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Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Completely revamped summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AKQ6	
	♥ J	
	♦ AQT53	
	♣ 853	
West		East
♠ J84		♠ 9
♥ KQT9		♥ 7543
♦ 842		♦ K976
♣ A94		♣ QJT6
	South	
	♠ T7532	
	♥ A862	
	♦ J	
	♣ K72	

This is a mixed series of eight deals. You will be the declarer on some, and play as a defender on others.

The deals are in no particular order, so just enjoy them as they come.

On this first deal, we revisit a theme from a previous series.

Will you be able to recognize it, but more importantly, will you be able to execute it?

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

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding.

Partner opens 1♦ and we naturally respond 1♠. Now partner raises us invitatively to 3♠ – should we go on to game?

This is a marginal decision with just 8 points and lousy Spades but we should be swayed by the attractive 5-4-3-1 pattern and the fact that we do have five trumps. 4♠ may fail but that's no reason to refrain from bidding it.

Play.

West has a normal lead of the ♥K and we thank partner as we survey the dummy. It's time to **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners? Well, we have five Spades, one Heart, one Diamond on top. Sure, this assumes Spades break 3-1 or 2-2, but that's normal odds. However, even with trumps breaking that's only seven tricks. We might ruff Hearts on table (in the *short trump hand*) but the problem here is that we'd be ruffing with high trumps. This way we'd set up the Jack of Spades for the enemy.

What about *losers*? Well, it may be possible to say that we have no Spade losers and no Heart losers. However, this last is an illusion. Ruffing Hearts on table would surely generate a trump loser. For sure, we don't have to lose a Diamond but we may have three Club losers.

It looks as though we have to set up Diamond tricks for extra winners; we have to avoid losing a Diamond and three Clubs in the process.

The neat trick on this deal is to make use of a **ruffing finesse**. We can keep East off lead (avoiding an unwelcome Club shift) while we set up Diamonds.

Right, here we go...

We take the ♥A and play the ♦J to the Ace (running the Jack is fraught with danger). Now we lead the ♦Q from table, intending to pitch a Club if the King does not appear from East.

Note that this is a heads-we-win-tails-they-lose situation. If the King of Diamonds appears we'd ruff, draw trumps and pitch a losing Club on the ♦10. If West had the King and took the trick then he'd be unable to lead Clubs to his advantage.

As it is, East (wily old bird) withholds his King, so we sluff off a Club. We lead another Diamond and ruff it in hand, hoping the King falls. Does it? No. So we draw trumps and ruff yet another Diamond in hand, setting up the Ten.

Now it's just a case of good housekeeping. We ruff a Heart for entry, cash the last Diamond for the tenth trick and try our luck with a Club to the King. West has the Ace but we have our contract.

Postscript.


It is usually poor play to ruff in the **long trump hand**. Here, though, ruffing Diamonds in hand sets the suit up. In all we make three Diamonds, **six** Spades and the ♥A. Six Spades come from four on table and two Diamond ruffs in hand.



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ Q64	
	♥ J873	
	♦ J5	
	♣ QJ83	
West		East
♠ J5		♠ AK3
♥ A64		♥ Q95
♦ QT963		♦ A72
♣ 652		♣ AK97
	South	
	♠ T9872	
	♥ KT2	
	♦ K84	
	♣ T4	

Psychology is a factor that plays a big role in Bridge.

Some call it "Table Feel".

Do you have what it takes to **not** give the game away here?

West	North	East	South
-	-	2NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ T

Bidding.

East opens 2NT as dealer (20 to 21 points) and West raises that to 3NT.

Play.

We have a routine lead of the the ♠10 from our five-card suit headed by a sequence. Dummy is par for the course, in fact it is better than it might be facing a 20-point declarer; West has a whole 7 points and a decent five-card suit.

Declarer calls for dummy's ♠J at trick one and partner covers with his Queen. That holds the trick, so we are excited to think that partner may have ♠K Q x. Nope, partner returns the ♠4 to declarer's King and we realize that East has held up with ♠A K x.

East has nowhere to go but Diamonds for his nine tricks; accordingly he plays off the Ace at trick three and leads another. How should we defend?

Now it is essential to follow low at this point and it is essential to do so smoothly. Declarer is on a nasty guess now – reverse the North-South Diamond holdings and it would be right to finesse the Nine.

If, though, we took time to think on the second round of Diamonds (and it may be difficult not to), then we'd give the game away – declarer would deduce that the only reason for our cogitation is that we are thinking of playing the King. If and when we did eventually play a low card, declarer would be able to resolve the guess and call for dummy's ♦Q. 3NT would then be a cakewalk.

Now, if declarer had ♦A J x our play is irrelevant, playing low would only delay matters by a trick. We'd still be due to take the ♦K, it would just be a trick later. There is no need to fly in with the honor in second seat; in other words: no need to *grab a trick*. It's yet another example of **second hand low**.

As it is, declarer frowns when we produce a low Diamond at trick four. After long and careful consultation with the ceiling he calls for dummy's Ten. North produces the Jack and

declarer's frown deepens. A Spade return from our dutiful partner completes declarer's ruin – we take three Spades and two Diamonds to sink 3NT.

Postscript.


Just to set things straight, the **Laws of bridge** state that you must not purposely stop and think if you do not have any logical reason to do so. So... if we had ♦J 6 4 on this deal, we could not hesitate before playing a low card, trying to convince declarer that we had the ♦K. With the ♦J we'd have nothing to think about – and dithering with intent is unethical behavior.



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 6	
	♥ JT962	
	♦ K75	
	♣ A762	
West		East
♠ AJ5		♠ 8732
♥ 3		♥ A84
♦ Q96		♦ T842
♣ KQJ954		♣ T8
	South	
	♠ KQT94	
	♥ KQ75	
	♦ AJ3	
	♣ 3	

Sometimes it is possible to take inferences from an opponent's failure to defend in a certain way.

This may sound like mind games; try it out on this deal.

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♠ and West enters the fray with 2♣. Partner makes a *negative Double* (promising Hearts) and East Passes. What now?

Well, 2♥ from us would be an underbid. That would show a minimum opener with 5-4 in the majors. It would **not** be forcing – partner would be entitled to Pass. As it is, with an attractive 5-4-3-1 hand (short in the opponents' suit) and 15 points we must make some sort of effort.

To show game interest we jump to 3♥ and partner raises us to game. Note that even 3♥ is not forcing – with a minimum Double North could have left us in 3♥.

Play.

West leads the ♣K and we can see that partner has nothing to spare for his raise to game. Still, the fifth trump is important – it is always easier to play these hands with nine trumps rather than eight. We applaud his enterprise, thank him for his efforts and settle down to **Count** and **Plan**.

Losers? There are clearly two losers in the major suits (the missing two Aces). There is also a possible loser in Diamonds (where's that Queen?), and that might seem all. However, where are all the Spade losers in hand going? Could we trump them all?

What about *winners*? One Spade, four Hearts, two Diamonds and a Club. That's just eight. So winners and losers don't add up (shock, horror!), so we need to think clearly about what to do here. Just counting losers is **not** helpful as it does not advise a line of play – we know, though, that with inadequate winners we should not aim to draw trumps.

The best way to cope with this hand is to try to establish the side-suit – we should aim to set up the Spades. To that end we take the ♣A at trick one and lead a Spade off the table, observing East's reaction.

Now, if that player had the ♠A would he not play it with a singleton on table? It seems likely that he would, so we can pretty much place the ♠A with West. (The bidding is a further pointer in that direction). So rather than play an honor we cunningly finesse the Nine. Should East have the Jack, this play would force the Ace and solve most of our problems.

Nope. West has the Jack and takes the trick with it. We ruff the Club return and continue with Plan A, setting up Spades. We are still playing West for the ♠A, so we lead the King and let it run when West meanly plays low. Yep, it's another **ruffing finesse**. Well, it's nearly game over now. Another Spade brings down the Ace (ruffed on table) and we are in that part of the game when we can draw trumps.

East takes the second round of Hearts and exits with a third (no more Club ruffs for us!) but we are home and dry. We have the ♦A in hand and a couple of winning Spades, so we make the hand for the loss of just two Aces. In fact, that's an overtrick.

Postscript.

Even if East had held the ♠A and had nerves of steel, playing low when we led a Spade off dummy at trick two, we'd still have made the contract. We'd just have lost two Spades, and a Heart.


We *might* have succeeded by ruffing Clubs in hand on this deal (note that this would have been ruffing in the *short trump hand*). We'd have made four Hearts, two Diamonds, the ♠A and (maybe) three Club ruffs. However, the timing and entries are not obvious and the line of play of setting up the Spades is a better choice.



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ KQ95	
	♥ AQ52	
	♦ 9	
	♣ KJ83	
West		East
♠ 72		♠ T843
♥ 9		♥ JT7
♦ AKJT863		♦ Q
♣ 972		♣ AQT64
	South	
	♠ AJ6	
	♥ K8643	
	♦ 7542	
	♣ 5	

On this deal, your partnership is faced with a typical problem dealing with an opponent's pre-empt.

What is your best "response"?

West	North	East	South
3♦	X	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding.

West, dealer, opens the bidding with a pre-emptive 3♦ over which partner makes a take-out Double. How should we "respond" to the Double?

Now it may seem obvious to bid 3♥ – after all, we should bid our best suit, right? However, the idea is to show both *length and strength*, and 3♥ would promise nothing – we'd be obliged to bid that on a garbage dump.

As a rule of thumb, a minimum response shows around 0 to 8 points, with anything more we should jump the bidding. Partner should have a good hand (or a *shape-suitable* hand) to enter the auction at the three-level.

The point-count is your guide, though, not your master. With the following collection:

♠ Q × ×
♥ J × × ×
♦ K J
♣ Q × × ×

then 3♥ would be the prudent response, for all of the 9 points. The shape is poor (4·4·3·2) the Diamond honors are worthless with the Diamond bid to our left and the hand lacks any sort of playing strength.

Now, on our current hand, we have strong grounds for an upgrade. Sure, it has 8 points only but what an 8 points! We have Spade honors – a suit partner is known to be interested in, and a five-card Heart suit. On top of that we have a singleton Club in an attractive 5·4·3·1 pattern.

The Diamond length is a two-edged sword. Given that West probably has seven of them, partner rates to have a singleton. That's good. However, what is less good is that East (right-hand opponent) is going to be short too, so may be over-ruffing dummy.

All in all, we definitely owe partner a jump to 4♥. Should we bid a mere 3♥, partner would probably Pass, fearing we have a trash heap.

After we do the decent thing and bid game no one else has anything to say.

Play.

West leads the ♠A and, having seen his partner's Queen, continues with a second Diamond. We could ruff that high but a 4-0 trump break would leave us exposed. Instead we ruff low and are content to see East over-ruff.

We take the trump return and draw trumps, which now split 2-1. With that out of the way the hand is a cakewalk. We cash four Spades and pitch the losing Club. We take a Diamond ruff on table but we still have a losing Diamond at the end.


In terms of winners we make five Hearts, four Spades and a Diamond ruff on table.



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 953		
	♥ AJT83		
	♦ T		
	♣ 9843		
West		East	
♠ T862		♠ AJ4	
♥ KQ9		♥ 64	
♦ A62		♦ KQJ984	
♣ KQ7		♣ JT	
	South		
	♠ KQ7		
	♥ 752		
	♦ 753		
	♣ A652		

Sometimes as a defender you can work out the right play if you can diagnose what declarer is up to.

Can you?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♦	P
1♠	P	2♦	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

East opens 1♦, after North Passes as dealer, and rebids his suit over West's 1♠ response.

With a flat hand containing 14 points West leaps confidently to 3NT, ending the auction.

Play.

Partner leads the ♥J and we survey a dangerous looking dummy. Those Diamonds are a rich source of tricks for declarer.

Can we **read the lead?** From our perspective the lead could be from ♥J 10 9, ♥K J 10, or ♥A J 10. The one card we know West has is the ♥Q. Naturally, we follow with the ♥2 and watch as declarer takes the Queen of Hearts. Rats – this tells us nothing that we didn't already know.

West now plays a Diamond to dummy and – somewhat unexpectedly – leads the ♣J from table. What's going on? Why didn't declarer continue with Diamonds? This surprising play has caught us on the hop and we must think hard, and think fast.

The only reason for declarer's strange line of play is that his Diamonds must be solid – in other words, West is looking at the Ace. Without it, it's all Wall Street to a busted nickel that declarer would play another Diamond to dislodge the Ace.

It's time to count declarer's tricks. We know of one Spade, one Heart, and six Diamonds, for a total of eight on top. A Club trick would give him nine – and the reason he has to play a Club is that he is trying to sneak one through.

To counter this, we must rise with our ♣A and return a Heart, hoping that partner has led away from ♥A J 10. Note that if declarer has the ♥A he has nine easy winners.

As it is, partner does indeed have that hoped-for holding in Hearts, so this defense is necessary to defeat 3NT. We take one Club and four Hearts.

Postscript.

It may be tempting to follow with a low Club at trick three, hoping declarer was going to finesse into partner's ♣Q, but a count of declarer's tricks shows that to be a false hope.


Should declarer have run six rounds of Diamonds instead? Maybe, but partner's discards (he would have chucked his Clubs and Spades) would have opened our eyes to the correct defense. Note that if partner held the ♣A the hand is unbeatable. Declarer thought that a Club play early in the hand might catch us napping if we held the Ace and would have made life easy if North had it. He was wrong.



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ 9875		
	♥ QJT6		
	♦ 752		
	♣ J4		
West		East	
♠ AQJ63		♠ T2	
♥ 94		♥ AK32	
♦ T93		♦ AJ84	
♣ 962		♣ AK3	
	South		
	♠ K4		
	♥ 875		
	♦ KQ6		
	♣ QT875		

Do Tens count as honor cards?

Well, it depends on the specific hand but, in general, not much can go wrong if you treat a Ten as an honor card.

How is this relevant to this deal?

We suggest you play on and find out.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	P
1♠	P	2NT	P
3NT	P	P	P

Lead: ♣ 7

Bidding.

East opens 1♦ as dealer and West responds 1♠. East's 2NT rebid shows 18 to 19 points and West decides to raise to 3NT.

Play.

Against East's 3NT contract, we lead the ♣7, fourth-highest from our longest and strongest suit. Dummy is particularly not good news for us as we can see our ♠K is under the suit, meaning that it can, and will, be finessed by declarer. Still, on the plus side, there are only 7 points on table so partner is marked with a little.

Our Club lead goes to partner's Jack and that is allowed to win. Another Club comes back, taken with the King, and we deduce declarer started with ♠A K x. Next, declarer attacks Spades, by leading the Ten through our ♠K. Ho hum – the King is dead... but...

...long live the King! It is easy to be despondent here and play low on the Ten, allowing East to rattle off five rounds of Spades. However, by putting His Majesty to good use we can be a thorn in East's side. We must be sharp here and cover declarer's ♠10. The hope is that partner has four Spades (preferably headed by the Nine), which will be promoted by *covering an honor with an honor*.

Unaware of any danger, East takes the ♠A and runs the ♦10 from table. We take the King and continue the Club attack, driving out the Ace. Declarer now thinks he has it made – he tries the Spades (are they 3-3? No) and then falls back on the second Diamond finesse, running the Nine.

In Diamonds this play is a 75% shot; 3NT would make with an overtrick whenever North held a Diamond picture. But today is the other 25% of the time. We take the ♦K and hasten to cash the Clubs. One off with three Clubs and two Diamonds.

Postscript.

The Ten counts as an honor, so it is certainly

right to cover the Ten with the King.


After the hand East claimed he was unlucky. "If Spades split 3-3 or if North had a Diamond picture I was home. How unlucky was that?" he asked. Well?



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 6H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ KQ4	
	♥ Q9	
	♦ AJT75	
	♣ K65	
West		East
♠ T986		♠ 532
♥ 82		♥ 643
♦ K84		♦ Q632
♣ J973		♣ AT4
	South	
	♠ AJ7	
	♥ AKJT75	
	♦ 9	
	♣ Q82	

Bidding can never be an exact science, despite what some players claim.

That doesn't mean you should bash away like your partner on this deal, mind.

However, don't concern yourself too much about the bidding, just put your focus into the play.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
P	2♦	P	3♥
P	4NT	P	5♥
P	6♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ T

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♥ and have to find a rebid after a 2♦ response.

Well, 2♥ would be a definite underbid and 3♥ just a tad pushy. However, with a wonderful Heart suit we think 3♥ is justified.

North has no doubts now (even if he should do!) He launches into Blackwood and then blasts a slam after we show two Aces.

6♥ it is.

Play.

West leads the ♠10 against our slam and, having thanked partner, we need to take time to **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners? Three Spades, six Hearts, one Diamond and one (slow) Club. Eleven in all.

Losers? Just two Clubs.

Well, at least the arithmetic balances on this deal – eleven winners and two losers. That makes the hand straightforward in one way but it's not much help when we have been put in a slam contract.

What to do? Well, we could play for a soft defense. We could try to determine who has the ♣A and then hope to persuade that player to play it *on air*. If we thought East held it (for example), we could draw trumps, cross to dummy and play a low Club. A weak defender might grab the Ace, playing it on air, and that would hand us the contract on a plate.

However, it is wise not to assume that the opposition are dummies who were born yesterday. Do we have a legitimate play for an extra winner? How about that five-card Diamond suit? Could we *ruff it out*? Let's try that.

The way to establish dummy's Diamonds without losing a trick is to ruff three Diamonds in our hand. Yes, this means that we need every entry we have to reach dummy. It also means that we have to **ruff in the long hand**. Still, there are times where that play is necessary.

We therefore win the opening Spade lead in the closed hand with the Ace, and immediately play a Diamond to dummy's Ace. A Diamond ruff follows and we next play a trump to dummy's ♥9 (yes, that is a valuable entry).

Next we ruff a second Diamond (high, with the Ace for show) and note that Diamonds are 4-3, as we require. Another trump goes to dummy's Queen, and the 3-2 split there sees us emerge from the clouds. This one is coming home!

Another Diamond ruff establishes the suit and we only have a little tidying up to do. We draw the last trump (with our last trump) and now play a Club to the King. East takes his Ace but that is the end of the party – We take the Club return and cash dummy's remaining winners – two Spades and the last, master, Diamond.

In all, we make three Spades, six Hearts, two Diamonds and a Club. Partner is looking pleased with his bidding.

Postscript.


This is a poor slam as it requires two favorable breaks. A 4-1 trump break or a 5-2 Diamond break might have wrecked the slam. Still, poor contract or not, it scores exactly the same as a good one...



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Y2 VBlue #16 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ T93	
	♥ 962	
	♦ 94	
	♣ AQT63	
West		East
♠ KQ6		♠ 752
♥ QT875		♥ J4
♦ 875		♦ QJT6
♣ K4		♣ 9875
	South	
	♠ AJ84	
	♥ AK3	
	♦ AK32	
	♣ J2	

Counting, counting, counting – yes, it can be tedious.

However, on many deals the effort is worthwhile.

This deal is just one of many examples.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥7

Did this deal look familiar to you?

It is almost a clone of Hand 6 where you were on defense. We have rotated the hand 90° clockwise and changed the suits around just a little.

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 2NT (to show a balanced hand of 20 to 21 points).

Partner raises to 3NT, concluding a simple auction.

Play.

West leads the ♥7 and we thank partner on the sight of dummy. Our **Count** and **Plan** reveals six *top tricks* (one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds and one Club). Maybe we could establish Clubs for the extras?

We duck the ♥J at trick one and take East's Heart return. Next we try our luck with the ♣J. Now, if this were to win we'd be in a bit of a quandary. East may well have the King and be *holding off*. That would be good defense on his part. A second finesse (losing this time) would see dummy's Club winners isolated.

Anyway, we lead the Jack of Clubs and West produces the King. Our thoughts about East maybe having a sneaky defense to beat us (by holding up the King) may blind us to the optimum play now. Without doubt the best line is to duck West's ♣K. Now we are solid for four Club tricks and nine in all. Well, Clubs might be 5-1 but that's a very unlikely shot.

True, if Clubs are 3-3 we are giving up an overtrick. Big deal!

Here, West clears his Heart suit but we are home and dry once everyone follows to the next Club. We cash out the long suit and score our game via one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds and four Clubs.

Postscript.

A 5-1 Club break is less likely (15%) than both Spade honors being offside, so ducking the Club is the best play on this hand. Compare this one with Hand 6, where declarer went down.