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Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 6N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 832	
	♥ A72	
	♦ 6542	
	♣ AK3	
West		East
♠ JT965		♠ 74
♥ 964		♥ T853
♦ 3		♦ AT98
♣ T862		♣ J74
	South	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ KQJ	
	♦ KQJ7	
	♣ Q95	

This series of eight deals is our General Series, a random mixture of hands.

Some of these deals have you as declarer and some have you defending.

Enjoy them as they come.

Hand 1. You pick up a powerful hand here.

Can you make the most of your assets?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	2NT
P	6NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 2♣, the strongest opening bid we can make.

After partner responds with the inevitable 2♦ (a waiting bid, in essence) we rebid 2NT to show a balanced 23 points, or thereabouts.

North, holding 11 points is fully entitled to leap to a slam.

Play.

West leads the ♠J, giving us nothing, and we settle down to **Count** and **Plan**. Taking stock we can see nine on top (three Spades, three Hearts, three Clubs) so need three tricks from Diamonds. That's easy enough, surely, all we need is for Diamonds to break 3-2?

Well, after taking the ♠Q in hand at trick one we could lead the ♦K. This play would secure three Diamond tricks whenever the suit breaks 3-2 but would lead to defeat whenever the suit split 4-1 (or 5-0).

Much better is to make use of the three entries on table to lead Diamonds towards our hand. This way we'd make three Diamond tricks whenever the ♦A is on our right, as well as those times when it lies to our left and the suit splits nicely.

So we take trick one, cross to table with a Club and lead a Diamond up to the ♦K Q J ×. It would be nice for us if East were to play his Ace on air but this defender has played the game a few times before – he plays low and we score the ♦J.

So we go for a repeat performance. We go back to dummy to lead a low Diamond again, *through* the East player. Once again, our right-hand opponent plays low and we score the the ♦Q.

Had West followed to this trick we could stop messing about – we'd know Diamonds were 3-2 and could play the suit from hand. As it is, left-


hand opponent shows out, so we know Diamonds are 4-1. Once more we cross to table, using up the last entry in the process and – for the third time – lead a Diamond through East. That defender can do nothing now; his goose is well and truly cooked. When, with a sigh, he takes his ♦A we claim the rest.



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Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 752		
	♥ A53		
	♦ 863		
	♣ 7642		
West		East	
♠ QJT98		♠ 643	
♥ T74		♥ QJ96	
♦ T942		♦ A	
♣ J		♣ QT853	
	South		
	♠ AK		
	♥ K82		
	♦ KQJ75		
	♣ AK9		

You pick up another powerful hand on this deal (aren't you the lucky one?)

Bidding it is easy (you may remember Hand 1).

What about the play, though?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

We pick up another lovely hand here – a full 23 points for the second hand in succession.

Bidding.

After East Passes we open 2♣, the strongest opening bid we can make.

After partner responds with 2♦ (waiting for clarification) we again rebid 2NT to show our balanced 23 points.

This time North, holding just 4 points, is content with game.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q and we take stock. We thank partner courteously and pause while we **Count** and **Plan**.

We can count six *top tricks* (two Spades, two Hearts and two Clubs) so need to set up the Diamonds to make the “extras”. That’s easily done, isn’t it? Win the Spade lead and play the ♦K...

Not so fast! There is one (admittedly very small) extra chance here. We need a 3-2 Diamond break unless East has the singleton Ace. To cater for that remote possibility we cross to the ♥A and lead a low Diamond up to the ♦K Q J. On this deal the 2% chance comes up – East is obliged to play his Ace on air. Now, regardless of the return, we have four Diamond tricks and ten in all.


Lucky? Well sort of, but this play costs us absolutely nothing and gains on some rare occasion like this one. Las Vegas casinos make billions on 2% margins, so we shouldn’t turn our noses up at increasing our chances of making a contract, even if it’s by a minuscule amount.



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Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ A52		
	♥ A82		
	♦ QJ73		
	♣ 954		
West		East	
♠ QJT98		♠ 63	
♥ T4		♥ QJ976	
♦ KT82		♦ 9	
♣ J8		♣ QT632	
	South		
	♠ K74		
	♥ K53		
	♦ A654		
	♣ AK7		

An routine auction to an obvious contract.

If the bidding provides no test of your skill what about the play?

Does that fall into the "routine" category as well?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1NT with a flat 17 points and partner raises us straight to game.

Routine bidding to a routine contract.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q and we survey dummy having observed the courtesies of the game by saying "Thank you" to partner. Even though we have lots of points between us (17 facing 11) we still must **Count** and **Plan**.

At first glance there may appear to be loads of tricks. In fact, we have just seven on top (two Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs) and the whole deal depends on making three tricks in Diamonds. So there's the focus of this deal – *how should we broach Diamonds?*

Faced with this combination many players would win the Spade lead on table and would run the ♦Q through East "taking the finesse". This play, however, is senseless. If East held the ♦K he would cover the ♦Q with the King, taking out two honors for one. If that happened we'd need to fall back on a 3-2 break. However, if Diamonds are 3-2 then any (sensible) play would register three Diamond tricks. The crux of this deal is to make three Diamonds when the suit breaks 4-1.

Correct technique is to cash the ♦A first (on some sunny days the ♦K would fall singleton). Here, both defenders follow low. Now we lead a Diamond up to the ♦Q J, through West. When the ♦J scores and East shows out we know that we have to repeat the prescription.

We come to hand and lead another Diamond. West is helpless now whether he plays high or low and we have three Diamond tricks in the bag.

There is always someone who asks, "What if East has four Diamonds?" Well, the answer is simple. We'd go down in 3NT (unless West's solitaire Diamond were the ♦K). There is nothing we could do about it – the contract

would be doomed to fail. The recommended play, though, would bring home the bacon in all cases where 3NT can be made.


This 3NT contract is made via a finesse – but it's a finesse through *West*, not through East.



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Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 9762	
	♥ A85	
	♦ 985	
	♣ 732	
West		East
♠ K54		♠ QJ3
♥ Q96		♥ 743
♦ AKQ3		♦ J4
♣ AK9		♣ QT865
	South	
	♠ AT8	
	♥ KJT2	
	♦ T762	
	♣ J4	

We have you defending on this deal.

What is the best way to inflict a wounding defeat on the enemy here?

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

West opens 1NT as dealer and East promptly raises to game.

This is not a pair who stand upon ceremony – they like to get on with it. Good for them.

Play.

Partner kicks off with a Spade lead, the ♠7 to be precise. Now, we need to have a clear style here and a clear understanding. Some players lead “Top of nothing” and would lead the ♠9 from that (broken) combination. Computer analysis (yes, really!) shows that this play will drop tricks on a significant number of occasions as it may destroy the North-South Spade holding. Not here, admittedly, but on other layouts it would.

VuBridge, therefore, continues with the world-wide practice of leading second highest from a crummy suit (a suit not headed by an honor). So North's ♠7 shows a higher spot card but no interest in Spades. Of course, the ♠7 could be fourth-highest in other circumstances – how could we (as partner of the leader) tell?

We might ask ourselves what three cards North might have that are higher than the ♠7. We might find that an impossible task – there aren't three higher Spades that North could have. We can see the ♠Q J on table and we have the ♠A 10 8 in our own hand, remember. Slightly easier, perhaps, is to apply the **Rule of Eleven**. This is something that we will deal with in the next edition, so we'll say no more for now.

All the above preamble is by way of saying that South's task is to realize that continuing Spades is akin to flogging a dead horse. North has nothing in the suit, so this is a dry well. A worked-out seam.


Defenders often have difficult choices of whether to return partner's suit (usually best!) or to shift to something better. Here, with it being pointless to continue Spades, we may as well shift to a Heart and try our luck there. From ♥K J 10 × we lead the Ten, hoping to trap the Queen. Partner obliges with the Ace and we

take the first five tricks.



Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ AK3		
	♥ 7643		
	♦ J94		
	♣ QJ3		
West		East	
♠ JT984		♠ Q5	
♥ K5		♥ QJ82	
♦ T753		♦ 862	
♣ A8		♣ T964	
	South		
	♠ 762		
	♥ AT9		
	♦ AKQ		
	♣ K752		

Another armchair ride in the auction.

The journey gets just a little bumpier as you play the cards, though...

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT and partner raises us to game.

Bidding on autopilot.

Play.

West kicks off with the ♠J lead and we gravely give thanks to partner while we **Count** and **Plan**.

With two top Spades, one top Heart and three top Diamonds available, it is necessary to set up the Clubs for three tricks. Now, we might win the Spade lead on table and lead the ♣Q but that isn't the best way of developing the suit. We might think that we need a 3-3 Club break but, in actual fact, we can increase our chances by a small amount.

As usual, the right technique to develop a suit is to lead low towards an honor (or honors). Here, it is best to lead twice towards the ♣Q J on table. This way we would make three Club tricks if the suit breaks 3-3 or if West has the doubleton or singleton Ace. (Of course, we also give ourselves the chance that West makes a gross blunder by playing his ♣A on air from a holding of ♣A x x x).


So we take the Spade lead on table, come to hand with a Diamond and lead a Club. The ♣J scores so we repeat the process. We come back to hand with a Diamond and lead another low Club. Nothing would be lost if Clubs were to split evenly; the gain comes when West has to play his ♣A on our ♣5. With a rueful look West does precisely that, allowing us a simple mopping up operation to score our game.

We make two Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds and three Clubs for a total of nine in all.



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Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ KT86	
	♥ J953	
	♦ QJ6	
	♣ 74	
West		East
♠ 97		♠ Q4
♥ K42		♥ A86
♦ A95		♦ K742
♣ KJ953		♣ AQT2
	South	
	♠ AJ532	
	♥ QT7	
	♦ T83	
	♣ 86	

Another defensive hand.

This one is just too easy. Isn't it?

Well, you'll see.

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

Lead: ♠ 3

Bidding.

East, as dealer, opens 1NT and West has an easy and obvious raise to 3NT.

Simple stuff.

Play.

We are on lead 3NT and have an obvious choice of a low Spade (the ♠3 to be precise).

To our joy and pleasure partner turns up with the ♠K and returns the ♠6. Declarer follows on the second round with the ♠Q, which we smash with the ♠A and we play...?

The point of this hand is that we should not be too eager to cash the ♠J. On this layout of the cards that would *block* the Spade suit; partner would win the next Spade lead and then that would be that – East would have the rest of the tricks.

Note that partner has played his part here. Many defenders in the North chair would return the ♠10 at trick two "to pin the ♠9 in dummy". That would be poor defense – we'd have no idea of what to do next. By returning his lowest Spade (and the ♠6 is the lowest Spade in the pack as we can see the ♠5 3 2 and East has played the ♠4), partner is showing that he started with four of them.

[All right, for the pedants and hair-splitters, North might have started with ♠K 6 alone, but if that were the case...]

1. Would East play the ♠Q on the second round?

2. How could we beat 3NT?]

Having read the Spade suit (North has four, East has just two) we must underlead the ♠J at trick three to partner's ♠10. We overtake the next Spade lead (the ♠8) with our ♠J and cash the last Spade for one off.


Easy when you know how and impossible when you don't...



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Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AT652	
	♥ T972	
	♦ 8	
	♣ Q82	
West		East
♠ K4		♠ J87
♥ AK4		♥ 63
♦ Q9765		♦ AJT3
♣ K75		♣ AJT3
	South	
	♠ Q93	
	♥ QJ85	
	♦ K42	
	♣ 964	

More work as a defender on this model.

Can you read the layout of a suit early in the hand and get this deal right?

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

West, in second seat, opens 1NT and his partner has an effortless raise to 3NT.

Easy-peasy bidding.

Play.

Partner leads a low Spade against West's 3NT, the ♠5 to be precise. Declarer calls for dummy's ♠7 and we have a decision to make. Should we play the ♠Q (*third hand high* and all that jazz) or should we not? Should we, in fact, insert the ♠9?

How can we tell what to do?

Well, let's go back to basics. A count of points shows that North can only have 4 to 6 points. That is enough to show that partner cannot have led from ♠A K × × ×.

So there is no danger of playing the ♠9 and watching declarer make a cheap trick with the ♠10 from, say, ♠10 ×. Declarer must have a high Spade honor, so if we were to play the ♠Q we'd be giving declarer two Spade tricks for sure. On the other hand, playing the ♠9 would give declarer one Spade trick whenever he started with ♠A × or ♠K ×.

Here, on this deal, the effect is obvious. Were we to play the ♠Q at trick one declarer would win the ♠K, take the Diamond finesse and we could no longer defeat the contract. In fact, it would make with overtricks.

If, on the other hand, we insert the ♠9 declarer is toast. He takes the ♠K, tries the Diamond finesse and we hit him with an avalanche of Spades. One down.

Read the Lead. We do say it many times but that's because it's important.

Postscript.

Note that, on other layouts, declarer could have nine top tricks – one Spade, two Hearts, one Diamond and five Clubs (say). If that were the

case, well – so be it.


The layout that would be intolerable is if we gave declarer his ninth trick when we were able to run off five top Spades. That would happen if West held the doubleton Ten and partner had underled the Ace-King. A count of points shows that to be impossible here.



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Eight assorted deals. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #18 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 6H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q5	
	♥ 94	
	♦ AT4	
	♣ JT9643	
West		East
♠ A9		♠ K82
♥ KQJT72		♥ A85
♦ J52		♦ K9763
♣ AQ		♣ K8
	South	
	♠ JT7643	
	♥ 63	
	♦ Q8	
	♣ 752	

Here you pick up a miserable collection of trumps and watch as the opponents sail into a high-level contract.

What is the best way to make use of your meagre assets?

This is not an easy hand. You have been warned!

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

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

West opens 1♥ and rebids 3♥ over his partner's 2♦ response. This strong rebid gets East excited and he blasts a Heart slam.

6♥ is a terrible contract but we have to acknowledge that East-West are unlucky in that the ♠A K Q are worth just two tricks.

Play.

Partner leads the ♣J (much better in principle than the ♦A after this bidding) the whole contract depends on a miracle lie in Diamonds or on a defensive mistake. The miracle lie in Diamonds, by the way, is to hope that North started with ♦A Q alone. Possible, but not likely.

There are other possibilities for declarer too, such as the defenders getting themselves tangled up and having to give away a fatal ruff-and-discard. Also, if and when West leads a Diamond towards dummy should North blunder in with the Ace *on air* the whole suit would run. So the hand is tricky for all concerned.

Keeping his concerns to himself, declarer wins the ♠Q at trick one, draws two rounds of trumps, plays three rounds of Spades, ruffing the third round in hand, cashes the ♠A (crashing the ♠K on the table) and then leads a Diamond.

A weak defender in the North seat might panic at this point and take the ♦A, letting the slam through. However, both defenders can count West for a 2-6-3-2 pattern so know that declarer has three Diamonds – that tells North that the ♦A is not going to run away. West calls for dummy's ♦K and now comes the moment of truth... what do we do as South?

It may be cruel to pick up a mere 3 points and have to sacrifice two thirds of them by chucking an important high card away, but it is essential to unblock the ♦Q.

True, this is a difficult play but it is logical. If we were to keep the Queen we'd be on play with it

at the next trick. What could we do next? Well, it's a fatuous question as we only have black cards left. So we'd lead one of those. Declarer would gleefully throw the ♦J whilst trumping on table with the ♥8, claiming his slam a moment later.

Partner will sorrowfully shake his head as his "certain" winning Diamond (the ♦A) would fold its tent and creep silently away.

Chucking the ♦Q is our only hope – we cannot afford to be stuck on lead with it. If partner has ♦A J × it doesn't matter what we do. With the actual layout, where North has ♦A 10 ×, we must disembarass ourselves of the blocking Queen.