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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 4S<br>By: West |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | Board #: 1               |
| Dealer: North  | Vulnerable: None         |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 |                          |

|         |   |        |
|---------|---|--------|
|         | North   |        |
|         | ♠ A6  |        |
|         | ♥ T985  |        |
|         | ♦ 973   |        |
|         | ♣ T752  |        |
| West    |  | East   |
| ♠ KQJ95 |   | ♠ T873 |
| ♥ J43   |   | ♥ AK6  |
| ♦ K85   |   | ♦ QJT2 |
| ♣ QJ    |   | ♣ K9   |
|         | South   |        |
|         | ♠ 42  |        |
|         | ♥ Q72   |        |
|         | ♦ A64   |        |
|         | ♣ A8643   |        |

This series of deals and its brother, elsewhere in this edition of V-Blue, are on *defensive signals*.

The declarer has the advantage of seeing his *entire* hand, both his half and his partner's. The defenders don't have that advantage.

Or do they...?

What if there were a way to help your partner read through the back of your cards? Is there a way to tell each other what you have?

There certainly is, and welcome to the world of Legal Table Talk. There are several kinds of defensive signalling, in the next eight hands, we're going to look at *Attitude Signals*, the most important (and in fact, your default signal).

Let's say the ♥A is led. We all know the leader also has the ♥K. Picture the leader staring at the dummy (which has three useless cards), wondering if third hand (his partner, in other words) has the ♥Q, or is it in declarer's hand?

If the vital Queen is in third hand (partner's hand), the opening leader will

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

Lead: ♥ T

This is a great little hand to see how *attitude signals* work. After East-West arrive in 4♠, our partner (North) leads the ♥10 and we begin our defensive **Count and Plan**.

First, we *Read the Lead*. Partner has lead the Top of a Sequence. (Well, in theory, he could have a shortage but how likely is that?? Declarer would have to have at least five Hearts if that were the case). When partner leads the ♥10 from ♥10 9 8, he usually is not frantic for us to return that suit.

Now, we look at the dummy, with the goal of trying to discern what declarer's plan is so we can smash it! Looking at that dummy, we see that declarer's ♣K is a loser. The Diamonds, however, look like a possible source of tricks. It might be that declarer is planning to *dump losers* on them. We have a stopper to slow things down though.

(By the way, when partner looks at the dummy, he's not too excited about the Heart suit, and will probably be thinking about another possible lead when he's in again).

We *do the maths* and figure partner for 4 points at best (West did force to game, remember). We've got two tricks in aces, and it looks like the ♥Q represents another opportunity for a trick.

At trick 1, we **encourage** partner to continue Hearts when/if he gets on lead again. Our ♥7 pretty much promises the ♥Q. (There are other possibilities, but we'll talk about them later).

Trick 2, declarer starts pulling trumps. (A thought here: This tends to confirm our interpretation of declarer's plan to use the Diamonds. When declarer plans on **dumping** in dummy, he usually pulls trumps early. If he's planning on **trumping** in dummy, he needs the trumps on the table).

Partner gets in with his ♠A. He's one of those useful fellows who actually pays attention to what his partner plays, and at trick 3, he plays another Heart. Our ♥Q is now set up as a

want to continue the suit. If, however, the ladyship is in declarer's hand the leader will not want to continue the suit as it would simply set up a winner for declarer. A dilemma.

Enter our new friend, *Attitude*. If the ♥Q is lurking amongst partner's cards, he will play the highest card he can afford, telling third hand he's "high" on the suit. From a holding of ♥Q 9 3, he would play the ♥9. That says to the leader, "I like this suit! Bring it on!" The leader will know to continue.

But! What if third hand *doesn't* have the ♥Q? From a holding of ♥9 6 3, he would play the ♥3. *Low says No!* "Don't continue the suit."

Now, signals do not exist in a vacuum. We will be looking at the hands as a whole. Sometimes we want our partner to continue the suit even when we don't have a winner. Think about when you have a worthless doubleton and want partner to give us a ruff. We would signal HIGH... saying please continue this suit.

Sometimes we want partner to cease and desist even though we have winners. Visualise a time when you want partner to switch suits. A LOW signal says "Stop that right now and think of something else."

I hear you thinking, "But what if I don't have a *clearly low or high* card to play?" Just do the best you can and pray partner can read the cards.

The most important thought here is this: Every single card played by the defence has meaning.

In this series you will be playing these hands twice, once from the point of view of the signaller and once from the point of view of the signallee.

Hand 1 sets the scene. You are not on lead - your partner is.

winner (unless of course declarer only had two Hearts to start with).

Declarer pulls trumps on his next two tricks, and then begins to set up his Diamonds. (Were we psychic or what?)

And now we are in with our ♦A, and we smartly play our ♥Q. Declarer indeed had another one.

For the *coup de grâce*, we play our ♣A. We could postpone that, but who knows what the rascally declarer has in mind? Let's take that winning trick while we can.

We end up with our three aces plus the ♥Q.

Notice that without our clever defence, the declarer could have thrown that losing Heart on the established Diamonds.

If we hadn't signalled a *positive signal card* at trick 1, partner might well have switched to a club at trick 3 after he took the ♠A. After all, from North's perspective, we could have the ♣A Q poised over the ♠K and no ♥Q.

Here's something we want you to write down somewhere (or have made into a tattoo) – **Every single card either defender plays should have a meaning.** Only the very inexperienced and non-concentrating players just follow suit.

**Attitude signals** are the default signal. Others, like *suit preference* and *count*, also play important roles, but the primary choice is attitude.


Then we're ready to move on. We're going to play this again, this time as the Signalee.



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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 4S<br>By: East |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | Board #: 2               |
| Dealer: South  | Vulnerable: N / S        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 |                          |

|        |   |         |  |
|--------|---|---------|--|
|        | North   |         |  |
|        | ♠ 42  |         |  |
|        | ♥ Q72   |         |  |
|        | ♦ A64   |         |  |
|        | ♣ A8643   |         |  |
| West   |  | East    |  |
| ♠ T873 |   | ♠ KQJ95 |  |
| ♥ AK6  |   | ♥ J43   |  |
| ♦ QJT2 |   | ♦ K85   |  |
| ♣ K9   |   | ♣ QJ    |  |
|        | South   |         |  |
|        | ♠ A6  |         |  |
|        | ♥ T985  |         |  |
|        | ♦ 973   |         |  |
|        | ♣ T752  |         |  |

This is Hand 1, albeit rotated 180 degrees. This time, though, we are the **receiver** of the signal.

We have to find a decisive opening lead, make a defensive **Plan** and be alert for news from across the table.

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

Lead: ♥ T

After the routine bidding to 4♠, we're faced with having to make the opening lead. We really don't have anything that attractive but our Heart sequence gives the ♥10 an edge over the other suits. The lead of the ♥10 promises a sequence (or a shortage), and is not a lead that partner has to return if he has a better idea.

When the dummy comes down, we're a little discouraged about our Heart lead. We also see a dummy that, with a little promotion in Diamonds, should be a nice **dump** for declarer's losers. We know we're going to be on lead fairly soon with our ♠A.

When faced with a **dump** dummy, we usually look for an attacking defence. Why? If we don't take our winners early, declarer will drop the losers on the dummy's **dump suit**. From our vantage point, attacking dummy's Clubs just makes sense. We know partner could have as many as 10 points, and they could include the ♠A Q.

Here's something to think about: Third hand is often way ahead of the opener in knowledge of the defence. Partner may know the location of every Spade honour, and often knows (thanks to being able to *Read the Lead*) the best defence.

At trick 1, we are very surprised to see partner's ♥7, which we take to be an encouraging card. He must have the ♥Q. He might have a doubleton, but it wouldn't have that much chance of providing winners, as declarer will have our teeth pulled too quickly to ruff a doubleton.

At trick 2, we gain the lead with the ♠A, and obey orders. We return another Heart. Declarer then pulls our trumps, and sets about promoting Diamonds, just like we thought he would. Partner has the ♦A, and after playing it, smacks down the ♥Q. And then for the setting trick takes the ♠A.

Here's your final thought: Because of partner's thoughtful positive attitude signal at trick 1, the defence went a little differently from the way we thought it would. This teamwork set the

contract. The declarer's plan was to pull trumps, develop the Diamonds, and **dump** the Heart loser on the established Diamond.

From now on, notice the defenders when you are the declarer. Does third hand just throw a card to follow suit? Does he give a signal?


Note that as a declarer, the opposition's signals are informative to you also. We're just sayin'....



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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 4S<br>By: East |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | Board #: 3               |
| Dealer: South  | Vulnerable: E / W        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 |                          |

|         |   |         |
|---------|---|---------|
|         | North   |         |
|         | ♠ T5  |         |
|         | ♥ AT42  |         |
|         | ♦ T5  |         |
|         | ♣ JT932   |         |
| West    |  | East    |
| ♠ AK83  |   | ♠ Q9642 |
| ♥ 7     |   | ♥ KQ65  |
| ♦ Q96   |   | ♦ J72   |
| ♣ AQ865 |   | ♣ K     |
|         | South   |         |
|         | ♠ J7  |         |
|         | ♥ J983  |         |
|         | ♦ AK843   |         |
|         | ♣ 74  |         |

On this hand, we are the opening leader, the "signal-ee".

When we make the lead and look at the dummy, we begin making a hopeful **Plan** for the defence. What will partner have to say? You can bet we'll be paying attention.

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

Lead: ♦ A

Here, as South we lead the ♦A against 4♣ by East. Why lead the ♦A? Let me quote Barry Crane (a great but late American Life master) to you: "God dealt you an Ace-King combination so you wouldn't have a problem with your opening lead". The principle is that you will be able to see the dummy and have a good idea of what to do next. Maybe.

Here, we know little about the East and North hands. To advance to 4♣ after West's strong raise East may have barely above a minimum response (he could Pass 3♠ of course, but he would bid 4♣ on a five-card suit and 8 points for sure). On the other hand, he may be just short of looking for a slam – it's impossible to tell.

Anyway, that Diamond holding in dummy is alarming. We may be setting up the ♦Q if we continue Diamonds so the right defence may well be to switch immediately to a Club, hoping partner has the ♣K behind the ♣A Q.

However, partner is there to rescue us. On the ♦A North signals vehemently with the ♦10. This can only mean "I like this suit, please continue". Why would he want us to do that? Well, the only explanation is that he has a doubleton Diamond (or it may be the only Diamond he has). In any case, we can get a third round Diamond ruff.


So the play starts ♦A, ♦K, Diamond ruff. That's the first three tricks and North cashes the ♥A to defeat the contract before declarer gets a look in. East claims the rest but that's only nine tricks. Not enough; one down.



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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 4S    |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | By: West        |
| Dealer: North  | Board #: 4      |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 | Vulnerable: All |

|         |   |         |  |
|---------|---|---------|--|
|         | North   |         |  |
|         | ♠ J7  |         |  |
|         | ♥ J983  |         |  |
|         | ♦ AK843   |         |  |
|         | ♣ 74  |         |  |
| West    |  | East    |  |
| ♠ Q9642 |   | ♠ AK83  |  |
| ♥ KQ65  |   | ♥ 7     |  |
| ♦ J72   |   | ♦ Q96   |  |
| ♣ K     |   | ♣ AQ865 |  |
|         | South   |         |  |
|         | ♠ T5  |         |  |
|         | ♥ AT42  |         |  |
|         | ♦ T5  |         |  |
|         | ♣ JT932   |         |  |

Once again, we're going to repeat a hand.

This time, you're going to be the Signal-er rather than the Signal-ee. Will partner pay attention? Absolutely! This is Vu-Bridge, and everything goes the way it should.

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

Lead: ♦ A

It's different from the other side, isn't it?

When our partner leads the ♦A, we should feel a pleasant warm glow. Why would partner lead an Ace unless it were backed up with the King? Anyway, we follow procedures and do a thorough **Count and Plan**.

We try to *Do the Maths* but this is tricky as declarer's hand is an unknown quantity. West may have scraped up a 4♠ raise, he may have a decent hand and be entirely confident. We can, though, see some danger in the Club suit, regardless of the location of the ♣K. If declarer has it there are three Club tricks, if partner has it, it is finessable (it may even be singleton). Not good.

Normally partner would see that ♦Q and switch, probably to a Club. We need to do something dramatic, and a **high attitude signal** will do the trick.

When we play the ♦10, partner is paying attention. He continues with the ♦K and a third Diamond, which we ruff – with the ♠10 just to be careful. Declarer (smart alec that he is), dropped the ♦J at trick 2 in an attempt to put partner off leading a third Diamond. The ♠10 might have forced a Spade honour from West if the ♦J had been a *true card*. As it is, West follows to the third Diamond and we have the first three tricks.

With a singleton ♥7 in dummy, it makes sense for us to cash the ♥A immediately rather than saving it for dessert. This defeats the contract before declarer gets a look in and we don't much care that declarer claims the rest. Once again, teamwork enables us to set the contract.

Things seem to be getting a bit too easy. Next hand, I promise you, will be a little harder.






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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 3N<br>By: West |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | Board #: 5               |
| Dealer: West   | Vulnerable: N / S        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 |                          |

|        |   |        |
|--------|---|--------|
|        | North   |        |
|        | ♠ T96   |        |
|        | ♥ QT9643  |        |
|        | ♦ 52  |        |
|        | ♣ A4  |        |
| West   |  | East   |
| ♠ 73   |   | ♠ Q542 |
| ♥ KJ5  |   | ♥ A    |
| ♦ AQ43 |   | ♦ KJT9 |
| ♣ QJT6 |   | ♣ K973 |
|        | South   |        |
|        | ♠ AKJ8  |        |
|        | ♥ 872   |        |
|        | ♦ 876   |        |
|        | ♣ 852   |        |

We've seen how encouraging attitude signals work in suit contracts - in one instance to get a defensive ruff.

Might there be an opportunity to make this signalling lark work in No-trumps? To be announced...

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1NT  | P     | 2♣   | P     |
| 2♦   | P     | 3NT  | P     |
| P    | P     |      |       |

Lead: ♥ T

Take a look at this deal from the declarer's point of view first. In 3NT declarer (West) sees two Hearts, four Diamonds off the top, with very promotable Clubs and with four-to-the-♠Q in Spades, no huge fear of that suit.

But... we've got other ideas. Partner's lead of the ♥10 looks to be the top of a sequence and may well be from an *interior sequence*, with an honour at the top. We, however, *hate* Hearts. After some basic arithmetic, we know partner is good for about 6 points. (Note that it's relatively easy to *Do the Maths* after a 1NT opening bid. It's often a lot harder in a suit contract when opponents' hands are unknown).

We need five tricks to set them, and we see a possible four in Spades in our own hand. We need to do is have them led by anyone but us and we really need partner to have the ♠10. We also need to tell partner at trick 1 that we want partner to lead something else when/if he gets on lead again.

Partner is brilliant today, and when he's on lead with the ♣A, he switches to a Spade – the all-important ♠10. We gather in the harvest, and then concede the rest.

Now, an important point. In the past, before we knew **attitude** signals, when partner led a suit, our only job was to follow suit. Now we are learning that the third card played in a hand of bridge is often the most important card. Now, when we play a *low* card to the trick, it isn't just "following suit." It's a signal to find another lead. If we had started with, say, ♥K 8 2 we would have followed with the ♥8.

Clever, no?








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Third hand tells declarer whether or not to continue the suit (ACOL version)

|  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| VB#13 Y2 Encouraging, discouraging signals Part 1 ACOL | Contract: 3N<br>By: East |
| Date: 07/10/2015                                       | Board #: 6               |
| Dealer: East   | Vulnerable: E / W        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>                 |                          |

|        |   |        |
|--------|---|--------|
|        | North   |        |
|        | ♠ AKJ8  |        |
|        | ♥ 872   |        |
|        | ♦ 876   |        |
|        | ♣ 852   |        |
| West   |  | East   |
| ♠ Q542 |   | ♠ 73   |
| ♥ A    |   | ♥ KJ5  |
| ♦ KJT9 |   | ♦ AQ43 |
| ♣ K973 |   | ♣ QJT6 |
|        | South   |        |
|        | ♠ T96   |        |
|        | ♥ QT9643  |        |
|        | ♦ 52  |        |
|        | ♣ A4  |        |

Let's look at that last hand from the other side of the table. The thinking is a little different, perhaps a little more complex.

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| -    | -     | 1NT  | P     |
| 2♣   | P     | 2♦   | P     |
| 3NT  | P     | P    | P     |

Lead: ♥ T

We think our role from this side of the table is a little more complex than when we were sitting in third seat.

After the Stayman auction to 3NT, we have to pick a lead, and Hearts are the suit. The ♥10, top of an *interior sequence*, looks about right. This dislodges dummy's singleton Ace and we know declarer has at most three Hearts (*remember the bidding!*) So there are hopes that we can run the Heart suit – maybe North has ♥K × × and declarer ♥J × ×...?

However... these hopes evaporate when partner, at trick 1, signals his dislike of Hearts with his play of the ♥2. (Remember the days before we learned positive and negative attitude signals? The ♥2 would have been just following suit).

We look at the dummy and after we *Do the Maths*, we know that partner has 8-ish points. Where are they? We're not sure, but they certainly aren't in Hearts.

At trick 2, declarer tries to set up the Clubs. We could duck, but why? We have a little *tempo* going here, and we should take advantage of it.

At trick 3 we could continue Hearts (playing partner for the ♥J and declarer for a bit of an idiot) but that's not really profitable. Diamonds are pointless to lead – even if partner has the ♦A Q that only will give us a couple of tricks. Going for the big money we shift to Spades and, holding a mini-sequence, we lead the ♠10.

It turns out that was the right choice, the killing defence. We end up with the ♣A and four Spade tricks.

And all because partner told us at trick 1 not to bother playing Hearts again. Neat!

