




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 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

		North	
		♠ T732	
		♥ JT982	
		♦ K3	
		♣ K7	
West		East	
♠ KJ		♠ Q984	
♥ 64		♥ AKQ	
♦ J86		♦ QT5	
♣ AJT863		♣ Q94	
		South	
		♠ A65	
		♥ 753	
		♦ A9742	
		♣ 52	

**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: You can see how to defeat 3NT but can partner? Can you help him to see the right thing to do?

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

Lead: ♦ 4

East-West reach 3NT on this deal and you have a routine lead with your fourth-highest Diamond.

Partner pleasingly produces the ♦K and naturally returns your suit, declarer following with two small cards. Well, you may as well take the ♦A and clear the suit – you can see that if partner gains the lead a Spade return will sink East's ship.

How, though, will North know to lead a Spade? It is much more likely that North would lead a Heart – after all, did East not open 1♠? Dummy's ♠K J are intimidating as well – a Heart lead must look much more attractive to North.


It is your duty to signal clearly here. Having taken the ♦A you have three equal Diamonds to play at trick three to clear the suit (the ♦9 7 2). By leading the ♦9 you are showing interest in Spades – the ♦2 would show interest in Hearts (you can't possibly want partner to lead a Club looking at that dummy).

When partner gratifyingly produces the ♠K he is wise enough to lead a Spade and not the "automatic" ♥J. You take the ♠A and cash the long Diamonds for two down.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

North	
♠ 753	
♥ A65	
♦ 52	
♣ A9742	
West	East
♠ AKQ	♠ 64
♥ Q984	♥ KJ
♦ Q94	♦ AJT863
♣ QT5	♣ J86
	
South	
♠ JT982	
♥ T732	
♦ K7	
♣ K3	

Here you have an obvious defence to play when on lead.

Does "obvious" mean "right", though?

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

Lead: ♣ 4

East-West reach yet another 3NT contract on this deal and partner leads the ♣4. What prospects are there for the defence?

Well, you are pleasantly surprised to hold the first trick with the ♣K and you hasten to return partner's suit. Yes, it might be right to switch to a Spade but partner is unlikely to be impressed if he started with ♣A Q × × × for example. There are other possibilities (such as this deal) where a Spade switch would help declarer and not your side.

North takes the ♣A at trick two and clears the Clubs at trick three, West winning with the ♣Q in hand. The ♦Q runs to your hand so you take the ♦K and lead..?

Well, it is just so obvious to lead the ♠J that the card might jump out of your hand before the neurons in your brain had connected. What else could you lead? After all, West opened 1♥, dummy has the ♥K J and there are only two tiddly Spades on the table. Did someone not say: "Lead through strength and round to weakness"?

Well, maybe. However, consider the actions of your nearest and nearest (aka your partner). He cleared the Clubs with the ♣2, the significance of which should not escape you. He clearly has a five-card suit and so, at trick three, has three equivalent Clubs. You don't need to make the mind-numbing effort to work out exactly what they are (actually the ♣9 7 2) all you need to do is to appreciate that the ♣2 is North's lowest Club. If partner had wanted you to lead Spades he would have led a high Club – the fact that he has led the ♣2 means he wants you to lead the lower of the remaining suits.


Diamonds are out of the question, of course. You'd no more lead one of those than stick your hand in a bonfire. The choice you have is to lead a Spade or a Heart and North has signalled for a Heart. If you trust your partner you must grit your teeth at this point and lead a Heart (any Heart) and expect your partner to produce the Ace.

Glory be! Partner has what his signal says he has and two more Clubs complete West's ruin. Two off. A Spade lead at trick five would have let 3NT make.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

North	
♠ 9763	
♥ 9763	
♦ AKQ	
♣ 73	
West	East
♠ KJ	♠ QT5
♥ KT2	♥ AQJ4
♦ 743	♦ J6
♣ AKJ82	♣ QT64
	
South	
♠ A842	
♥ 85	
♦ T9852	
♣ 95	

You have an easy opening lead on this hand and partner's early play clears up the position.

So, knowing what you know, can you guide partner through the rest of the defence?

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

Lead: ♦ T

Another day, another 3NT contract. You have an easy ♦10 lead and dummy displays a depressingly good hand – 15 points and a good five-card suit. How might we beat this one?

Partner's ♦Q takes trick one and the ♦A at trick two lights up the whole hand. North clearly started with the ♦A K Q. Great! We can cash five Diamonds and the ♠A. Wait a moment, though – let's do a small amount of arithmetic. If East has two Diamonds North has three – so he has precisely ♦A K Q bare. After cashing those he is going to have to lead something and that "something" is going to be crucial. Will it be a Heart? Will it be a Spade? How can North tell? (Note that a Club lead would just be silly with ♣A K J × × in dummy – there can be no hurry to lead that suit).

Right – how can we draw North's attention to Spades? Putting the ♦2 firmly back in our hand, amongst its fellows, we should realise that the Diamonds are all equals and can be used to make suit-preference signals. At trick two we play the ♦9 and at trick three the ♦8. Partner, wide-awake as usual (!) sees that as indicating a high suit so leads a Spade. Well done partner!

We grab the ♠A and two more Diamonds and East is two down before he makes any meaningful contribution. Tough luck, my friend.



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

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

Lead: ♥ T

West reaches 3NT in rapid fashion and your partner fishes out the ♥10 lead. That's nice – at least it hits our strength although we can see immediately that the suit is irrevocably blocked.


Dummy is a good hand – 15 points and a strong five-card suit. Still, there is just room for North to hold an Ace. Indeed, if North doesn't hold an Ace it's hard to see how this contract is going to fail.

We cash the three top Hearts and then have to decide what to do. Lead a Club? Lead a Spade? We think we can rule out a Diamond lead at this point...

Now, in these circumstances it is important to realise that you have a partner and good partners make every effort to help you resolve decisions. Here, the Heart position would have been obvious to North the instant the ♥J appeared from declarer's hand. North then could (and should) have used all of his equal Hearts as signalling cards. Remember: **Bridge is a partnership game.**

In fact, if you were watching, North played the smallest Heart he could at the two opportunities he had available. That suggests that a Club lead is what he wants – had he wanted a Spade lead he should have played the ♥9 at trick two and the ♥8 at trick three.

A Club switch at trick four brings home the bacon. North takes his ♣A and two winning Hearts. Two down, with declarer a morose spectator.

North			
♠ 842			
♥ T9852			
♦ 95			
♣ A85			
West		East	
♠ AQT5		♠ KJ	
♥ J6		♥ 743	
♦ QT64		♦ AKJ82	
♣ QJ4		♣ KT2	
South			
♠ 9763			
♥ AKQ			
♦ 73			
♣ 9763			

Partner's lead here is a good one.

However, you are going to have to switch suits soon enough – to what? Do you have a guiding light?



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

North	
♠ 87653	
♥ 8763	
♦ A4	
♣ K4	
West	East
♠ K9	♠ QJT2
♥ K9	♥ AQT4
♦ 873	♦ K6
♣ AQJ865	♣ T97
South	
♠ A4	
♥ J52	
♦ QJT952	
♣ 32	

Here you have to be just a little imaginative with your defence.

Can you make things clear for your partner?

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

Lead: ♦ Q

East-West bid effortlessly to 3NT and you have an easy and obvious lead of the ♦Q. Immediately you can see that dummy contains an ominous source of tricks in the form of the long Club suit.

North (your cherished partner) produces the ♦A and returns the suit to declarer's ♦K, nicely setting up your suit. You can see that if North gets on lead a Spade return will flatten 3NT as you have five Diamond tricks, the ♠A and North's entry to cash. **However, how will North know to lead a Spade?**

Now, at trick two, you can follow suit with any of your remaining five Diamonds (the ♦J 10 9 5 2) and must seize the opportunity to send a *suit-preference signal*.

Since your entry is in Spades, the higher of the two remaining suits (Spades and Hearts are the critical suits with Clubs clearly out of reckoning) the right thing to do is to follow with the ♦J on the second round. The ♦2 would indicate that a Heart switch was required.


This ♦J should wake up even the most comatose of partners and be a clear *suit-preference signal* for a Spade rather than a Heart if North ever gains the lead.

Again, without this flare-path providing a guiding light North would be on a blind guess about what to do when he wins the ♠K.



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VB#23 Year 2 Suit preference in NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ J2	
	♥ A54	
	♦ 32	
	♣ QJT952	
West		East
♠ AQT4		♠ K9
♥ QJT2		♥ K9
♦ T97		♦ AQJ865
♣ K6		♣ 873
	South	
	♠ 87653	
	♥ 8763	
	♦ K4	
	♣ A4	

Well, you might guess what's going to happen on this deal.

The more you play these hands, though, the more ingrained this important technique becomes.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

Your partner leads the ♣Q against West's contract of 3NT and dummy is nearly the same as that of Hand 5. The Diamonds are going to be declarer's primary source of tricks and we surely cannot defeat 3NT if West has both major suit Aces.

You have to get out of partner's way in Clubs (you don't want to block the suit) so you win the ♣A and return a Club to West's ♣K. Now, at this point, your partner can follow suit with any of his remaining Clubs (the ♣J 10 9 5 2) and should seize the chance to send a *suit-preference signal*.

Since his entry is in Hearts, the lower of the two remaining suits, (Spades and Hearts are the critical suits with Diamonds way out of reckoning) the right thing for him to do is to follow with low Club on the second round. A high Club would indicate that a Spade switch was required.

Here, the ♣2 should be a clear *suit-preference signal* for a Heart rather than a Spade and should make it obvious what North wants you to lead. Partner should not be lazily following suit with his lowest card in these circumstances.

The Club position should be clear to you, really, as declarer would surely have ducked a round or two of Clubs had he been able to do so. This makes it clear that North has a choice of Clubs to play at trick two for suit-preference purposes.

[Of course, if North has neither major suit Ace then 3NT is going to be bomb-proof and we are all wasting our time on this deal].

Again, without this guiding light you would be on a blind guess about what to do when you take your ♦K.