricks? **Count – Plan – Execute.**

East takes the ♠J with the ♠Q and returns a trump. He thinks that the hand is a ruff-in-the-dummy hand and that the right defense is to lead trumps to try to prevent that. Well, he might be right and he might be wrong. Should we draw trumps or do we have another plan?

On this deal drawing trumps would be wrong. With only nine trumps between us and dummy we would remove all of dummy's trumps if we pulled them all (well, maybe only two of them on a 2-2 break). In any case, we need two Hearts on table to ruff our losing Clubs – drawing any more trumps would be *verboden*. Our plan should be to make six Heart tricks (in the closed hand) the ♣A K and two ruffs on table (in the *short trump hand*).

So... we win the trump shift on table with the ♥J, cash the ♣A K and ruff a Club. We return to hand with a Spade ruff and ruff the last Club spectacularly with the Ace of trumps.

All the trumps in our hand are high now so we can claim enough tricks for our contract. Sure, the defenders can take the ♦A K but that shouldn't worry us one bit.