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Four defensive deals to supplement David Bird's hands for VBlue, year 2. SA Version. Updated spring 2016.

Y2 VBlue #13 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ T742		
	♥ J962		
	♦ K4		
	♣ 865		
West		East	
♠ A5		♠ KJ8	
♥ QT3		♥ 85	
♦ AQT83		♦ J952	
♣ KJ4		♣ AQ73	
	South		
	♠ Q963		
	♥ AK74		
	♦ 76		
	♣ T92		

This set of four deals is all about defense.

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
-	P	P	P
1NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Lead: ♥ 2

This deal demonstrates a cute defensive play that appears more often than you may think.

Bidding.

After three Passes, West opens 1NT and East has a routine raise to game.

Play.

Against 3NT partner (with a hideous collection of used tram-tickets) fishes out the ♥2 as his opening lead. Now, having viewed the dummy, how should we defend with the South cards?

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

If North's Hearts were headed by the ♥Q then it wouldn't matter how we played the suit – all roads would lead to the defense cashing four tricks there. But what if North has ♥J × × ×?

Now we 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 our right-hand opponent (that's us 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 agonizing decision West may well go wrong and try the ♥10 and – on this layout – live unhappily ever after. Shame.

Note that we 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 we started with ♥A J × × rather than ♥A K × × (because we would have won with the ♥K, right?)

We don't want to overdo this type of false carding, and here, on this deal, we stuck to the time-honored method of playing the lower of touching honors. 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 tomorrow...



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Y2 VBlue #13 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ T72	
	♥ J9632	
	♦ Q4	
	♣ 865	
West		East
♠ A54		♠ KJ8
♥ QT		♥ 85
♦ AKT83		♦ J952
♣ KJ4		♣ AQ73
	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?*

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

Lead: ♥ 3

This deal is remarkably similar to Hand 1 – on the surface, at least.

Bidding.

After two Passes, West opens 1NT and East has a straightforward raise to game.

Play.

Against 3NT partner (with a poor collection) fishes out the ♥3 as his opening lead. Now – how should we defend with the South cards?

We can read partner for not much (all right, once again, let's do the math – he has to have 3 to 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 tires down later if they do that... but that's for another time and another place.

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 ditch. So there can be no percentage in leading a low Heart at trick two in an effort to make West have an agonizing guess.

Our best chance of beating 3NT is to play North for five Hearts (a likely prospect, given the observable events of trick one) and cash the ♥A at trick two. When the ♥Q comes down and North shows the ♥2 we know we are onto the scent.


A third round of Hearts cooks declarer's goose and he is one down before he can gain a foothold.



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VB#13 Y2 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ Q8532	
	♥ KJ5	
	♦ 973	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ 94		♠ AJ6
♥ AQ42		♥ 763
♦ QJ4		♦ AK5
♣ AQJ9		♣ T862
	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

Bidding.

We Pass as dealer and, once again, East-West bid 1NT – 3NT.

Play.

Partner fishes out the ♠3 as his opening lead. "Thank you, partner", says West mechanically, "play small, please". Now – how should we defend this one?

We can read partner for a Spade honor (we follow the modern practice of leading fourth-highest from suits with honors and second highest from trashy 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 × × × or ♠Q 10 × × ×.

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



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Y2 VBlue #13 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N By: West
Date: 03/07/2016	Board #: 4
Dealer: West	Vulnerable: All
Play this hand online!	

	North	
	♠ 98532	
	♥ KQ52	
	♦ J9	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ Q4		♠ AJ6
♥ AJ4		♥ 763
♦ K743		♦ AQ5
♣ AQ98		♣ JT62
	South	
	♠ KT7	
	♥ T98	
	♦ T862	
	♣ 753	

Hand 3 all over again, surely?

Perhaps...

Anyway, how can you be the star in this movie?

After all, you are holding your usual collection of garbage...

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

Lead: ♠ 8

Bidding.

As dealer, West opens 1NT and, for the fourth hand in a row, East-West bid 1NT – 3NT.

Play.

With that strange feeling of *déjà vu* that we often get at VuBridge, we watch as partner fishes out the ♠8 as his opening lead. “Thank you, partner”, says West without emotion, “play small, please”. Now – how should we defend against this dummy?

This time (in contrast to Hand 3) we can read partner for a poor Spade suit with no honor (remember, we follow the modern practice of leading fourth-highest from suits with honors and second highest from trashy 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 defense is to take the ♠K and to shift to another suit that offers more promise. With dummy offering us little in Diamonds and Clubs the most promising shift comes in the form of Hearts, and we should therefore lead the ♥10 at trick two.

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...