




This series looks at the way declarer should plan the play at the start of the hand. Draw trumps? Ruff losers? Set up discards? Part 1 of 2. ACOL version. Updated Summer 2015.

Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ T5			
♥ Q94			
♦ AKQJ			
♣ J532			
West		East	
♠ 762		♠ A4	
♥ J872		♥ T53	
♦ 863		♦ T9742	
♣ 974		♣ AKQ	
South			
♠ KQJ983			
♥ AK6			
♦ 5			
♣ T86			

The secret of good comedy is – timing!  
And this holds true for bridge, also.

This series, and another also in this edition, is all about the timing of the hand – *What to do first*. When playing in a suit contract usually there are two main ways to get rid of losers. You can *trump* them in dummy (in the *short trump* hand). Or you can *dump* them, on dummy's long suit. The question becomes, do you draw trumps now or later?

Were life so simple! In fact, there are a lot more things than that you have to think about and this series shows you how important planning the order of your tricks is.

Hand 1: We start with a very straightforward deal to illustrate the principles.

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

Lead: ♥ 2

### Bidding.

Partner has a balanced hand (actually a 4·4·3·2 shape), with 13 points and so opens 1NT as dealer, naturally enough.

With a lovely six-card Spade suit and a hand worthy of an opening bid in its own right (13 points also), we have every reason to advance to game. 4♠ must be the right contract and we bid it without standing on ceremony.

### Play.

West (with a miserable collection) leads the ♥2 and we settle down to **Count** and **Plan**, having thanked partner for his contribution to proceedings.

*[In passing, with 20-20 hindsight, we can all see that a black suit lead would have defeated 4♠ as East could have grabbed four quick tricks. Why, though, should West have led either a Club or a trump? He isn't gifted with second sight. You might also ask why East Passed over 1NT. Well, what would you want him to bid with that collection? 2♦ would be an absurd call with that dismal suit and – in any case – would only have attracted a Diamond lead].*

So, back to the plot... In terms of **winners** we have five slow Spades (once the ♠A has gone, that is), three Hearts and four Diamonds. So plenty of winners. In terms of **losers**, however, there are four – three Clubs and a Spade. So we have an imbalance – twelve winners and four losers. This does not compute.

Now, usually when we can count sufficient tricks for the contract we have a clear signal to draw trumps. Not here, though. If we were to play a Spade at trick two East would grab that and play his winning Clubs at a rate of knots. We have some housekeeping to do first and that involves tidying up the Club losers before giving up the lead.

So, we take the Heart lead (actually with the ♥K although it doesn't much matter) and immediately play on Diamonds. Here we simply dump the losing Clubs. What if someone ruffed? Well, it wouldn't matter provided we rid ourselves of at least two Clubs. All we would be doing is to exchange one loser (a Club) for

another (a Diamond ruff). In the grand scheme of things that wouldn't defeat the contract.

As it is, we are able to chuck two Clubs away on the ♦A K Q and try our luck with the ♦J. If Diamonds were 4-4 we'd get away with that and dump all of our Clubs without loss.

On this layout, Diamonds are 5-3 so West makes a trick with the ♠2 – and much pleasure it must have given him. However, we are safe as houses at this point – the only other loser is the Ace of trumps (that loser can't be avoided!) so we end up with eleven tricks.

Amusingly, with four top losers (the ♣A K Q and the ♠A) we concede only two tricks, and those to the Two of trumps and the Ace of trumps.

East is still grinding his teeth in frustration.



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VB#14 Y1 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ JT32	
♥ A4	
♦ AJ74	
♣ 642	
West	East
♠ 9	♠ A7
♥ JT983	♥ 762
♦ K852	♦ QT63
♣ KJ8	♣ AT93
South	
♠ KQ8654	
♥ KQ5	
♦ 9	
♣ Q75	

On this deal you have to identify the right losers to eradicate and when.

Don't worry, it's not difficult...

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

Lead: ♥ J

### Bidding.

We open 1♠ with a decent opening bid (only 12 points but a good six-card suit and a pleasing 6-3-3-1 pattern).

Partner raises us to 3♠, inviting us to bid game should we wish, and we duly advance to game on the strength of the attractive shape of the hand.

5-3-3-2 hands play poorly, in general, but 6-3-3-1 hands tend to have far fewer losers. This logic is not infallible (with this South hand it's possible that we'd have four Aces to lose) but taking account of hand pattern is as important as counting points.

### Play.

West prefers a *passive* Heart lead from his sequence to an *attacking* Club lead from an honour. Right in principle, wrong (make that "unlucky") on this deal. An highly unlikely low Club lead would give us no chance of making the hand.

Anyway – on the sight of dummy we must pause to **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners – well, we've got a few. To be specific we have nine: five (slow) Spades (once we have driven out the ♠A), three Hearts and a Diamond.

Losers? Well, there are obviously four – three Clubs and the Ace of trumps. At least the arithmetic balances on this deal – nine winners and four losers.

If we were to make the mistake of attempting to draw trumps East would take the ♠A and would certainly find the Club switch to defeat us. A much better idea is to **dump** one of dummy's losers on the three top Hearts before surrendering the lead.

That reduces the loser count (only three now) but what about the number of winners? Isn't that still nine? Well, because we have oodles of trumps between us (that's one of the reasons we bid 4♠) we can make six trump tricks, not

just five. The sixth trump trick comes from ruffing a Club on table – in ***the short trump hand***.

Notice, for the umpteenth time, that ruffing Diamonds in the closed hand (the *long trump hand*) is a waste of time.

So... in detail. We must take three rounds of Hearts immediately, dumping a Club from dummy. Best (to avoid blocking the Hearts) is to take the ♥A at trick one and follow with the ♥K Q. Now we play a trump. East wins and gets off lead with another trump.


We win that and patiently play a Club, paving the way for a Club ruff on table. West wins and tries a Diamond but we take the ♦A and persist with our plan – playing another Club. The defenders win that but have to concede the rest.

Contract made with six Spades (five in hand plus one ruff on table) three Hearts and a Diamond.



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ T853		
		♥ JT8		
		♦ K3		
		♣ KQJ2		
West				East
♠ A7				♠ 64
♥ AQ6				♥ K974
♦ T9872				♦ J65
♣ 986				♣ AT74
		South		
		♠ KQJ92		
		♥ 532		
		♦ AQ4		
		♣ 53		

We all know people who fall in love with their hands, no matter how tatty. Will that happen to you?

After ending up in the right contract, your next challenge will be how to get rid of a surplus loser.

Will you be able to **dump** it on a long suit in dummy, or will you **trump** it in dummy?

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

Lead: ♦ T

### Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♠ on a 5-3-3-2 hand with 12 points. Partner issues an invitational raise to game with 3♠, something we have no problem in firmly rejecting.

This hand has too many losers and too few points to contemplate making a further bid. There is no more minimum hand we could have to open 1♠ – so if we don't Pass 3♠ on this hand just what hand would we Pass it on?

### Play.

We get a lucky break with the opening lead. West chooses what most people in the world would pick: the top of a sequence in Diamonds. This gives us time and space to **Count** our tricks and make a **Plan**.

We can all see now (with perfect hindsight) that a Heart lead (or a Club lead, and a switch to Hearts by East) would destroy us but, fortunately, it doesn't happen (this time!) The ♦10 lead is normal, natural and downright unlucky (for West).

We count our losers and see a Spade loser, three Hearts and a Club. Five losers – one too many. What about winners? Four Spades, three Hearts and a couple of Clubs. Nine winners. Umm – the computer is malfunctioning, captain. This does not balance.

The first thought that may occur to us (Plan A, if you like) is that we could set up dummy's Clubs to dump a loser or two, but... we'd have to give up the lead. If we give up the lead we'd allow the opposition to hurt us with a Heart switch. We need to get rid of a loser before allowing the enemy in.

Plan B... since we can't dump a loser on dummy's long suit, can we find a way to dump one of dummy's losers on one of our long suits? The Diamonds are an unbalanced suit with an extra winner in the closed hand. We must use that advantage to create a short suit in dummy so we can trump a loser.

We win trick one in dummy with the ♦K, and

continue the Diamond suit. At trick three, we dump one of dummy's losing Hearts on the closed hand's winning Diamond. Now we have Heart shortage in dummy. Instead of losing three Hearts, we'll be able to trump one of the losers from our hand in dummy.


After we finish playing three rounds of Diamonds, we pull trumps. It doesn't matter if we lose the lead now as the opponents can do us little damage. We only lose one Spade, two Hearts and one Club.

Timing! We all have to do our housekeeping chores at the right time.



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VB#14 Y1 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ JT9		
		♥ J853		
		♦ AQ73		
		♣ Q5		
West				East
♠ A82				♠ 7643
♥ 9				♥ AK
♦ JT42				♦ 865
♣ JT984				♣ K762
		South		
		♠ KQ5		
		♥ QT7642		
		♦ K9		
		♣ A3		

Once again, you will face the challenge of planning the timing of the hand.

Will you be able to pull trumps? Will you be able to give up the lead?

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

Lead: ♣ J

### Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1♥ on a 6·3·2·2 hand with 14 points. Partner issues an invitational raise to game with 3♥, something we have no problem in accepting.

Unlike the last hand, we are glad to accept partner's invitation to game. Not only do we have a decent quota of 14 points but we have six trumps to sit alongside partner's four-card support.

### Play.

Against 4♥ West leads the ♣J and we settle down to **Count** our winners and losers and to make a **Plan**.

Firstly, we sadly realise that the ♠Q is destined to play but a minor role in our small drama. Forlornly we try playing Her Majesty from the table but, predictably, East covers that with the ♠K. *'Twas ever thus*.

Our loser count shows one Spade, two Hearts, no Diamonds (remember, losers in dummy aren't in the initial count) and one Club. Sadly, they are all fast losers, which means if the opponents get in they could cash them off the top. Not good. Playing a trump would be fatal.

What about winners? Two Spades, four Hearts, three Diamonds and a Club. That's ten winners. Once again, the arithmetic doesn't balance – four losers, ten winners.

Is there a way we can get rid of a loser before giving up the lead? *Yes we can!* We could dump our Club loser on dummy's long(ish) Diamonds. To that end we cash the ♦K and then the ♦A Q to dump the ♣3 from the closed hand.

After that we patiently play trumps and 4♥ gently rolls home.

What if an opponent were to trump a Diamond winner? Well, let's cross that bridge as and when we come to it... If that happens, it happens. Here it's the only chance we have and we have to play for it.








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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ JT9		♠ A7432	South
♥ J853		♥ K9	
♦ AQ73		♦ T6	
♣ Q5		♣ K762	
West			
♠ 86			
♥ A			
♦ J8542			
♣ JT984			
South			
♠ KQ5			
♥ QT7642			
♦ K9			
♣ A3			

This hand ought to remind you of the last deal. Odd how we keep finding ghosts here at VuBridge....

Your hand and the dummy bear a staggering resemblance to Hand 4. But there's a critical difference in the opponents' hands...

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

Lead: ♣ J

### Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1♥ on a 6-3-2-2 hand with 14 points. Partner issues an invitational raise to game with 3♥, something we have no problem in accepting.

### Play.

When dummy goes down here we know we have travelled this path before. This is Hand 4 all over again, no?

Just as in the previous deal West leads the ♣ J. Just as before we must **Count** and **Plan**.

We can lose three tricks. We see unavoidable losers in trumps, an unavoidable loser in the ♠ A. The only one that isn't inevitable is the Club – it can be dumped on a Diamond winner. So, we've got our Plan A.

At trick two, we start immediately on the Diamonds. At trick four, we get an ugly surprise – East trumps in on our Diamond winner. (How dare he spoil Plan A?) We need to make a decision. We can overtrump in our hand, but we still have the Club loser. While we will win the over-ruff, it will not get rid of a loser.

So we have a choice – we could over-ruff or throw a loser. Which to choose?

Amazingly, on this layout, it doesn't matter! *All roads lead to Rome*. Here at VuBridge we were intending to pitch a losing Club and saw no reason to deviate from Plan A. When East meanly ruffs the ♦ A with the ♥ 9 we throw the losing Club anyway. East now plays a Club so we ruff and, following a brief prayer, lead a trump. With an almighty crash the ♥ A and ♥ K come down on the same trick.

Suppose we had over-ruffed the ♥ 9 instead. We would have then played a trump and watched the defenders' looks of horror as they took the same trick twice over (!) True, this way we'd lose a Club but only one trump trick.

Heads we win, tails they lose. The defenders have no winning option when the ♦ A is led. East can ruff with the ♥ 9, the ♥ K or not ruff at all and

all options are bad for him (and, naturally enough, good for us).

What a satisfying deal. Well, satisfying for North-South – East-West may have other epithets.



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ Q532		♠ K764	South
♥ Q642		♥ T7	
♦ Q5		♦ T84	
♣ 984		♣ KT75	
West			
♠ JT98		♠ A	
♥ A9		♦ 9763	
♦ 9763		♣ AJ3	
♣ AJ3			

Once again you will find yourself in need of a strategy to get rid of an excess loser.

Should you *trump* it in dummy? *Dump* it on a long suit in dummy? Create a shortage in dummy?

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

Lead: ♠ J

### Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1♥ on a lovely 5-4-3-1 hand with 18 points. Partner raises gently to 2♥ (so he has some trump support and 6-9 points, give or take a little) and we have to decide what to do.

Passing is off the menu so it's a choice between a *game try* of 3♦ (partner would be expected to convert to 3♥ or 4♥ according to his values) or a full-blooded "VuBridge game try" of 4♥. So called because we bid game, then try to make it...

We are seeking that ever-attractive game bonus so decide to go for the jugular. 4♥ it is.

### Play.

West, with a neat sequence in Spades, starts off with the ♠J lead. Dummy's red Queens are excellent – the ♠Q is worthless tat. Ho hum. *C'est la vie*.

Time to **Count** and **Plan**. We can see four losers – three Clubs and the ♥A. Winners? Well, we can count nine of those – one Spade, four Hearts and four Diamonds.

The **good** news is that the arithmetic balances (nine winners, four losers).

The **bad** news is that the arithmetic balances (nine winners, four losers)...(!) We'd like to see ten winners so that we'd see a way to dump losers.

However, we do have another opportunity to turn the dummy into what we need to get rid of losing tricks. When we've got too many losers, we try to find a way to *trump* losers in dummy or *dump* them on a long suit in dummy. When we look at this dummy, we don't see a dumping ground, so... what about shortening a suit so we can trump in dummy?

We've got a great "shortage creator" with the Diamonds in the closed hand. We must discard dummy's Clubs, enabling us to ruff Clubs in dummy. Note that we'd then be ruffing Clubs in the *short trump hand*.

We don't dare pull trumps first, as the nasty opponents have the controlling Ace of trumps; they'd win it and would immediately go after our quick Club losers. So at tricks two and three we attack the Diamonds. At trick four, we discard one of dummy's Clubs.

We perform our mid-hand recount and see that we are going to be ruffed in on if we play another Diamond. But... what's the harm? We have another Club loser and may as well pitch it on the boss Diamond. On a good day the fourth Diamond would be ruffed by an opponent's ♥A. Today is not that day but we can't abandon hope. In any case, it may weaken a defender's trump holding.

When we play the last Diamond East ruffs and desperately tries to extract dummy's trumps (he can see our Plan is to ruff Clubs). Nice try sir, but definitely no cigar.

West plays off the ♥A and another Heart but we are in control. We win, casually concede a Club and are in Easy Street. Our losing Clubs are ruffed on table and we have ten tricks.

We only lose one Club and two Hearts. We make one Spade, six trumps (four in hand and two ruffs), and three Diamonds (note that one got trumped).