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A set of 8 assorted deals for VB 20; mainly declarer-play problems. ACOL version

VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KQJ54		
	♥ J		
	♦ 86		
	♣ KQJ52		
West		East	
♠ 9762		♠ 8	
♥ T985		♥ KQ642	
♦ AQT		♦ 9743	
♣ 87		♣ A64	
	South		
	♠ AT3		
	♥ A73		
	♦ KJ52		
	♣ T93		

This series of eight deals is our general series of hands, a random mixture of deals. This series focuses largely on declarer-play problems.

Remember to follow the basic principles and to count your tricks before you play a card from the dummy at trick one.

Enjoy them as they come.

Hand 1 is easy enough... (we think!)

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

Lead: ♥ T

This is a straightforward deal. You (South) declare 4♠ after a transfer sequence and West kicks off with the ♥10 as the opening lead. Not that it matters much on this deal but you can probably place your right-hand opponent with the ♥K Q. Anyway, how do you go about playing the hand?

The secret, as ever, is to take your time before playing a card from dummy. Did we ever mention **Count – Plan – Execute**?

Let's do the **Count**. In terms of winners we have five Spade tricks, one Heart trick, an unknown number of Diamond tricks (that depends where the opponents' high cards are), and four Club tricks once the ♣A has been dislodged. That gives us a total of ten tricks. Losers? Well, there are no Spade losers, no Heart losers, one or two Diamond losers and one Club loser.

Since we are in 4♠ we have sufficient winners for the contract and it suggests that we *draw trumps*. So we take the ♥A at trick one, play off the ♠A 10 (following the long-established principle of playing the high cards from the short side first) and note the 4-1 split. We can continue to pull trumps until they are all gone (two more rounds) and then switch attention to Clubs – the side-suit.

Again, we use the principle of playing the high cards from shortage by leading low to our ♣10 9 3 to force the ♣A. The defenders take two Diamond tricks (it may look at one point as though we could manoeuvre a Diamond trick but the cards do not lie well for us) and then concede the last three tricks.

So, what's the problem? Well, there isn't one but many players, faced with this type of hand, make the disastrous play of leading a Heart at trick two and ruffing it in the dummy. This is the wrong play (*don't trump in the long trump hand!*) and here it's fatal. Now you would no longer be able to make 4♠ as West would have the same number of trumps as you do. If you draw trumps then the opponents can play off all


of their Hearts when on lead with the ♣A. If you **don't** draw trumps West would score a Club ruff. Oops!



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ AJT8		
	♥ AJT		
	♦ 984		
	♣ A42		
West		East	
♠ 642		♠ 9753	
♥ 98753		♥	
♦ KT		♦ AQ3	
♣ T98		♣ KQJ763	
	South		
	♠ KQ		
	♥ KQ642		
	♦ J7652		
	♣ 5		

On this deal you just have to take your tricks in the right order.

Seems simple enough, doesn't it...?

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

Lead: ♣ T

Here you (South) reach 4♥ having overcalled East's 1♣ opening bid with 1♥. Knowing that you must have at least five Hearts North is fully justified in bidding game.

West leads his partner's suit (always a good idea!) and you take stock by **Counting** your tricks. You can see four Spade tricks, five Heart tricks and the ♣A (ten in all) so this looks to be very easy indeed.

You take the ♣A and play off the ♥A, learning straight away of the bad news – trumps are 5-0. Still, the North-South hands have enough high trumps to draw all of East-West's; the deal just needs some care and attention in terms of *entries*.

You must play off the ♥A J 10 (you can't afford to overtake any of these) and then come to hand with the ♠Q. Now you can pull the last two trumps with the ♥K Q before reverting to Spades. However, you must remember to overtake the ♠K with the ♠A to be in dummy to cash the remaining ♠J 10. Now you can happily concede the last three Diamond tricks to the opponents.


Note, again, that ruffing a Club in hand at trick two (the egregious play of *ruffing in the long hand*) would be fatal. Now West would have more trumps than you do. Not good!



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 54	
	♥ A5	
	♦ J642	
	♣ KQT92	
West		East
♠ KQT98		♠ 762
♥ T9		♥ QJ842
♦ QT93		♦ 75
♣ 76		♣ A43
	South	
	♠ AJ3	
	♥ K763	
	♦ AK8	
	♣ J85	

This time you will be playing in No-trumps...

As so often happens you need to make an accurate plan as an early mistake will lead to defeat.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

In this deal you reach 3NT as South and West starts off with the ♠K. Analysing the lead you should realise that West must have the ♠K Q 10 (and others, no doubt). How should you play the hand?

This is a common position (that is: holding the A J × when the King is led on your left); it is so well-known that it was common knowledge way back when in the days of whist. The correct play goes under the name of *The Bath Coup*, named after the city of Bath where, supposedly, it was first “discovered” in the eighteenth century in games of whist.

It is, in fact, a fancy name for an easy play – all it means is that you duck the first trick, creating a *tenace position* in your hand. What can West do at trick two? If he leads another Spade he gives you two Spade tricks; if he switches to something else (best defence) then you still have a Spade stopper. Heads you win, tails West loses.

Here, West switches to a Heart at trick two (nothing else is any better). You take this in hand (you must preserve the ♥A on table as an entry for the long Clubs) and set about the Clubs. East holds up the ♣A for as long as he can but takes it eventually and leads back a Spade. No matter; you have nine tricks (one Spade, two Hearts, two Diamonds and four Clubs).


Now, what would happen if you were to take the ♠A at trick one? The answer is that you would be one down. East would take the ♠A and fire a Spade through the remaining ♠J 3 allowing East-West to take four Spades and a Club.



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ T4		
	♥ A5		
	♦ J642		
	♣ KQT92		
West		East	
♠ KQ987		♠ 652	
♥ T9		♥ KJ842	
♦ QT93		♦ 75	
♣ 76		♣ A43	
	South		
	♠ AJ3		
	♥ Q763		
	♦ AK8		
	♣ J85		

As so often in VuBridge we like to present you with a deal that is very much like the previous one. "Very much like" does not, however, mean "identical to".

What is the (devious) twist here?

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

In this deal you reach 3NT as South and West starts off with the ♠K. This deal is eerily familiar – is this a clone of Hand 3?

Well, not quite. You should realise that West must have the ♠K Q 9 (and others, no doubt). This is a slightly unorthodox lead from West – more normal with a suit of ♠K Q 9 × × is to lead fourth highest but that isn't your problem at the moment, your problem is to play the hand correctly.

On the previous deal the right play was to apply *The Bath Coup*, by ducking the opening lead of the ♠K. Well, is tonight a bath night or not? How should you play the hand?

The answer is that possession of the ♠10 on the table makes all the difference. If you were to duck the opening lead a Heart switch might be very damaging for you. True, you have opened 1♥ so that is unlikely but it is not impossible and if East were to take the ♥K and return a Heart you would lose the entry to all those Clubs. Also (crucially) there is no point in ducking – you have two Spade tricks by taking the ♠A as the combination of the ♠10 on the table and the ♠J 3 in hand will force a second Spade trick.


So... you take the ♠A and set about the Club suit. East meanly ducks his ♣A until the third round and then plays back a Spade. This, however, gives you your ninth trick (two Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and four Clubs). You might make an overtrick in the ending but nine tricks are always welcome...



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J965	
	♥ Q5	
	♦ J963	
	♣ AK8	
West		East
♠ K42		♠ 3
♥ JT98		♥ K7643
♦ 82		♦ A754
♣ QJ32		♣ T95
	South	
	♠ AQT87	
	♥ A2	
	♦ KQT	
	♣ 764	

On some deals you just make the ordinary, everyday play. Sometimes, however, that play is the wrong one.

What should you do on this deal?

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

Lead: ♥ J

You (South) play in 4♠ and West leads the ♥J. You may as well try the ♥Q but this is covered by the ♥K, so you know you have a Heart loser.

Counting winners and losers you see four (maybe five) Spade winners with maybe one loser, maybe none; one Heart winner, one loser; one Diamond loser and three winners; two Club winners and one loser. That makes ten winners (maybe eleven) with three losers (maybe four).

Tempting, is it not, to win the ♥A, cross to a top Club and try the Spade finesse? That, however, is the **wrong play**. That will lose on this layout as West should cash a Heart and play the ♣Q. Oops! – that's four losers (the defenders have *the tempo* to set up a Club trick to go with a trick in the other three suits).

Such nonsense should not be contemplated when the contract is (nearly) 100% secure. Instead you should win the ♥A and play the ♠A and another trump. The defenders can win the ♠K, cash a Heart and switch to a Club but you are in complete control. The ♦A can be forced out and the losing Club **dumped** on the long Diamond.

Note that you would not have been able to go down on this hand had you held:

♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ A 2
♦ K Q 10
♣ 7 6 3


Here you would win the ♥A and calmly play the ♠K (or any trump for that matter). It's the fact that you have the ♠A Q that puts temptation in your path...



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ T9764		
	♥ 872		
	♦ J4		
	♣ AQ5		
West		East	
♠ 82		♠ 3	
♥ 6543		♥ KQJ	
♦ AT2		♦ 97653	
♣ J983		♣ KT64	
	South		
	♠ AKQJ5		
	♥ AT9		
	♦ KQ8		
	♣ 72		

Here you are playing in a game contract and dummy appears to be a goldmine with extra trumps and very useful high cards.

However, you mustn't take your eye off the ball – if you do, it will hit you square between the eyes.

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

Lead: ♣ 3

Here you reach 4♠ as South and partner puts down a very nice dummy. Five trumps! The ♣A Q! Such riches for a mere 2♠ response.

Anyway, the point at issue is to find the right play in 4♠ after West leads a Club. What should we do? Take the Club finesse? Play the ♣A? Duck the Club completely?

Well, let's stick to the basics, shall we? How about a **Count** and **Plan** before we **Execute**? There are five Spade tricks, one Heart trick, two Diamond tricks and the ♣A. That makes nine. It won't be difficult to manufacture a Club ruff in hand for a tenth trick (with a 5-5 fit we aren't *ruffing in the long hand* – each hand is of equal length in trumps). So there are ten tricks.

What about losers? There are two Hearts and the ♦A and a possible Club (we still haven't resolved what to do in Clubs). So three, maybe four losers.

Now, suppose that we play the ♣Q at trick one and East were to take the ♣K. A Heart switch would see us down for sure. Before we got the Diamonds set up East-West would have two Hearts, the ♦A and the ♣K.

Suppose, instead, that we took the ♣A. Now we could draw trumps and knock out the ♦A. The difference here is that we can **dump** a Heart loser from dummy before the opponents have a chance of knocking out the ♥A. Let's count again. Five Spades, the ♥A, two Diamonds and the ♣A. This time, though, we can ruff a Heart on table as dummy will be down to a doubleton Heart.


Taking the Club finesse is a snare and an illusion. In fact, if dummy had displayed the ♣A 6 5 instead of the ♣A Q 5 you could not possibly have gone down in 4♠. There was just too much in the dummy...



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ A93	
	♥ AK86	
	♦ J5	
	♣ 7642	
West		East
♠ QJT		♠ 62
♥ 94		♥ JT72
♦ AQT4		♦ K862
♣ QJT9		♣ 853
	South	
	♠ K8754	
	♥ Q53	
	♦ 973	
	♣ AK	

On some hands you need to be patient in setting up an extra trick or two. This, naturally enough, is one such deal.

Don't be in a hurry to grab your tricks too quickly or failure may well be the outcome.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ Q

You reach 4♠ as South and you see that partner hasn't exactly held back in the auction. Mind you, your opening bid (12 points and a tatty Spade suit) is not exactly cast-iron and made in Birmingham either. Sadly you notice that the ♦J is a waste of pasteboard and that partner's Clubs are of no use to you at all. Still, that's the way it is some days.

Now, after West leads the ♣Q we need to take stock and **count** winners and losers. In Spades there are only two immediate winners but there may be four tricks if trumps are 3-2; in Hearts there are three winners and no losers (there is a possibility of four winners with a 3-3 split); in Diamonds there are no winners and two losers; in Clubs there are two winners and no losers.

The first point that ought to be clear is that trumps are going to have to break 3-2. If Spades split 4-1 then we will have two trumps to lose as well as the two inevitable Diamond losers. If the Spades are breaking badly we could only wave goodbye to the contract.

Even with a favourable trump break there are only nine tricks (four Spades, three Hearts, two Clubs). So we need a tenth trick and that can come either from a Diamond ruff on table (again – in *the short trump hand*) or from a lucky Heart break. Note that ruffing Clubs in hand is *felo de se*; we will beat this drum again: it is poor play to ruff *in the long trump hand*.

To ruff a Diamond on table needs preparation; we have to concede two losers in the suit in order to prepare the groundwork. So... win the Club lead and immediately play a Diamond. West wins his ♦Q and plugs away in Clubs. We win and play another Diamond. West wins and tries to cash a Club winner. Not today, my friend. We ruff that, cash two top Spades (getting the 3-2 split that we need) and now ruff the losing Diamond on table.

With that done we can simply play out some winners, allowing West to take his boss trump when it suits him.


"Nothing I could do", says West, sorrowfully. No?



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VB#20 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 62	
	♥ JT72	
	♦ K862	
	♣ 853	
West		East
♠ A93		♠ K8754
♥ AK86		♥ Q53
♦ J5		♦ 973
♣ 7642		♣ AK
	South	
	♠ QJT	
	♥ 94	
	♦ AQT4	
	♣ QJT9	

Defence is harder than declarer play in general. How would you go about defending this hand?

Yes, the deal may look a little familiar to you. Odd how that happens in VuBridge, isn't it?

West	North	East	South
-	P	1♠	P
2♣	P	2♣	P
4♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ Q

If you haven't realised it yet this is Hand 7, albeit rotated 90°.

East-West reach 4♠ and you (South) have to lead. With the possibility that dummy is going to supply declarer with a *ruffing value* (as well as some long Clubs) you decide that the best defence is to eschew your attractive Club sequence and to lead trumps instead. You lead the ♠Q instead of the ♣Q and await dummy with interest.

As you had expected there are three trumps on the table together with a ruffing value (in Diamonds). The Club suit is surprisingly weak, though. Should you have led one?

Declarer wins the trump lead and immediately plays a Diamond, confirming his intentions of playing for a ruff in dummy. You take the ♦Q, therefore, and plug away in trumps, trying to prevent this.

Realising the sheer futility of playing another Diamond (you would take the ♦A, draw dummy's last trump and cash a winning Diamond) declarer tries his luck in Hearts. With a 3-3 break he could **dump** his Diamond loser rather than **trump** it.

This is not East's lucky day as Hearts are 4-2. However, you still have to defend well. It would be fatal to trump the third round of Hearts with your master trump (East would then be able to trump a Diamond in dummy). Instead you wait patiently. East has little choice but to revert to Plan A (a Diamond ruff in dummy) and he leads the ♦J from the table.

Here, you partner makes a remarkable blunder by playing the ♦K. Why? Perhaps he remembered the adage "*Always cover an honour with an honour*". Hmm. "*Always*" is a bit strong here... you have to temper these sayings with common sense. Luckily, you can save North from himself by overtaking with the ♦A, cashing the master trump (removing dummy's last Spade) and then taking the boss ♦10. That's four defensive tricks and defeat for East.

Against a trump lead and subsequent accurate
defence declarer cannot make 4♠. Well
defended!