




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

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| Y2 VBlue #15 Four General Hands SA     | Contract: 3N     |
| Date: 03/07/2016                       | By: South        |
| Dealer: North                          | Board #: 1       |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a> | Vulnerable: None |

|         |   |         |  |
|---------|---|---------|--|
|         | North   |         |  |
|         | ♠ A7  |         |  |
|         | ♥ J94   |         |  |
|         | ♦ Q62   |         |  |
|         | ♣ K8653   |         |  |
| West    |  | East    |  |
| ♠ JT952 |   | ♠ K83   |  |
| ♥ 72    |   | ♥ T8653 |  |
| ♦ AKT3  |   | ♦ 74    |  |
| ♣ J7    |   | ♣ QT9   |  |
|         | South   |         |  |
|         | ♠ Q64   |         |  |
|         | ♥ AKQ   |         |  |
|         | ♦ J985  |         |  |
|         | ♣ A42   |         |  |

**This set of four deals has you playing as declarer. The hands may all look similar but they contain subtle differences.**

In Hand 1, where are your tricks coming from?

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

Lead: ♠ J

### Bidding.

After two Passes we have an easy opening bid of 1NT (15 to 17 points).

Partner responds 3NT and there the matter rests.

### Play.

West starts off with the ♠J lead and we settle down to contemplate our chances. It's time to **Count and Plan**.

We can count six *top tricks* easily enough (to wit: one Spade, three Hearts and two Clubs) and it is clear that this lead into our **split tenace** in Spades provides us with a second Spade trick some time or other.

Naturally enough, we play a low Spade from the table and see what happens. East has the ♠K, so wins the first trick and knocks out the ♠A at trick two. We now have seven clear winners and so need two more. As usual in these No-trump deals, the source of extra tricks is to be sought in our long suit – Clubs in this case.

With that in mind we can see that we can make four Club tricks if (and only if) the suit breaks favorably for us. A 3-2 break would bring home the bacon but a 4-1 split would upset the applecart (a splendid mixed metaphor!)

Right – we need to get started on Clubs so we play a Club to the ♣A and lead another Club. This second round we must duck – playing the ♣K and another Club would be committing *hara kiri*. How could we ever reach the dummy to cash the long Clubs if we played off the ♣K at this stage?

As the cards lie the 3-2 break is everything that we need for success. As the cards lie, East decides to take the ♣Q at trick four to play another Spade, but we are home and dry. We grab the ♠Q and, in swift order, take four Clubs, three Hearts and two Spades for nine in all.


### Postscript.

We could have succeeded on this hand by ducking the first round of Clubs instead of taking the Ace and ducking the second. That play would have worked equally well as the line of play that we actually took. All roads lead to Rome here (well, two of them, anyway).



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|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| Y2 VBlue #15 Four General Hands SA     | Contract: 3N      |
| Date: 03/07/2016                       | By: South         |
| Dealer: East                           | Board #: 2        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a> | Vulnerable: N / S |

|         |   |         |  |
|---------|---|---------|--|
|         | North   |         |  |
|         | ♠ A7  |         |  |
|         | ♥ Q94   |         |  |
|         | ♦ Q62   |         |  |
|         | ♣ KT653   |         |  |
| West    |  | East    |  |
| ♠ JT952 |   | ♠ K83   |  |
| ♥ 72    |   | ♥ T8653 |  |
| ♦ A3    |   | ♦ KT74  |  |
| ♣ QJ87  |   | ♣ 9     |  |
|         | South   |         |  |
|         | ♠ Q64   |         |  |
|         | ♥ AKJ   |         |  |
|         | ♦ J985  |         |  |
|         | ♣ A42   |         |  |

In this deal you have to think of what difference a slight alteration in a few cards makes to your line of play (if any).

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

Lead: ♠ J

*This is Hand 1 all over again with just a slight tweak to the North-South cards.*

### Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we have an easy opening bid of 1NT.

Partner raises to 3NT and there the auction ends.

### Play.

After a repeat performance in the auction West kicks off with the ♠J lead and we thank partner sincerely before thinking about our prospects. Once again it's time to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can count six tricks *on top* (to wit: one Spade, three Hearts and two Clubs) and this Spade lead into our **split tenace** provides us with a second Spade trick.

Obviously, we play a low Spade from the table and see what happens. East wins his ♠K and shoots down the ♠A at trick two. We now have seven winners and need two more. As before – and as is normal in No-trump hands – the source of extra tricks can be found in our long suit, Clubs. The provision of the ♣10, however, makes it possible to cope with some 4-1 breaks as well as all the 3-2 splits.

On Hand 1 we could duck either the first round of Clubs or the second. Since we had no Club intermediate cards at all we had to hope that the suit broke 3-2 and, consequently, we could lose a Club immediately or on the second round.

Here, though, we can cope with West having four Clubs – but to do that we have to cash the ♣A first. Ducking the first round of Clubs would lead to defeat on a 4-1 break. Having cashed the ♣A we lead a Club up to the ♣K 10 on the table and see what West does. If he showed out (and East started with four Clubs) we'd be doomed. 3NT would fail and all we could do would be to grin and bear the pain. *That's the way the cookie crumbles.*

When West follows, though, we have them. On the ♣8 we play the ♣10 knowing that we are going to make four Club tricks. Be sure you can see this. If the ♣10 were to lose to East then Clubs must be breaking 3-2 and the ♣K would bring down the last Club, establishing the long Clubs as winners.

If the suit happens to break 4-1 (as indeed it does) then the ♣10 wins the trick as East shows out, and we continue on our merry way. The ♣K and a low Club sets up the last Club on table as a fourth winner in the suit. This way we lose one Club trick only and make four of them. We make four Clubs, three Hearts and two Spades for nine in all.

#### **Postscript.**


Now, you may be asking the question “*What if West splits his honors?*” That is, on the second round of Clubs what if West were to play the ♣J (or ♣Q) instead of the ♣8? Well, we’d have two counters to that.

We could take the ♣K and – having noted the 4-1 split – return to a top Heart before playing a Club up towards the ♣10 6 5. That would set up four Club tricks nicely. Alternatively (and with greater elegance) we could duck the ♣J. Now we’d have the ♣K 10 6 poised over the ♣Q 8 as a *marked finesse* to be taken at our convenience. This way also would allow us to bring home four Club tricks and the contract.



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|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| VB#15 Y2 Four General Hands. SA        | Contract: 3N      |
| Date: 03/07/2016                       | By: South         |
| Dealer: South                          | Board #: 3        |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a> | Vulnerable: E / W |

|         |   |         |
|---------|---|---------|
|         | North   |         |
|         | ♠ A7  |         |
|         | ♥ Q94   |         |
|         | ♦ Q62   |         |
|         | ♣ K9653   |         |
| West    |  | East    |
| ♠ JT952 |   | ♠ K83   |
| ♥ 72    |   | ♥ T8653 |
| ♦ A3    |   | ♦ KT74  |
| ♣ QJ87  |   | ♣ T     |
|         | South   |         |
|         | ♠ Q64   |         |
|         | ♥ AKJ   |         |
|         | ♦ J985  |         |
|         | ♣ A42   |         |

Hand 3 continues the theme of Hands 1 and 2.

However, your *source of tricks* is weaker here. What can you do?

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

Lead: ♠ J

*This is Hand 2 all over again with just the barest alteration to the North-South cards.*

### Bidding.

As dealer we have an easy opening bid of 1NT.

Partner raises to 3NT and that ends that.

### Play.

Once again West puts the ♠J lead on the table as the opening lead and we pause to **Count** and **Plan** before playing a card.

As in Hands 1 and 2 we can count six *top tricks* (one Spade, three Hearts and two Clubs) and this Spade lead into our **split tenace** provides us with a second Spade trick.

We play a low Spade from the table at trick one (of course) and see what happens. East takes his ♠K and dutifully plays a Spade back at trick two, removing dummy's ♠A. We now have seven winners and need two more.

As in the two previous instances the source of extra tricks must be sought in our long suit, Clubs. With no ♠10, though, it looks as though we may have to rely on a 3-2 Club break.

Well, hold that thought. There are a few 4-1 breaks that can be handled. If East has four Clubs (any four Clubs) we'd be toast but what if West has them? ♠Q J 10 × we cannot deal with but we can cope if East should have the singleton ♣Q, ♣J or ♣10.

On Hand 1 we could duck either the first round of Clubs or the second. With no intermediate cards at all we had to hope that the suit broke 3-2. Here, though, we could cope with West having four Clubs and East having a singleton honor – but to do that we have to cash the ♠A first. Ducking the first round of Clubs would lead to defeat.

When we play a low Club off the table East plays the ♠10, so now we have a deal almost identical to Hand 2. There is no percentage in ducking that – we must take the ♠A and lead a

Club up to the ♣K 9 on the table to see what West does. If he were to show out (and East started with four Clubs) we'd be doomed. 3NT would fail and all we could do is to concede defeat with as much grace as we could muster. Live with it.

When West follows, though, we have guaranteed success. On the ♣8 we play the ♣9 knowing that we are going to make four Club tricks. Should the ♣9 lose to East then Clubs must be breaking 3-2 and the ♣K would bring down the last Club, setting up the long Clubs as masters.

Should the suit break 4-1 (as it does here) then the ♣9 would hold and we'd continue smoothly to success. That's what happens in practice; having taken a cheap trick with the ♣9 we play off the ♣K and a low Club to establish the long Club on table. This way we lose only one Club trick and make four of them.


#### **Postscript.**

West has no effective defense to our play. If he were to split his honors on the second round of Clubs we'd duck that and take the *marked finesse* of the ♣9 later in the piece. West does best to play small with nonchalance and hope that we take our eye off the ball, either by ducking the ♣8 completely or by playing a ham-fisted ♣K. You wouldn't do that, though, now would you?



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|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| Y2 VBlue #15 Four General Hands SA     | Contract: 3N    |
| Date: 03/07/2016                       | By: South       |
| Dealer: West                           | Board #: 4      |
| <a href="#">Play this hand online!</a> | Vulnerable: All |

|        |   |         |
|--------|---|---------|
|        | North   |         |
|        | ♠ A8  |         |
|        | ♥ 853   |         |
|        | ♦ K4  |         |
|        | ♣ KT7632  |         |
| West   |  | East    |
| ♠ Q972 |   | ♠ JT53  |
| ♥ Q97  |   | ♥ T64   |
| ♦ QT   |   | ♦ A8632 |
| ♣ Q985 |   | ♣ J     |
|        | South   |         |
|        | ♠ K64   |         |
|        | ♥ AKJ2  |         |
|        | ♦ J975  |         |
|        | ♣ A4  |         |

Hand 4 is slightly different from the previous three.

Are you about to be very lucky?

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

Lead: ♠ 2

*This deal differs from the others in this series in many respects although it has echoes of Hands 1, 2 and 3.*

### Bidding.

After three Passes we have an obvious opening bid of 1NT.

Partner raises to 3NT and no one has anything else to contribute.

### Play.

West leads a Spade (a low one this time) and we thank North profusely before **Counting and Planning**. This time we can count six *top tricks* (two Spades, two Hearts and two Clubs) with no extra trick being provided by the opening lead.

**[Note.** *West chose to lead a Spade rather than a Club even though the latter suit is (marginally) stronger. Why did he do that? Well, this deal may provide the answer. Although dummy cannot be accurately predicted after 1NT – 3NT it is almost inconceivable that it would be displayed with a long major suit. However, a long minor suit is often concealed in the auction (as it is here). For that reason many players follow the precept of “When in doubt, lead a major”. This deal demonstrates the sagacity of that hoary advice].*

Back to the plot. Our plan must involve developing the long Clubs and we have to retain entries to the table to reach them. With that in mind it is important to take the ♠K at trick one and not waste the ♠A. Now we must cash the ♣A (playing the *high card from the short side first*) and play a second Club towards the dummy, hoping that the suit breaks 3-2.

**[Note.** *We could not cope with West holding ♣Q J × × of Clubs. If that were his holding then on the second round of Clubs he would assuredly split his honors by playing the ♣J on the second round and we'd lack the entries (and another Club in hand) to set the suit up].*

Another possibility opens up when East follows

to the ♣A with the ♣J. Did he start with the miraculous holding of ♣Q J doubleton, allowing us to take the ♣K (dropping the ♣Q) and run off six Club tricks?

Note that we can never make six Club tricks if we play the ♣10. Either East did have ♣Q J alone, and makes a trick with the ♣Q, or West started with ♣Q 9 8 × and makes at least one trick.

Well, this is a guess, isn't it? Play the ♣K or the ♣10? Decisions, decisions. Actually, no. This is a case for clear thinking and accurate counting. We need **five** Club tricks to secure our contract (we have two Spades and two Hearts outside the suit); making six Clubs would be a bonus.

We cannot afford **not** to make five Clubs, though, and that is that what we risk by playing the ♣K. Playing the ♣K would be a greedy attempt to make an overtrick; on this layout we'd end up with just two Club tricks and a steely glare from partner.

Putting in the ♣10 guarantees us five Club tricks, whether or not it wins the trick. Let East take some pleasure at making the bare ♣Q if he started with ♣Q J doubleton. His joy would be short-lived as we'd win the Spade return and run off enough Clubs for our contract.

As it is, the Ten holds, so we cash the ♣K and concede a Club. West plays another Spade (nothing else is any better) and we have enough tricks for the contract. We make two Spades, two Hearts and five Clubs.

#### **Postscript.**

You should never lose sight of your target number of tricks nor ignore the risks involved in a line of play.