




This series focuses on giving signals in No-trumps to indicate a later entry to an established long suit.

VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North	
♠ 9864	
♥ 543	
♦ K3	
♣ 9864	
West	East
♠ KJ3	♠ AQT
♥ T9	♥ A76
♦ AQJ764	♦ T98
♣ KJ	♣ QT72
	
South	
♠ 752	
♥ KQJ82	
♦ 52	
♣ A53	

This set of deals (and another series to be found elsewhere in this edition) is all about *suit-preference signals* in No-trumps.

You may remember suit-preference signals from the last edition of V-Blue and how they work in suit contracts when we are giving partner a ruff.

Here, we are trying to tell partner where our entry might lie so that you can regain the lead to cash a long suit.

Hand 1: Here we have a set-up suit and an entry. However, if partner gets on lead he has to know which suit to lead to find that entry.

Can you paint the picture with bright colours?

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

Lead: ♥ K

East-West reach 3NT in double-quick time and you lead the obvious ♥K.

Declarer correctly employs the hold-up play and ducks two rounds of Hearts, throwing dummy's ♠3 on the third trick. Now declarer runs the ♦Q round to North's ♦K and your partner has a difficult decision... should he return a Club or a Spade? *How can he tell?*

If he gets it right and leads a Club there are six defensive tricks; if he gets it wrong there would be nine tricks for declarer. Making the contract or going two down – that's a significant difference.

How can you help in the defence? Well, in what order should you play your Hearts? This is the crucial point of this deal – and other deals in these two series. This topic has a link to a previous series in V-Blue: signals made when giving ruffs in suit contracts.

After the ♥K holds trick one you can see that you want to direct North's attention to Clubs, the *lower ranking* of the two remaining suits. (Clearly Diamonds are out of the reckoning on this deal).

So the best way to indicate interest in Clubs (the lower ranking of the black suits) is to play the lower (or lowest) card you can of your equals. Therefore, you do best to continue at trick two with the ♥J (partner knows you have the ♥Q, of course) and, when that holds, the ♥8 at trick three.

Constantly playing your lowest equal Heart shows interest in Clubs rather than Spades; partner now has an easy decision when on lead with the ♦K as to which black suit to lead. Had you wanted partner to lead Spades when on lead then you would have continually led high Hearts at every turn.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ T9</p> <p>♥ KJ4</p> <p>♦ KJ</p> <p>♣ AQJ764</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ A76</p> <p>♥ QT8</p> <p>♦ AQ T5</p> <p>♣ T95</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ 543</p> <p>♥ 9763</p> <p>♦ 9763</p> <p>♣ K8</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ KQJ82</p> <p>♥ A52</p> <p>♦ 842</p> <p>♣ 32</p>		

This deal isn't a million miles different from Hand 1.

However... the message you want to transmit to your partner may be different.

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

Lead: ♠ K

This deal may look familiar BUT...

Here, by contrast to Hand 1, you have a set up suit (Spades) against 3NT with an entry in *Hearts*.

Against East's 3NT you have an obvious lead of the ♠K and, in similar fashion to the previous deal, declarer ducks his ♠A to the third round and then takes the Club finesse into North. On winning the ♠K North plays...

Now, on this layout a Diamond switch is fatal (East makes **ten** tricks) but a Heart switch leads to two down. *How can North tell?*

Well, on this deal you must play your Spades by leading the ♠K, following that with the ♠Q and then leading the ♠J. In each case that's your highest Spade so you are showing interest in the *higher* of the two remaining suits – in this case that's Hearts rather than Diamonds.


Your partner should get the message and switch to a Heart when on lead with the ♠K and not a Diamond.

So that means two down instead of an overtrick.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

North	
♠ 752	
♥ KQJ82	
♦ 52	
♣ A53	
West	East
♠ AQT	♠ KJ3
♥ A76	♥ T9
♦ T98	♦ AQJ764
♣ QT72	♣ KJ
	
South	
♠ 9864	
♥ 543	
♦ K3	
♣ 9864	

Here, you are in third seat rather than on lead.

True, on this deal, you have tripe. However, that's no reason to lose interest in proceedings and let your concentration waver.

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

Lead: ♥ K

This hand (you may have realised), is Hand 1 again, this time seen from the other defender's perspective.

You have a heap of rubbish and watch with scant interest as the opponents bid rapidly to 3NT.

Your partner leads the ♥K and you can see that your ♦K is well placed for your side, giving you a certain trick there. North appears to have the ♥K Q J as well, so maybe this contract will fail.

Declarer accurately holds up the ♥A for two rounds and, after taking the third Heart, runs the ♦10 round to your ♦K. Now you are on lead what do you play back? A Club or a Spade?

With no indication you would be up a certain creek without a paddle – a straight 50-50 guess. If you get it right and lead a Club there are six defensive tricks, if you get it wrong and lead a Spade there are nine tricks for declarer. That's a big difference. However, you have a partner and **bridge is a partnership game**.

How can partner help in the defence? Well, in what order did he play his Hearts? This is the crucial point. Partner is signalling – are you able to receive and decode his message?

After the ♥K holds trick one partner follows with the ♥J and then the ♥8, concealing the ♥Q (which you know he has). Why is he playing his lowest (equal) Heart at every opportunity?

Yes, you've got it – he is directing your attention to Clubs (the lower suit) rather than Spades. You now have an straightforward decision when on lead with the ♦K as to which black suit to lead. A Club lead takes the contract two off. A Spade (or a silly Diamond) lead would allow declarer to make the hand.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

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

Lead: ♠ K

This, of course, is Hand 2 again with the deal rotated 180 degrees to see the cards from third-hand's perspective.


Against West's 3NT your partner leads the ♠K and, in similar fashion to the previous deal, declarer ducks his ♠A to the third round and then takes the Club finesse into your hand. On winning the ♠K you play...?

Now, on this layout a Diamond switch is fatal (declarer makes **ten** tricks) but a Heart switch leads to two down. *How can you tell?*

Well, on this deal North has played his Spades by leading the ♠K, following that with the ♠Q and then leading the ♠J. In each case that's North's highest (equal) Spade so your partner is showing interest in the higher of the two remaining suits – in this case that's Hearts rather than Diamonds.

The message is clear; you should switch to a Heart when on lead with the ♠K and not a Diamond.

So that results in two down instead of an overtrick.

North ♠ KQJ82 ♥ A52 ♦ 842 ♣ 32			
West ♠ A76 ♥ QT8 ♦ AQT5 ♣ T95		East ♠ T9 ♥ KJ4 ♦ KJ ♣ AQJ764	South ♠ 543 ♥ 9763 ♦ 9763 ♣ K8

Again, you have rubbish – a very similar hand to Hand 3. However, you still have a key role to play in the defence.

When you pick up tram-tickets like these it's still important not to lose concentration and focus.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♠ 5

East-West reach 3NT after an uninformative auction and, you lead the ♠5, the trusty fourth-highest of your longest and strongest.

Partner agreeably produces the ♠A and, well trained in these matters, dutifully returns your suit. Declarer tries the ♠10 so you take your ♠Q and clear the Spades with a third round of the suit.

Declarer now tackles his long suit by running the ♣10 round to your partner. He takes his ♣K and leads? You can see that a Heart switch leads to two down, a Diamond switch would allow the contract to make (actually with an overtrick). But can partner see it? In short: *How can he tell?*

Remember that *bridge is a partnership game* and that you should have signalled to help him. When you played a third round of Spades at trick three you had three little ones, all (effectively) of equal rank. In fact, they were the ♠9 7 2. When you cleared the Spades you should have done so with a card that was a *suit preference signal*. In this case you correctly and accurately led the ♠9, your highest remaining Spade.

A high card means "lead a high suit" (the choice is between Hearts and Diamonds on this hand).

Having the path clearly lit for him partner should not trip up...

North ♠ A6 ♥ 8743 ♦ T8642 ♣ K4		East ♠ KT4 ♥ QJT ♦ AQJ5 ♣ T98	
West ♠ J83 ♥ K9 ♦ K9 ♣ AQJ765		South ♠ Q9752 ♥ A652 ♦ 73 ♣ 32	


This deal is a subtle variation of the current theme.

Can you tell your partner what to do if and when he gets on lead?



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 3N By: West
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 6
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
Play this hand online!	

North			
♠ 652			
♥ Q9752			
♦ A73			
♣ 32			
West		East	
♠ AQJT		♠ K9	
♥ KT4		♥ J83	
♦ QJ5		♦ K9	
♣ T98		♣ AQJ765	
South			
♠ 8743			
♥ A6			
♦ T8642			
♣ K4			

By now, you should be seeing the pattern.

Does partner's carding tell you what to do at a crucial point in the deal? If you haven't been watching the spot cards you'll be in – er, a spot.

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

Lead: ♥ 5

East-West reach 3NT after an uninformative auction and, your partner leads the ♥5, probably the fourth-highest of his longest and strongest.

You take the ♥A and, naturally enough, return partner's suit. North is allowed to win with the ♥Q and clears the Hearts with the ♥2, declarer's ♥J and ♥K falling on the same trick.

Declarer now tackles his long suit by running the ♣10 round to you. You take the ♣K and lead...?

Well, you have to put partner on lead to cash his long Hearts – but does he have the ♠A or the ♦A? How can you tell? (Of course, if he has neither Ace then you are wasting your time – the contract would be cold).

As the cards lie, a Diamond switch leads to two down, a Spade switch would allow an overtrick. This is a big difference...

Remember that *bridge is a partnership game* and that partner is trying to help you. When he cleared the Hearts at trick three he did so with the ♥2 – clearly his lowest remaining Heart. Why lead a low card? The answer should be obvious by now – it's a *suit preference signal*.

A high card means lead a high suit and a low card means a low suit. Here partner is signalling for a Diamond and that's the lead you should make at trick five. Two down.