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Eight assorted deals for VBlue, year 2. SA Version. Totally revamped spring 2016.

VB#14 Y2 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 873	
	♥ AJT73	
	♦ 732	
	♣ K4	
West		East
♠ KQT95		♠ J2
♥ 864		♥ 2
♦ AQT8		♦ K9654
♣ 9		♣ JT862
	South	
	♠ A64	
	♥ KQ95	
	♦ J	
	♣ AQ753	

This series of eight deals is our general series of hands, an assortment of deals with no theme to them.

They are in no particular order, so enjoy them as they come!

Hand 1 How might you bid this one?

What about the play? Is that easy?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♣
1♠	X	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

Bidding.

There are two Passes to us and we have an obvious opening bid of 1♣. West overcalls 1♠ and this gives North a small problem.

Partner attempts to solve this by making a **negative Double**, showing (in principle) enough points to bid and a four-card Heart suit. Such a Double is, in theory, unlimited but, as he is a Passed hand, he obviously won't have more than 11 points.

Why not bid 2♥ on his hand? Well 2♥ (a two-over-one bid in competition) should promise 10-plus points. It should also allow for the possibility that we would have to rebid Clubs at the three-level should we have no liking for his Hearts.

Here, partner's hand is too weak to bid 2♥ so he makes the best of a bad job by Doubling. The only alternative would be to Pass and that would stick in North's craw.

In response we are worth a jump in Hearts. A 2♥ bid as an alternative would be a major underbid (no pun intended), as it would show a minimum hand. With 15 points and a lovely 5-4-3-1 pattern we are worth much more than that.

Over our highly encouraging 3♥ rebid North has just about enough to scrape up a 4♥ raise, as he values his fifth trump and figures that his King of Clubs is working overtime.

Play.

West kicks with the ♠K lead against our 4♥ contract. As ever, we thank partner for his contributions and settle down to **Count** and **Plan**.

In fact, the play on this deal is relatively straightforward. We can see one Spade, five Hearts and three Clubs as obvious winners. In terms of losers there are two Spades and just one Diamond. Oops – nine winners and three losers; this does not compute. Where is the

extra winner?

Well, we can easily negotiate a Diamond ruff in the South hand – unusually, the closed hand is the **short trump hand**. It may be rare for the long trumps to be in dummy but there is no law against it. In these circumstances we should aim to ruff losers in the closed hand – a sort of upside-down play, if you like.

In fact, if Clubs were to split 3-3 we'd make even more tricks as we could pitch dummy's Spades on the long Clubs. Right, we have thought things through, **Counted** tricks, made a **Plan** – it's time to **Execute** it.

We take the ♠A and draw trumps. A 4-0 split might cause us to think of a Plan B but here the Great Dealer in the Sky is not so unkind. Hearts are 3-1, so we pull three rounds. We next play three rounds of Clubs (cashing the King first, of course), dumping a Spade loser from table. The 5-1 break prevents us from making any more than three Club tricks, so we need a Diamond ruff to make the total up to ten.


We concede a Diamond and wait patiently as the opposition cash a Spade trick. We ruff the next lead (a Diamond) and have ten tricks. With no Hearts left in hand we have a Diamond loser but that is of small account. We have ten tricks (one Spade, six Hearts and three Clubs) and that is all that matters.



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ A62		
	♥ T93		
	♦ T97642		
	♣ T		
West		East	
♠ 974		♠ QT5	
♥ Q2		♥ AK7	
♦ AK5		♦ QJ	
♣ QJ975		♣ A8632	
	South		
	♠ KJ83		
	♥ J8654		
	♦ 83		
	♣ K4		

You are defending on this deal.

How might you crack declarer's contract?

How might you work together with your partner as a team?

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

East opens 1NT as dealer with his balanced 15-count and West has a straightforward raise to game.

Play.

We choose to lead the ♥5 against 3NT. A Heart is preferable to a Spade despite the suit quality of the latter being much stronger. It is usually better to lead from length.

Dummy is quite intimidating – 12 points and a decent long Club suit. Applying basic arithmetic we see that North can have no more than 5 points.

On our Heart lead declarer calls for dummy's ♥Q, which wins the trick, and next calls for the ♣Q running it round to our ♣K. What now? Should we play aggressively and shift to a low Spade, or should we defend passively and continue with another Heart?

Well, continuing with Hearts is akin to flogging a dead horse. Partner's inability to cover dummy's Queen at trick one marks the ♥A K in the East hand. The play in Clubs strongly suggests that declarer is taking a finesse. If North held the ♣A 10 wouldn't declarer have tackled Clubs by winning trick one in hand and playing up to the table?

There is a clear and present danger that East is about to run away with his contract. We suspect he has three Hearts, four Clubs and the ♦A K to take as soon as he regains the lead. What could we do to stop him?

Well, continuing with Hearts would be futile – we need four tricks and we need them fast. Where? Well, Spades offers the only hope – we have to play North for the Ace. With that in mind we shift to the ♠3 and hope.

Luckily for us, partner is there with the ♠A, but there is still a hurdle to surmount. North may be a good, loyal partner but he is not gifted with X-ray vision. Once on lead should he return a Spade or revert to Hearts? Obviously on this layout it is right to lead Spades, but if we had nothing in Spades, and our Hearts were

originally ♥A J 8 5 4, then a Heart would be the right defense. **How could he tell?**

It's all to do with the Spade we lead. In these circumstances we "Lead **Low** for **Like** and **High** for **Hate**". Here, partner should read our low Spade shift as in "we like Spades" and subsequently return a Spade. On another day, if we had, say, ♠8 5 3 and ♥A J 8 4, then at trick three we should shift to the ♠8, a high Spade telling partner that, "We do not like Spades", and this would carry the additional message, "Please revert to Hearts".

This hand requires defensive collaboration. Visualization from our perspective (seeing that a Spade shift is the only possible defense) and co-operation from partner in continuing the suit.

Yes, defense is the hardest part of the game. When successful, though, it is **so** rewarding...



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 6N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ AJ76		
	♥ AKQ		
	♦ KQJ		
	♣ 852		
West		East	
♠ T852		♠ Q94	
♥ 954		♥ 8732	
♦ T9862		♦ A3	
♣ 9		♣ Q763	
	South		
	♠ K3		
	♥ JT6		
	♦ 754		
	♣ AKJT4		

How much faith should you put old adages?

Do they apply even at a very high level?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
P	1♠	P	1NT
P	6NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ T

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♣ and see partner quietly respond 1♠. We rebid 1NT to show a balanced 12 to 14 points and, having made a *limit bid*, await partner's decision.

Well, the auction may have started *pianissimo* but it finishes rapidly with a deafening *coda*. North raises to 6NT.

Maybe partner has a flight to catch?

Play.

Against our slam West leads the ♦10. We thank partner and settle down to **Count and Plan**.

We can see two Spades, three Hearts, two (slow) Diamonds and two Clubs as sure winners. So we have nine winners. We need, therefore, three extras. Where are they coming from? Well, the whole deal depends on picking up the Club suit for five tricks. So, how do we play this Club combination?

We have eight cards in Clubs, missing the Queen, a combination that should immediately ring a bell. The ***Eight Ever, Nine Never*** adage ought to be bouncing around in our heads.

Trick one goes to East's Ace and a Diamond is returned. So, we are on lead at trick two, in dummy. There is no point delaying matters – we must attend to Clubs at once. So at trick two we lead a Club to our...King! Yes, we do intend to finesse East for the ♣Q, but just in case West has a singleton Queen, it is best to play a top honor first to guard against that improbable but possible layout.

Yes, it's something around a 2% shot that West has the singleton ♣Q. Remember, though, that Las Vegas casinos make billions of dollars on 2% margins in their favor...

Does West play Her Majesty? Nope – he follows with the Nine. Right, with that small chance gone we revert to the main chance. We cross to dummy (with a Heart for choice) and

now take a Club finesse. Should West produce the Queen our slam would fail. That's the thing about finesses – you win some and you lose some. Here we win one – the Ten of Clubs holds the trick.


West's Diamond discard tells us that Clubs are 4-1. Is that a problem? Not a bit of it! We cross back to dummy (we choose to use Hearts again as our transportation suit), and play another Club to the Jack – this time the finesse is **marked**. Now all the Clubs are good and the finishing line is in sight.

We cash our Clubs and take the rest of our top tricks. We make 6NT via two Spades, three Hearts, two Diamonds and five Clubs.



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ K9752	
	♥ 864	
	♦ K7	
	♣ QJT	
West		East
♠ J864		♠ A
♥ AKT		♥ Q72
♦ A942		♦ QJT86
♣ A4		♣ K652
	South	
	♠ QT3	
	♥ J953	
	♦ 53	
	♣ 9873	

Partnership trust goes a long way, especially in defense.

How might you enlist partner's co-operation on this deal?

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

As dealer, West opens 1NT. East, not pausing to pick the daisies, raises that to 3NT.

No one has anything more to add.

Play.

Partner leads the ♠5, presumably his fourth-best Spade, against 3NT and we see a strong dummy displayed. 12 whole points – so East-West have at least 27 points between them.

West thanks his partner and calls, perforce, for dummy's Ace. We follow suit with...? Well what, exactly?

Partnerships at this game are built on trust, especially in defense. To get the best out of our cards we must always try to understand and trust partner's signals, as they are often an essential guide to the winning defense.

The corollary to that is that we should also be helping partner with our signals and not be leaving him in the dark. This means that we cannot be lazy and just follow suit with whatever card we fancy.

On this deal, it is imperative to play our ♠10 at trick one for two reasons. The first is that we must encourage a Spade continuation. The ♠5 lead does not tell us whether partner has led away from the ♠K or the ♠J (or both), but regardless of which honor(s) partner has, our ♠Q is surely going to be a very helpful card to support partner's suit. If North gets on lead – what do you want him to play next?

Look at it from partner's perspective. Should we play the discouraging Three of Spades at trick one North, on regaining the lead with the ♦K, might decide to try his luck elsewhere. He may well shift to the ♣Q, playing us for the Ace and declarer for a hand such as:

♠ Q J 10 ×
♥ A K J ×
♦ A × ×
♣ × ×

The second reason for playing the Ten is that it

unblocks the Spade suit. Suppose that we played the Three at trick one and next declarer took a losing Diamond finesse. Partner, disregarding our inept signal, may play another Spade (say). Right, we'd take the Queen, play the Ten... and would still be on lead at trick five. Oops! Any subsequent lead would allow declarer to claim.

Accurate defense makes things easy. Easy for partner, easy for us. We play the ♠10 at trick one and sit and wait patiently. The ♦Q is run to the King and North plays another Spade – he knows we want him to follow this line. We take the Queen and play the Three and now partner is sitting pretty. He has the ♠K 9 sitting over the ♠J 8 and declarer is beyond hope.


We take four Spades and a Diamond, forcing 3NT to sink beneath the waves.



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ KJ2		
	♥ 98		
	♦ T643		
	♣ KQT3		
West		East	
♠ AQ863		♠ T974	
♥ J7		♥ KQ643	
♦ AJ7		♦ Q9	
♣ 964		♣ AJ	
	South		
	♠ 5		
	♥ AT52		
	♦ K852		
	♣ 8752		

The *critical point* is the point in the play where a defensive card will break a contract or allow it to make.

Will you be ready to *seize the day*?

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

After North Passes as dealer, East opens 1♥.

West's 1♠ response is raised to 2♣ and West has to decide how high to bid.

With an opening bid himself West follows the sound principle that *an opening bid facing an opening bid should play in a game*. Accordingly, he goes on to 4♠.

Play.

Partner, leads the ♣K against 4♠ and we contemplate a minimum dummy – 12 points and a 5·4·2·2 pattern.

Declarer calls for the ♣A at trick one and immediately follows that with the ♦Q. Now, there is no one at our shoulder, telling us that this is a crucial moment and that this is the make-or-break point of this deal. Nevertheless, this is it – our play here is crucial. Should we follow low with the ♦2 or should we play our ♦K?

Partner's ♣K lead indicates that he also holds the ♣Q. Declarer's play strongly suggests he is trying to take three fast Diamond winners, hoping to discard a Club on the third Diamond. Should we play small at trick two this is precisely what would happen. Dummy's ♦Q would win the trick, and now West would play a Diamond to the Jack, followed by the ♦A discarding the ♣J. After that all would be sweetness and light – for East-West.

Playing the King on dummy's ♦Q (*covering an honor with an honor*) is the essential defensive play in defeating 4♠. The trick takes out two of declarer's honors for one of ours. Sure, the Jack is now top dog, but that is not enough for any discards; no third Diamond winner exists to dump a Club from dummy.

Declarer changes tack by switching his attention to Hearts, but he is defeated by the unlucky Spade layout. We gain the lead with the ♥A and promptly return a Club to partner's Queen. With these two tricks in the bag, partner just sits back in his chair and awaits his two

natural trump winners to fall into his lap.

Declarer plays the hand correctly by cashing the ♠A and subsequently leading up to the Queen. This would allow him one loser in all cases other than when North holds the ♠K J. When we show out on the second Spade declarer says something rude and admits defeat. North cashes his two trump tricks and a grumpy declarer claims the rest.


We take two Spades, a Heart and a Club for one off.



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ K75	
	♥ AQJ6	
	♦ AK63	
	♣ Q6	
West		East
♠ JT92		♠ 643
♥ KT3		♥ 85
♦ 7		♦ Q8542
♣ AKJ94		♣ T32
	South	
	♠ AQ8	
	♥ 9742	
	♦ JT9	
	♣ 875	

This deal is action packed with problems in the bidding as well as the play.

Yes, problems can arise even when holding a weak hand!

Can you handle such a deal?

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

Lead: ♣ A

Bidding.

After two Passes West opens 1♣ and partner makes a take-out Double. East Passes and we respond with a simple 1♥, which doesn't promise much. In fact, we should be quite happy with our hand since we'd bid the same 1♥ if all of our honors were small cards!

West passes 1♥ (there's no point in him getting excited when his partner could not muster up a response), and partner now raises us to 3♥. Should we Pass, or should we move forward?

Our first instinct might be to Pass, because there is nothing special that we can see about our hand, but think about it this way. Our 1♥ response showed 0 to 7 points and we are on the top of our range. In other words, partner's jump to 3♥ should show approximately 19 to 21 points as we are known to have a weak hand.

So we bid 4♥ and await the dummy. Partner does indeed have 19 points, but 3♥ is a stretch with that hand – the ♣Q is a waste of artwork. Dummy's Clubs may as well be the ♣3 2.

Play.

West leads the ♣A followed by the ♣K against our 4♥ contract and shifts to the ♠J at trick three. We run that round to win the Queen in our hand, but what next? It's time to **Count** and **Plan**.

With two tricks lost, we have to decide how to tackle the red suits. We have finesses available in both Hearts and Diamonds.

The Diamond finesse may first appear to be a sensible choice, since if the finesse were to win we could switch to the Heart finesse. Should the ♦Q be offside we'd have an entry to hand in Diamonds to try a Heart finesse (or two).

However, there is a real danger to that play – and as you can see with hindsight, a losing Diamond finesse would allow East to return the suit for West to ruff. One down, and a poor

effort.

It is best to take the Heart finesse at trick two. The Diamond finesse can wait – if East turns up with the ♥K we'd still have an entry with the ♠A for later. As it is, a Heart to the Jack wins. So, we cross to the closed hand with a Spade and follow that up with another Heart finesse.

Once the trumps split 3-2, we draw the last trump with the ♥A and the job is nearly done. We have three Spade winners, four Heart winners and two Diamond winners. A tenth winner materializes from a ruff in either hand – we could ruff a Diamond in hand or a Club on table.


As we are somewhat stuck on dummy at this point we cash the top Diamonds (does the Queen fall? No) and concede a Diamond. That's it then – the rest are ours.



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Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 2D
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ 86432		
	♥ K5		
	♦ QT5		
	♣ 532		
West		East	
♠ AQT95		♠ KJ	
♥ J98		♥ A732	
♦ A32		♦ 97	
♣ QJ		♣ T9874	
	South		
	♠ 7		
	♥ QT64		
	♦ KJ864		
	♣ AK6		

Some competitive deals are hotly contested, taking the bidding to uncomfortable heights.

However, there are times when competitive auctions die young. When this happens you might wonder why the opponents are lying low, saying nothing.

Is there a trap hidden somewhere waiting to catch you?

Best to stay sharp!

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♦
1♠	P	P	X
P	2♦	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♦ as dealer and are mildly surprised to hear the auction continue with a 1♠ overcall on our left followed by two Passes. What should we do now?

Holding a respectable hand with a singleton Spade and support for all unbid suits, we should keep the auction alive by making a **re-opening Double**. This is a common situation and needs analyzing.

It is entirely possible that partner could be sitting there licking his chops with a **trump stack** – lots of Spades and a good hand. He'd be hamstrung over 1♠ as he'd have nothing sensible to bid. If that were the case the best we could do is to defend 1♠ Doubled, hoping to extract a penalty.

Our singleton Spade, along with East's inaction, makes a Spade stack a real possibility (we have short Spades and East sounds like he also has short Spades – thus partner figures to have length in Spades).

We Double (for take-out, of course) and await developments. Unfortunately partner does not have the strength in Spades to Pass the Double, so he removes it to 2♦. Getting the message that North has a pretty ropey hand we Pass and that ends that.

Play.

West understandably chooses the ♣Q as his opening lead against our 2♦ contract and we take a few moments to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see six possible losers (one Spade, three Hearts, one Diamond, and one Club). The best chance to get rid of one is to trump one in dummy. Remember – with excess losers we can only **trump them** or **dump them**.

Here, with ♥K × sitting on table, we should aim to ruff a Heart in dummy. Since we are missing the ♦A also, it is imperative that we do not play on trumps at all. To gain a tempo, we must play

a Heart to the King at trick two.

East wins his ♥A and duly shifts to a trump. Good defense – if we don't play trumps, the defenders ought to. However, it is too late. An initial Diamond lead from West would have prevented our Plan from coming to fruition but leading trumps at trick three does not inconvenience us.

We cash the ♥Q and ruff a Heart on table; to our pleasant surprise, the ♥J comes down on the third round of Hearts, establishing our Ten. We come to hand with a Club, draw the last trump and find ourselves with an extra winner.


So we rack up a neat little overtrick on the deal. We make two Hearts, **five** Diamonds (four in hand and a ruff on table) and two Clubs.



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Eight assorted deals for VBlue, year 2. SA Version. Totally revamped spring 2016.

Y2 VBlue #14 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ QT87		
	♥ AK984		
	♦ 5		
	♣ AJ2		
West		East	
♠ A4		♠ 532	
♥ JT73		♥ Q52	
♦ KJT3		♦ Q94	
♣ T98		♣ KQ74	
	South		
	♠ KJ96		
	♥ 6		
	♦ A8762		
	♣ 653		

You reach a pushy contract here; can you see enough tricks?

Which hand will you use for ruffs, or will this be a **crossruff** hand?

That's up to you to figure out.

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

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

After West Passes as dealer, North opens 1♥ to which we respond 1♠.

Normally it's preferable to bid our longest suit first, but our hand is too weak to respond 2♦ (which would promise 10-plus points).

Partner raises our Spades to the three-level (14 points with a singleton Diamond – aggressive but acceptable), and we decide to advance to game.

Play.

West leads the ♠10 against our 4♠ contract and we pause to assess our chances. Both of us have pushed the boat out in the bidding; still, that's the way it goes sometimes. Can we justify reaching this 22-point 4♠? We need to **Count** and **Plan**.

When we are faced with a 4-4 trump fit along with shortages in both hands, it may be the right play to try a **crossruff** (where we ruff in both hands). Note that ruffing in both hands is usually the wrong play – so we need to be sure of our count of winners before we begin such a play. When planning on a crossruff, it is much easier to count winners than losers.

Outside the trump suit, we have four side-suit winners (the ♥A K, the ♦A and the ♣A). This means we need to establish **six** trump tricks to make the count up to ten. Is that possible? Well, if we were to ruff three Diamonds in dummy and collect three trump tricks from the closed hand that would settle the account.

Is there anything else? Well, when embarking on a crossruff it is usually best to cash the outside winners first. Why? So the defenders do not get the opportunity to discard their plain suits and later trump our winners.

So... we in the Club opening lead with the Ace and cash the ♥A K and the Ace of Diamonds. Now comes the crossruff. We ruff Diamonds on table and Hearts in hand.

The defenders are powerless to prevent us from taking the first nine tricks. In the ending we have the ♠K J facing the Queen, and cannot be denied a tenth trick in one way or another.

4♠ bid and made via six trump tricks and four outside winners (a Club, two Hearts and a Diamond).