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This is a set of four hands designed to complement David Bird's set of six deals for VB#13; ACOL version

VB#13 Y2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ T742	
	♥ J962	
	♦ K4	
	♣ 865	
West		East
♠ K5		♠ AJ8
♥ QT3		♥ 85
♦ AJT83		♦ Q952
♣ QJ4		♣ AK73
	South	
	♠ Q963	
	♥ AK74	
	♦ 76	
	♣ T92	

**This set of four deals is all about defence.**

**Are we going to give you any more hints than this? Certainly not!**

Hand 1 is simple enough - isn't it?

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

Lead: ♥ 2

This deal demonstrates a cute defensive play that appears more often than you may think. East-West bid routinely to 3NT and partner (with a hideous collection of used tram-tickets) fishes out the ♥2 as his opening lead. Now – how should you defend with the South cards?

You can read partner for not much (all right, let's be specific – he has to have 3-5 points) and the ♥2 lead shows that he has precisely four Hearts. That leaves West with three Hearts.

If North's Hearts are headed by the ♥Q then it doesn't matter how you play the suit – all roads lead to the defence cashing four tricks. But what if North has ♥J × × ×? Now you can play on declarer's fears (and on his nerves) by taking a high Heart at trick one and playing back a low Heart at trick two.

Put yourself in the West seat. What is the Heart layout? Does your right-hand opponent (that's you in this case) have the ♥A K × × or ♥K J × ×? (If it's any other holding then it doesn't matter what West does). Faced with an agonising decision West may well go wrong and try the ♥10 and – on this layout – live unhappily ever after. Shame.

Note that you might give declarer an extra nudge in the wrong direction by occasionally winning trick one with the ♥A rather than the ♥K in this position. That may give West greater cause to believe that you started with ♥A J × × rather than ♥A K × × (because you would have won with the ♥K, right?).

You don't want to overdo this type of false carding, and here, on this deal, we stuck to the time-honoured method of playing the lower of touching honours. Still – it's worth bearing in mind for the future.

Having taken four Hearts (while West gnashes his teeth) it's just a case of waiting for declarer to take the Diamond finesse and go down.

Bad luck, sir! Better luck next time...





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VB#13 Y2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♥ 3

This deal is remarkably similar to Hand 1 – on the surface, at least. East-West bid routinely to 3NT and partner (with a poor collection) fishes out the ♥3 as his opening lead. Now – how should you defend with the South cards?

You can read partner for not much (all right, once again, let's do the maths – he has to have 3-5 points) but the ♥3 is a little ambiguous. It could be from a four-card suit or it could be from five. The crucial question is: **where is the ♥2?**

When West drops the ♥10 at trick one it becomes clear that North has five Hearts and that the ♥2 is with partner.

Now, let's be clear here – declarers are wily and utterly untrustworthy and the best of them will often craftily conceal a Two in hand just to confuse the defenders. Remember to let their tyres down later if they do that... but that's for another deal and another time.

However, no declarer, no matter how sly, would throw the ♥10 and keep the ♥2 from a holding of ♥Q 10 2 – the ♥10 is simply too valuable to throw. So there can be no percentage in leading a low Heart at trick two in an effort to make West have an agonising guess.

Your best chance of beating 3NT is to play North for five Hearts (a very likely prospect) and cash the ♥A at trick two. When the ♥Q comes down and North shows the ♥2 you know you are onto the scent. A third round of Hearts cooks declarer's goose and he is one down before he can gain a foot-hold.

North

♠ T72  
♥ J9632  
♦ JT3  
♣ J6

West

♠ K54  
♥ QT  
♦ AK84  
♣ Q854



East

♠ AJ8  
♥ 85  
♦ Q952  
♣ AK73

South

♠ Q963  
♥ AK74  
♦ 76  
♣ T92

As so often happens in VuBridge this deal looks suspiciously like the previous one. Odd that...


So, do you defend in exactly the same way? If not, *why not?*



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VB#13 Y2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ Q8532		
	♥ KJ5		
	♦ 973		
	♣ K4		
West		East	
♠ 94		♠ AJ6	
♥ AQ42		♥ 763	
♦ QJ4		♦ AK5	
♣ A862		♣ QJT9	
	South		
	♠ KT7		
	♥ T98		
	♦ T862		
	♣ 753		

This deal is different in many ways from the previous two. However, you are still defending and you still have a critical decision to make.

When does that decision appear? Oh no! We aren't telling!

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

Lead: ♠ 3

East-West bid routinely to 3NT (again) and partner fishes out the ♠3 as his opening lead. "Thank you, partner", says West mechanically, "play small, please". Now – how should you defend as South?

You can read partner for a Spade honour (we follow the modern practice of leading fourth-highest from suits with honours and second highest from rubbishy suits) as the ♠3 has to be fourth-highest from length.

That means it would be a mistake to play the ♠K on this trick (allowing declarer two Spade tricks. The right play is to take the ♠10 and play back the ♠K to knock out the ♠A. West has no choice but to try the Club finesse – when it fails he has to suffer the loss of four Spades and a Club.

Note that West is entirely correct in calling for a low Spade from dummy at trick one. That would have brought home the bacon if North's Spades had been ♠K 10 x x x or ♠Q 10 x x x.


It just isn't West's day today, is it?



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VB#13 Y2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 98532	
	♥ KQ52	
	♦ J9	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ Q4		♠ AJ6
♥ AJ4		♥ 763
♦ Q743		♦ AK5
♣ A862		♣ QJT9
	South	
	♠ KT7	
	♥ T98	
	♦ T862	
	♣ 753	

Hand 3 all over again, surely?

Perhaps...

Anyway, how can you be the star on this one? After all, you are holding your usual collection of tripe...

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

Lead: ♠ 8

East-West bid routinely to 3NT (yet again) and, with that strange feeling of déjà vu that you often get at VuBridge, you watch as partner fishes out the ♠3 as his opening lead. "Thank you, partner", says West without emotion, "play small, please". Now – how should you defend as South?

This time (in contrast to Hand 3) you can read partner for a poor Spade suit with no honour (remember, we follow the modern practice of leading fourth-highest from suits with honours and second highest from rubbishy suits) as the ♠8 cannot be fourth-highest from length.

That means it would be a mistake to play the ♠10 on this trick (allowing declarer to take the ♠Q and to have the *tempo* to set up his tricks). The right play is to take the ♠K and to switch to another suit that offers more promise. With dummy offering us little in Diamonds and less in Clubs the most promising switch comes in the form of Hearts and we should lead the ♥10.

As the cards lie this cuts declarer down to size. No matter what he tries we can set up three Heart tricks and the ♠K to go with the ♠K. One down again.

"What have I done to deserve this?" wails West, plaintively, "four 3NT contracts, four defeats".

Do try to look sympathetic...