



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

Y2 VBlue #17 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ QJ98 ♥ T8 ♦ Q62 ♣ K975		East ♠ 62 ♥ J9643 ♦ KT98 ♣ Q8
North ♠ K53 ♥ Q2 ♦ A74 ♣ JT432		
South ♠ AT74 ♥ AK75 ♦ J53 ♣ A6		

This set of four deals looks at some subtle card combinations. You need to think carefully about your play on these deals...

In Hand 1 you reach a routine contract.

Which suit should you play on and how should you play it?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

*This is a tricky hand, requiring an understanding of **suit combinations**.*

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT with 16 points and a 4-4-3-2 pattern.

Partner, holding 10 points with a 5-3-3-2 shape, has an easy raise to 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q from his near-sequence and we have to decide how to play the hand. Thanking partner we settle down to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see seven *on top* (two Spades, three Hearts, one Diamond and one Club) and we can be grateful to have escaped a Diamond lead. Our best and longest suit is Clubs, although they are somewhat threadbare, and these need developing for the extra two tricks that we need.

With little else to do (we know Spades aren't breaking 3-3 after West has led one) we take the Spade lead in hand and play off the ♣A and another Club. A 3-3 Club break will see us home but what if they are breaking 4-2?

Well, if East has four Clubs we'll need West to hop up with an honor on the second round. Here, though, West follows with low cards to the first two rounds. What is our best play?

It may look obvious to try the ♠10 from table but that's against the odds. It's only right if West has precisely ♠K Q × ×. If, on the other hand, East has ♠K × or ♠Q × then playing a low Club would force him to play his high card on air. This is two shots to one, so playing low from dummy is the right play. Note that if Clubs are actually 3-3 it makes no odds which Club we play from dummy.

Here, on this layout, East obliges with the ♠Q on dummy's ♠3 and we can see the harbor lights. We take the Spade return on table with the ♠K and play the ♣J to set up the suit. East

signals vehemently for a Diamond switch but this defense comes too late. We have two Spades, three Hearts, one Diamond and three Clubs for our contract.



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Y2 VBlue #17 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

West ♠ K53 ♥ Q2 ♦ A74 ♣ JT432		East ♠ AT74 ♥ AK75 ♦ J53 ♣ A6
North ♠ 62 ♥ J9643 ♦ KT98 ♣ 97		
South ♠ QJ98 ♥ T8 ♦ Q62 ♣ KQ85		

You must always remember when playing this game that the opposition have no idea what your hand is.

Can you take advantage of their obliviousness?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

As dealer, East opens 1NT. West raises that to the No-trump game, ending matters rapidly.

Play.

Against East's 3NT we decide that a Spade lead from ♠Q J 9 8 (a near sequence) is better than a Club from ♣K Q 8 5. As a rule of thumb, it is better to lead a major than a minor. Dummy may ring a bell or two but that's something to think about later.

Declarer takes the ♠A at trick one and immediately plays off the ♣A and another Club. Obviously we take this and...? Well, the answer is that we concede the contract. This is another case where the "obvious" play is the wrong one.

There is no hurry to fly in with the ♠Q – it is rarely right in this game to *grab tricks*. Here, if we keep calm and play a low Club (in tempo) declarer may well go wrong. If he plays the odds he won't make the "obvious" play of dummy's ♠10 – on the contrary, he will follow the logic of Hand 1 and duck the Club.

Now, after declarer makes the right technical play in Clubs, partner takes an unexpected trick with the ♠9 and 3NT is in a mess.

We still have to defend carefully. Partner's Spade return knocks out the ♠K and declarer persists with Clubs. Partner's violent signal (the ♦10) suggests a shift to that suit and – rather than speculatively cash our ♠J – we follow partner's suggested path. Declarer has nowhere to go for tricks now and ends up two down.



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Y2 VBlue #17 Four General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

<p>West</p> <p>♠ K862</p> <p>♥ KJ</p> <p>♦ JT982</p> <p>♣ 62</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ J7</p> <p>♥ T864</p> <p>♦ 73</p> <p>♣ KQJ53</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ QT953</p> <p>♥ A2</p> <p>♦ AK4</p> <p>♣ 974</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ A4</p> <p>♥ Q9753</p> <p>♦ Q65</p> <p>♣ AT8</p>		

When playing suit combinations you have (on occasion) to make a difficult guess.

Sometimes you choose wrongly but may have had no indication of why you should have got it right.

On other occasions, though, some guesses are better than others.

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

Lead: ♦ J

*This is another deal where you need to know your **suit combinations**. Spades in this case.*

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♥ with our 5-3-3-2 hand containing a minimum 12 points.

Partner's 1♠ response gives us an easy 1NT rebid and North wastes no more time – he takes us straight to 3NT.

Play.

West finds a Diamond lead against 3NT (a Club lead might have had us in some difficulty but opening leads are blind – here, West has an obvious ♦J lead). We thank partner for his efforts and pause while we **Count** and **Plan**.

Now, with just six tricks *on top* (one Spade, one Heart, three Diamonds and one Club) the obvious suit to develop is Spades. The only way to do that is to play the ♠A and another Spade and see what happens.

Well, to no one's surprise West follows with two low Spades and now we have to decide what to do. Is the right play to finesse the ♠10 or to play the ♠Q? Is this a straight 50-50 guess or is there a reason for making the successful choice?

The finesse of the ♠10 (or ♠9 if you feel that strongly about it) would bring home four Spade tricks if West started with ♠J × ×. Playing the ♠Q would bring home the bacon if West started with ♠K × ×. These two positions are equally likely and no inference may be taken that West played low nonchalantly on the second round. No West of any experience is going to give us anything at all here – he would play low (in tempo) with either of these holdings.

So the position is a 50-50 guess? No – as you can now see from the actual layout. By playing the ♠Q we gain when West started with ♠K × × as well as ♠K × ×. The same is not true in reverse, if you see what we mean. If West has ♠J × × × then finessing the ♠10 may bring us

temporary pleasure as we force the ♠K but we'd still lose two Spade tricks eventually.

So playing the ♠Q gives us two chances of success, whereas finessing the ♠10 gives us just one. Some guesses are better than others...

After we play the ♠Q the hand plays itself. We play the ♠10 to drive out the King and take the Club shift with the Ace. After that we adopt our ***hit and run*** strategy by cashing our winners as fast as we can. We take four Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds and a Club for nine in all.



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Y2 VBlue #17 Four General Hands SA

Date: 03/07/2016

Dealer: West


[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 3N

By: South

Board #: 4

Vulnerable: All

North		East	
♠ 42		♠ K963	
♥ AQ4		♥ 72	
♦ T63		♦ Q9752	
♣ AT973		♣ J6	
			
South			
♠ AJ85			
♥ K53			
♦ AJ8			
♣ Q84			

How should you play the critical suit here?

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1NT with 15 points and a 4·3·3·3 hand.

Partner has a simple 3NT raise, ending the auction.

Play.

West kicks off with the ♥J lead from his sequence. We observe the niceties of the game by thanking partner courteously and then we take a moment or two to **Count** and **Plan**.

We see that we have one Spade, three Hearts, one Diamond and one Club for a total of six "toppers". We need to swell that by three and the suit we need to play on is Clubs. So, the key question is: how should we play the Club suit?

We might play off the ♣A and another but what would we play if East followed small? The ♣Q or the ♣8? As the cards actually lie the ♣J would pop up (solving all of our problems) but on other layouts we wouldn't know what to do. We want to avoid these agonizing guesses if at all possible and we also want to make the best (for which read "highest odds") play.

Here, the best play in Clubs is to take a **combination finesse** through West. The idea is to run the ♣Q and, should it lose to the ♣K, run the ♣8 next. This way we pick up four Club tricks whenever West has either Club honor – a solid 75% chance. True, this play loses if East started with the ♣K J but that's life. Live with it.

So we win the Heart lead in the closed hand with the ♥K and immediately advance the ♣Q. West might cover that with the ♣K – if he did we'd bash that with the ♣A and use the power of the Club intermediates to drive out the ♣J, setting the suit up for four tricks. As it is, the ♣Q holds the trick so we lead the ♣8 and see what happens next.

When West follows small it is 100% safe to run the ♣8. Either it wins the trick or – as here – East takes the ♣J. However, the remaining

Clubs are now all winners and the contract is safe.

A Spade shift from East opens up that suit and, rather than mess about for a possible overtrick, we grab the ♠A and ***hit and run***. Our bag of booty consists of one Spade, three Hearts, one Diamond and four Clubs. That's nine tricks and the contract.