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Eight General Hands for Issue 23 of V-Blue (Year 1); ACOL version Updated spring 2015

VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 06/09/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AJ863	
	♥ A54	
	♦ K753	
	♣ 6	
West		East
♠ 942		♠ T7
♥ Q96		♥ KJT832
♦ Q96		♦ A
♣ KJ92		♣ AQT4
	South	
	♠ KQ5	
	♥ 7	
	♦ JT842	
	♣ 8753	

**Here are eight general practice hands on the themes that we have been looking at in VuBridge. They are in no particular order, just enjoy them as they come...**

Here, on Hand 1, we start off with a defensive hand where partnership co-operation is key.

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

Lead: ♠ K

### Bidding.

North opens 1♠ and East has an easy 2♥ overcall. We raise to 2♠ as South (we should never miss the chance to show partner some support if we can) and West raises to 3♥ (for much the same reason that we bid 2♠).

With extras for his overcall and an attractive 6·4·2·1 shape East goes on to 4♥.

### Play.

We have an easy lead of the ♠K and West's 4·3·3·3 dummy is displayed in all its glory. Nonetheless, declarer is very happy with his 4♥ contract as he can count ten winners (five Hearts, four Clubs and the ♦A).

Game over? Time for North-South to throw in the towel and surrender to the inevitable? No way! The defenders have a secret weapon up their sleeves, able to pierce the armour of this impregnable looking contract.

North overtakes our ♠K lead with his ♠A and switches to a Club – straight into dummy's ♠K J 9 2. What on earth could have prompted this odd-looking defence? Declarer wins in dummy and leads a trump off the table. Partner hops up with the Ace and returns a low Spade to our ♠Q. What now?

The only logical explanation for the way North is defending is that he must have switched to a singleton Club at trick two. Why else would he be taking control of the defence in this manner? Why else lead a Club into dummy's dangerous-looking Club holding?

Reading partner's intentions (and trusting him!) we take the ♠Q and return a Club to complete partner's master-plan – to give him a Club ruff for one off.

Was partner's defence lucky? Well, yes and no, but he had good reason. On the ♠K lead, he knew that we had the ♠Q also (from a holding of ♠K × × it is usual and sensible to lead a low Spade) so, once he knew of a Spade entry to our hand, he seized the chance to set up his

Club ruff. The lucky part was that declarer had two Spades.


However, no doubt if declarer had started with a singleton Spade then the contract would have been unbeatable anyway.



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Eight General Hands for Issue 23 of V-Blue (Year 1); ACOL version Updated spring 2015

VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/09/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ KJ52		
	♥ A9642		
	♦ 5		
	♣ J53		
West		East	
♠ 8		♠ Q43	
♥ JT83		♥ KQ7	
♦ AK4		♦ QJT982	
♣ 98764		♣ A	
	South		
	♠ AT976		
	♥ 5		
	♦ 763		
	♣ KQT2		

Think of all of the times that your partner has produced a disappointing dummy for you.

This deal shows the other side of the coin.

You'll think it's your lucky day.

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♠
X	4♣	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ A

### Bidding.

East opens 1♦ as dealer. It is just about acceptable to overcall 1♠ with a hand such as South's. Overcalls only promise a minimum point count of 9 or so points (although you need a decent suit to intervene with a weak hand) and here we have a nice 5-4-3-1 distribution to justify butting in.

West Doubles 1♠ (to show a four-card Heart suit) and partner, having too much faith in either our playing ability or the strength of our one-level overcalls, jumps all the way to 4♣. An invitational bid is probably sufficient but this partner clearly dispenses with the middle ground. It's all or nothing with him, clearly.

As it turns out, partner produces the most magical of dummies. The ♥A, a singleton Diamond and the ♣J are all working full time. Not that North could have known that, of course...

### Play.

West leads the ♦A and switches to a Club. East wins the ♣A and, with little to do, tries the ♥K. We take the ♥A and should play for Diamond ruffs. Still, with only two baby Diamonds to ruff on table and four trumps over there we can afford to take out two rounds of trumps first.

So we try the effect of cashing the ♠K and ♠A, hoping for a friendly 2-2 break. Nope – East has the boss trump left. No matter, though, Plan A still has wheels. We ruff a Diamond, play a Club to the closed hand (for entry) and ruff the last Diamond on table. That clears the Diamond losers from hand so now we can revert to the side-suit.

We lead off the winning Clubs, not caring if and when East takes his boss trump. As soon as he does, all of our trumps in hand get promoted to winning rank. East can either ruff a master Club or watch us cash them. It's an unenviable choice.

Had Spades been 2-2 we would have made an overtrick but the actual 3-1 split means that we

lose one Club, one Diamond and one Spade  
and make the contract on the nose.


4♠ bid and made on 18 points...



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 45
Date: 06/09/2015	By: East
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ K62		
	♥ QT83		
	♦ AT		
	♣ Q765		
West		East	
♠ A9		♠ QJT853	
♥ AK		♥ J62	
♦ KQJ985		♦ 7	
♣ 983		♣ AJ2	
	South		
	♠ 74		
	♥ 9754		
	♦ 6432		
	♣ KT4		

The auction tells many stories; indeed, it is a pool of information.

What can you deduce here?

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

Lead: ♣ 4

*This deal is about listening to the auction and what information we can gather from it. Having listened in we have to find a devastating opening lead.*

### Bidding.

West opens 1♦, East responds 1♠ and West rebids 3♦ to show a powerful suit and a decent hand. This gives East a small problem which he solves by rebidding his Spades. West doesn't fancy 3NT much so he raises 3♣ to 4♣.

### Play.

Before considering an opening lead, it is always a good idea to review the bidding.

West's 1♦ and 3♦ bids tell us that West must have a good hand with long, strong Diamonds. We now know that dummy's Diamonds pose a threat to the defence as they can be used as a *source of tricks* to discard declarer's losers.

The implications of this are that, if the defence hopes to beat the contract, an *attacking* (or *aggressive*) lead must be chosen. This is a case of getting our defensive tricks before the rats get at them.

Here, on this hand, we must attack, hoping to get our tricks on the table fast before declarer dumps his losers on the Diamonds. Essentially, it's all a question of **tempo**. From this South rubbish a low Club lead is best as it represents the best chance of getting a few tricks early.

In fact, a low Club lead is a killer. North's ♣Q knocks out declarer's ♣A, leaving the ♣K 10 poised over the ♣J 2. Whichever suit declarer decides to go for (he might go for trumps, he might play a Diamond) North gets in and returns a Club, allowing the defenders to collect two Club tricks.

All in all, North-South make two Clubs, the ♦A and the ♠K to beat 4♣ by one.

What would happen if we were to lead something other than a Club? Declarer would

win and knock out the ♦A. North could now switch to a Club but it's far too late; the defenders would be a *tempo* behind. Declarer could now take the ♣A, unblock dummy's Hearts, and cash the ♦K to discard a Club. On the ♦Q, North could ruff in but declarer would over-ruff and ruff a Heart in dummy.


Declarer would lose just one Spade, one Diamond, and one Club. Contract made.



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/09/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AKJ6	
	♥ AQ5	
	♦ 5	
	♣ Q7532	
West		East
♠ 2		♠ Q83
♥ KJ86		♥ T9432
♦ AKQT6		♦ J974
♣ 964		♣ T
	South	
	♠ T9754	
	♥ 7	
	♦ 832	
	♣ AKJ8	

If there is ever such a thing as a straightforward hand this one must be one of them.

But one slight lapse of concentration may induce a mistake that can't be retracted...

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♠
P	4♣	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ A

### Bidding.

West opens 1♦, North Doubles for take-out and East Passes. The correct bid now is to make a jump bid to show some values, typically around the 8-11 point range.

Our hand here, with 8 points along with a five-card Spade suit, is definitely worth a jump to 2♠. Note that North's take-out Double must promise support for all unbid suits so we are guaranteed at least an eight-card Spade fit.

Over 2♠ North has an easy 4♣ raise.

But what would partner do if we responded with a miserable 1♠? In that case, North may very well just Pass. A 1♠ bid, the cheapest level at which we can bid Spades, would deny values, showing about 0-7 points. Even opposite a 7-point hand North certainly couldn't be blamed for Passing 1♠. Remember, we could have absolutely nothing at all and even 1♠ could be too high.

### Play.

West leads a top Diamond and switches to a trump. We take the ♠A and ♠K, finding out about the 3-1 break, and switch attention to our side-suit, Clubs. We don't mind in the slightest if a Club winner gets ruffed by East as that would be with the master trump and that rarely hurts.

By playing the Clubs out the hand is easy; we eventually only lose to the ♠Q and the ♦A. One Diamond loser gets dumped on the fifth Club, the other gets ruffed on table. In fact, we could just as well have ruffed two Diamonds in dummy – all roads lead to Rome.


In total we make eleven tricks.



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/09/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ J		
	♥ AKT6		
	♦ AKJT84		
	♣ Q6		
West		East	
♠ KQT95		♠ 732	
♥ 982		♥ QJ3	
♦ Q763		♦ 2	
♣ A		♣ JT9432	
	South		
	♠ A864		
	♥ 754		
	♦ 95		
	♣ K875		

There are several hurdles to be jumped on this deal; prepare yourself.

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

Lead: ♠ K

### Bidding.

North, holding a strong hand, starts out by opening 1♦ and *reversing* into 2♥ over our 1♠ response.

**Reverse bids**, if you recall, promise unbalanced hands with 16+ points and are *forcing* for one round. So whatever we do, we cannot Pass 2♥.

We have no fit in Hearts and nothing in Diamonds but do have a stopper in Clubs. With only 7 points we should bid 2NT to show a weak hand (approximately 6-8 points) with something in the unbid suit, Clubs.

With a minimum hand (16 points or so) North could Pass 2NT but, here, little will stop partner bidding on. The power of the six-card Diamond suit could easily produce six tricks in No-trumps – so North tries his luck with 3NT.

### Play.

West, ignoring the fact that we have bid Spades, leads the ♠K from his strong suit. From his point of view he is delighted to see dummy's singleton ♠J as it solidifies his remaining Spades.

As declarer we can see five top tricks – and, no doubt, our source of extra tricks is in Diamonds. The key question is, what is the best way to play the suit?

The percentage play is clear – to finesse against the Queen. (This is almost twice as good as playing off the ♦A K and hoping the ♦Q falls). However, the finesse isn't quite as simple as that. After winning the ♠A, we must start by leading the ♦9.

Why? When West plays low, we let the ♦9 ride. If the Nine wins it means we are in the right hand to lead another Diamond, finessing again. Were we to lead the ♦5 first to dummy's ♦10 we'd see the finesse succeed but would be locked in the wrong hand. The ♦A would reveal



the 4-1 break and we'd no longer be able to pick up the Diamond suit for six winners. Oops!

Yes, we'd lose the contract (we'd lose six tricks, in point of fact) if the ♦Q were in the East hand. That's the way the game is. Take the best shot and be philosophical about the result as and when it fails.

As it is today, the ♦9 holds trick two. So we repeat the finesse (a low Diamond to the ♦10) and enjoy our nine "toppers" – six Diamonds, two Hearts, and one Spade.

The remaining four tricks go to East-West. No matter – 3NT bid and made.



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/09/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

North

♠ K62  
♥ A75  
♦ JT7  
♣ QT42

West

♠ A85  
♥ 843  
♦ AKQ42  
♣ 87



East

♠ QJT973  
♥ QT6  
♦ 6  
♣ AK6

South

♠ 4  
♥ KJ92  
♦ 9853  
♣ J953

Never underestimate the wealth of information you can gather from the opponents' bidding.

The story that they are telling each other can be very revealing to you as well.

Are you a good listener?

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

Lead: ♥ 2

*Keeping an ear open and listening in on the opponents' conversation proves essential here.*

### Bidding.

East opens 1♠, West responds 2♦, East rebids 2♠ and West, assured of at least an eight-card Spade fit, raises to 4♠.

### Play.

Well, what do we know? We know the opponents are in a Spade fit and West's announcement of his Diamonds implies a potential *source of tricks* for declarer.

This is no time to lead a passive (and dangerous) trump or a silly Diamond. A Club lead from a feeble holding of ♣J9 × × may charitably be described as "undynamic". With dummy likely to display a source of tricks we must collect (or establish) our tricks as soon as we can. *Get some in before the rats get at them!*

You may have been taught not to lead away from a King-Jack holding (albeit not by us here at VuBridge as we have never said that...) but such advice should not be followed blindly, if at all. Here, Hearts is our strongest suit and it is the most promising area for attack. All we need from partner is either the ♥A or maybe the ♥Q.

As luck would have it, partner has the ♥A this time and the defence quickly collects the first three Heart tricks. With partner's ♠K sitting after dummy's ♠A that fourth defensive trick comes along in due course.

The attacking Heart lead was needed on this deal – on any other lead declarer would be able to cash those yummy Diamonds and dump his losing Hearts, ending any interest that the defenders had of beating the contract.

Sometimes opening leads do really determine the fate of the contract. When we suspect that the opponents have a side-suit somewhere that may be used as a source of tricks for dumping purposes we should attack with an aggressive

lead.

On this deal had the bidding been 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠,  
for instance, we may well have led a passive  
Diamond, letting declarer do all his own work.


Listening in can help...



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/09/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ J983		
	♥ AJ5		
	♦ A74		
	♣ J65		
West		East	
♠ 76		♠ A	
♥ Q83		♥ T9762	
♦ KQJ5		♦ T82	
♣ 9842		♣ AT73	
	South		
	♠ KQT542		
	♥ K4		
	♦ 963		
	♣ KQ		

Visualising the possible layouts of the opposing cards (and what will happen if you follow a particular line of play) is a technique that can help you.

On this deal, for example, it can determine the difference between a making contract and a failing contract.

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

Lead: ♦ K

### Bidding.

The bidding here is quite straightforward.

We open 1♠, North raises invitatively to 3♠ and we, holding a six-card suit, take a reasonable pot at 4♠.

### Play.

West has an easy lead of the ♦K which (annoyingly) gives the defence the best start. As declarer, we start off by noting two missing black Aces and, after the ♦K drives out the ♦A, we see two immediate Diamond losers as well. That's four losers. Not good.

This is where we need to visualise what would happen if we were to play on such and such suit. Let's say, having won the ♦A, we were to play a trump at trick two. This would turn out to be futile as the defence would win, cash their two Diamond tricks and follow with the ♣A. Nope. No good.

What about a Club? Again, let's picture how the play would go. If we play a Club, to establish the ♣J for a Diamond discard, it wouldn't help us either. The defence would be in control as they would win, play a Diamond and cash out their four top winners... No good, either.

There's only one hope that remains. In order to make this contract we have to finesse against West for the ♥Q. Note that this would enable us to dump a Diamond loser on the ♥A – assuming that the Heart finesse were successful.

So, as our only chance, at trick two we play a Heart to our King and follow with a Heart to dummy's Jack. If this wins we are in great shape. We cash the ♥A discarding a Diamond, and then (and only then) start on trumps.

What if the ♥Q were with East? Then our contract was doomed from the start. Taking the Heart finesse is not without risk as we would be headed for down two if the finesse were to lose. However, it is worth the risk. If the finesse loses, we are only trading down one for down two, which is -100 for -200 as we are vulnerable.

If the finesse works, on the other hand, we are trading a score of -100 (for one down) for +620 (for 4♠ making).


That's a good rate of exchange, we think.



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VB#23 Y1 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 5C
Date: 06/09/2015	By: East
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ T95		
	♥ 32		
	♦ AQT52		
	♣ QJ5		
West		East	
♠ AQ732		♠ K	
♥ K6		♥ AQ74	
♦ J6		♦ 983	
♣ K762		♣ AT984	
	South		
	♠ J864		
	♥ JT985		
	♦ K74		
	♣ 3		

Bidding, defending and declaring on "autopilot" can be good and it can be bad.

It can be useful to relax and turn off our brains when we are faced with an easy hand but at other times, where critical judgement is needed, we need to switch our autopilot off and our brains back on.

Are you turning your autopilot on or off on this hand?

West	North	East	South
1♠	P	2♣	P
3♣	P	3♥	P
4♣	P	5♣	P
P	P		

Lead: ♦ 4

### Bidding.

*As the bidding holds the key to the defence we should review it carefully.*

*West opens 1♠, (his best suit);*

*East responds 2♣ (at least four Clubs and 10+ points);*

*West raises to 3♣ (four-card support and a minimum hand);*

*East bids 3♥ (maybe a suit, maybe just Heart values, angling for 3NT);*

*West retreats to 4♣ (he can't bid 3NT and his Spades are poor);*

*East goes on to 5♣ (He is not giving up on game as he has a decent hand).*

### Play.

Should we should just sit back, turn on our autopilot and make a seemingly standard lead of the ♥J?

Certainly not!

There is one all-important piece of information that the bidding has given us – neither opponent has values in Diamonds. If either East or West had a secure Diamond stop surely they would have preferred the safe level of 3NT to the stratospheric 5♣. The nine-trick game is usually easier than an eleven-trick game.

Taking this inference we should lead a low Diamond from the South hand. Sure, it is dangerous to lead away from ♦K 7 4, at least in principle, but the bidding has made a Diamond a very attractive lead. Tricks need to be taken before dummy's Spades can be used for discards. *Get some in before the rats get at them!*

On this deal, a Diamond lead allows the defenders to take the ♦A K quickly and North's ♣Q J 5 proves to be a trump trick on its own.

Look what would happen on a Heart lead. Declarer would win the ♥K, unblock the ♠K, cash the ♣A K, to find out about the 3-1 break, and proceed to play on the Spades for Diamond discards.

When the bidding indicates a lead of a particular suit we should heed the call. This deal is no exception.