



A series of eight unrelated deals, some declarer-play, some defense. SA version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 2H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ T986 ♥ J3 ♦ KJ94 ♣ A95		East ♠ QJ3 ♥ K652 ♦ T76 ♣ KJT
North ♠ A74 ♥ 4 ♦ Q8532 ♣ Q863		
South ♠ K52 ♥ AQT987 ♦ A ♣ 742		

This set of eight deals makes up our General Series. There is no theme to the hands, just enjoy them as they come.

Some are defenses, some are declarer play problems.

Hand 1. You are playing in a delicate part-score.

What is the percentage play here?

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

Lead: ♠ T

Bidding.

We open in third seat with the obvious bid of 1♥ and partner replies with the courtesy response of 1NT. We know that he has 6 to 9 points without four Spades and little in the way of support for our suit.

It is clear with a misfit and 19 to 22 points between us to play this one in a part-score. Nonetheless, with a 6-3-3-1 shape we can hardly Pass 1NT, so we sign-off in 2♥, a bid which rapidly ends the auction.

Play.

Dummy brings scant cheer after West leads the ♠10. A whole 8 points, yes, but the minor-suit Queens are all but useless facing the singleton ♦A and the three low Clubs. Still, none of this is partner's fault – we thank him courteously and settle down to **Count** and **Plan**.

Counting up *losers* we see one Spade and three Clubs (West is hardly going to have the ♣A K after his failure to lead one, is he?) so must confine the trump losers to one.

This is the crux of this deal – can we hold our Heart losers to one (put another way – *can we make five Heart tricks?*)

We may as well win the Spade lead in dummy and play a Heart immediately. When East (naturally enough) plays low we have to decide what to do. Play the ♥7? Play the ♥Q? (playing the ♥A does look to be fairly pointless).

Well, it may appear to be an even money shot. Putting in the ♥7 (finessing against the ♥J in other words) would bring in five Heart tricks if East held ♥J × ×. Playing the ♥Q would bring in five Heart tricks if East held ♥K × ×. So far, so even.

However... if West held ♥J × (and East ♥K × ×) then the ♥Q would win the day. The ♥A would then drop the ♥J and there'd be five Heart tricks by force.

The converse distribution is of no help. If West


had ♥K × and East ♥J × × × then finessing the ♥7 would force the King, it is true, but East would still be due a second trump trick. So we get two bites of the cherry if we finesse the ♥Q – East having ♥K × × or ♥K × × ×

Two chances are always better than one...



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

		North		
		♠ T65		
		♥ J63		
		♦ KQ752		
		♣ AK		
West		East		
♠ 9732		♠ K		
♥ AKQ		♥ T985		
♦ JT		♦ 9863		
♣ T642		♣ J873		
		South		
		♠ AQJ84		
		♥ 742		
		♦ A4		
		♣ Q95		

You reach a routine game contract here and, annoyingly, the defenders cash early tricks, putting you under pressure.

What is the precise way you should proceed?

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

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

After East Passes as dealer we open 1♠ and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♦ response.

Knowing that game is the limit of our side's ambitions, North takes us to 4♠.

4♠ is the obvious contract on our cards.

[Note: We say 4♠ is "obvious" but 3NT would have proved a little easier to make with the Hearts 4-3, the Spade finesse onside and the blockage in Hearts to boot. That's the way the cookie crumbles at this game].

Play.

West leads the ♥A and we thank partner, study the dummy and prepare our **Count** and **Plan**. We can do little while the enemy cash some Hearts but we can make plans for the future. How are we going to handle matters when we are allowed on lead?

West cashes three top Hearts and exits with a Diamond. With three tricks already lost the problem is clear and easy to state – *how can we pick up the Spade suit for no losers?* Take the finesse, you say? Sure, but how **precisely** do we do it?

Many players would win the Diamond shift on table and immediately lead the ♠10. That's a little sloppy and would be punished on this layout. East covers with the ♠K (yes, we realize he has little choice!) and West's ♠9 comes into the game as a fourth-round winner.

If there were no entries to dummy then leading the ♠10 would be the best play, but here, with the ♣A K providing easy access to the table, we can afford to make the technically correct play of leading a low trump at trick four. When East reluctantly produces the ♠K on the ♠5 it's all too easy... we just draw the remaining trumps and claim the game.



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

<p>West</p> <p>♠ 2</p> <p>♥ AKQT</p> <p>♦ T986</p> <p>♣ 7642</p>		<p>North</p> <p>♠ T65</p> <p>♥ J63</p> <p>♦ KQ752</p> <p>♣ AK</p>
<p>South</p> <p>♠ AQJ84</p> <p>♥ 742</p> <p>♦ A4</p> <p>♣ Q95</p>		

Here at VuBridge we do like to create hands that look similar to other hands but have subtle differences. This deal does look just a little bit like Hand 2, doesn't it?

However, as the play develops you can see that it isn't.

It needs precision play to land your contract.

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

Lead: ♥ A

This is another one of VuBridge's déjà vu hands... It's Hand 2 all over again, isn't it? Umm – maybe.

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♠ and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♦ response.

Knowing of game values, North takes us to the obvious 4♠.

Play.

West leads the ♥A and we thank partner, look the dummy and take a few moments as we **Count** and **Plan**. How are we going to handle matters when we are allowed on lead?

West cashes three top Hearts and exits with a Diamond. The problem is as it was in the previous deal – *how can we pick up the Spade suit for no losers?* Take the finesse? Sure, but how **precisely** do we do it?

We know that to lead the ♠10 on the first round of the suit would be sloppy play, falling foul of East holding a singleton King. So we carefully lead a low Spade to the ♠J, which (on this lie of the cards) holds the trick. No singleton King this time. Now what? Well, it is obvious to return to dummy with a top Club to play another Spade – but *which Spade?* The ♠10 or the ♠6?

Now, having cleared out two trumps (one from each defender) we know that there are only three left, the ♠K 9 7. If we were to lead another low Spade to the ♠Q we'd fall foul of a 4-1 break with East having four trumps. (Please don't say we could play a low Spade to the ♠8. Yes we could, but only if we had peeked at East's cards).

The right play is to lead the ♠10, not caring if it gets covered or not. As it happens, East **does** cover with the ♠K and West shows out.

Game over... We cross over to dummy again and play the ♠6 to the ♠8 (a classic *marked*


finesse) before tidying up the house by drawing trumps and claiming the rest.

Had East *not* covered the Ten with the King, we'd have had it easier – he was in a no-win position.



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

North			
♠ J4			
♥ 83			
♦ A9753			
♣ A754			
West		East	
♠ KT52		♠ A83	
♥ KT2		♥ AJ54	
♦ K2		♦ Q84	
♣ J982		♣ KQ3	
South			
♠ Q976			
♥ Q976			
♦ JT6			
♣ T6			

The Conversation is a 1974 film written by Francis Ford Coppola and starring Gene Hackman.

It features a surveillance expert who listens into people's private conversations.

Can you listen in effectively to your opponents' dialogue here?

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

Lead: ♦ J

Bidding.

After two Passes East opens 1NT and West applies Stayman.

East replies with 2♥ and West proceeds directly to 3NT.

Play.

We are on lead to 3NT with a miserable 5 points. What do we lead? Well, it might look like a toss-up between a Heart and a Spade as our two best suits are identical.

However, what about the bidding? Let's remind ourselves of it. East opened 1NT and West employed Stayman. East showed four Hearts and West then leapt to 3NT. We now know that East has four Hearts and West has four Spades. (If West has no four-card major why not simply raise 1NT to 3NT? If he has four Hearts why not raise Hearts?)

Now, with both of our suits well held by the opponents the rationale for leading one evaporates. We like to lead long suits against No-trumps so that we can get the long cards going – here we know we can't. So *with cannons to the left of us and cannons to the right of us*, it is best not to attack into strength. Realistically we have to choose between Diamonds and Clubs. With Clubs a highly unattractive holding to lead from we select the ♦J, hoping partner is well at home there.

A Diamond lead scores a goal in double-quick time! Declarer tries the ♦K from table and ducks the next round of Diamonds to us. When we clear the suit at trick three East is doomed – partner must get in with the ♠A and cash out his Diamonds for a brisk one off.

Note that an initial major-suit lead gives declarer an undeserved trick as well as a tempo.



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA

Date: 03/07/2016

Dealer: North

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 3N

By: East

Board #: 5

Vulnerable: N / S

		North	
		♠ J953	
		♥ T872	
		♦ 62	
		♣ 932	
West			
♠ AQ6			
♥ KJ5			
♦ T873			
♣ QT7			
		East	
		♠ K82	
		♥ AQ4	
		♦ K4	
		♣ KJ864	
		South	
		♠ T74	
		♥ 963	
		♦ AQJ95	
		♣ A5	

You are on lead against a rapidly bid game contract.

In theory you have a textbook lead.

Is that the practice as well?

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

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding.

North Passes as dealer and East opens 1NT.

West raises to 3NT and there the matter rests.

Play.

We are once more on lead to 3NT, this time with a good suit – ♦A Q J 9 5 to be exact. So what should be our selection?

The textbook lead from this particular Diamond holding is the ♦Q – the top of an interior sequence. We may be hoping that the Diamonds are something like this:

		Partner	
		♦ x x	
Dummy		Declarer	
♦ x x x	□	♦ K 10 x	
		We	
		♦ A Q J 9 5	

Now our ♦Q forces the ♦K and the suit is ours to run when the defense gains the lead. Note that if declarer ducks the ♦Q then, depending on circumstances, we may well abandon the suit and wait for our partner to gain the lead. Now a Diamond through the ♦K would kill the King and allow the defenders to pick the suit up for five tricks.

That's the theory – what about the practice? Well, if we had no outside entry then, without doubt, the best lead would be the ♦Q. But here we have the ♣A as a way of regaining the lead. That makes a difference. It makes all the difference in the world.

The right lead now is the ♦A, to take a look at dummy. If the Diamonds are distributed as in the above diagram we could still continue with the Queen, setting the suit up and expecting to regain the lead with the ♣A.

However, in the layout as we see it on this deal, we can see that continuing with the ♦Q at trick two would only set up the ♦10 on the table as an extra stopper. So we must continue with a **low** Diamond at trick two, hoping partner has

two of them and that the King will fall on air. If declarer started with ♦K × × then no defense works at all – 3NT would have been impregnable.

On this layout it is true that an initial low Diamond lead (the ♦9?) would have defeated 3NT. However, such a dangerous lead would have failed against the distribution given in the diagram above – declarer would take the ♦10 and his ♦K would be safe from further attack from our side.

The ♦A lead beats 3NT whenever it is possible to defeat it.



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West ♠ 843 ♥ T4 ♦ K63 ♣ QJ762		East ♠ AK6 ♥ AKQ8 ♦ QT72 ♣ K8
North ♠ Q9752 ♥ J63 ♦ A95 ♣ A4		
South ♠ JT ♥ 9752 ♦ J84 ♣ T953		

Once more you are on opening lead, this time with a poor collection.

What do you lead here?

Or is it just a case of chucking something on the table and inviting declarer to get on with it?

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

Lead: ♠ J

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more; ...

Bidding.

East deals and opens 2NT. We Pass mournfully with a trash-heap and West raises to 3NT.

Play.

Again we have to lead against 3NT, this time with a real heap of junk. Well, we have to make the first move, even with this trash. What should it be?

Now, it is easy to depress ourselves on this sort of hand and just throw any old card onto the table, expecting to concede a couple of overtricks. Indeed, we may be feeling relieved that East-West are not contracting for a slam.

Enough of the negative waves...!

Let's try and beat the contract, shall we? We are not going to take anything much with this tip so we must focus on how the defense might garner five tricks. North might have a decent hand (let's face it, he has to have a decent hand if 3NT is going down), but was unable to bid given that the auction was at the 3NT level before he could open his mouth.

So we have to lead partner's long suit and hope we (realistically **he**) can set it up. That means abandoning any hope of setting up our pathetic Hearts or Clubs (even if we did get a long Club or long Heart going how on Earth would we reach it?) and hoping North has a long suit and some entries.

A Spade lead is now starting to look attractive – if North has five of them and a couple of Aces we may get something set up over there. Why Spades? Well, just where do you think North's hoped-for long suit is likely to be? Bear in mind that neither East nor West bid the suit, and opponents tend to bid Spades (or employ Stayman) if they have them. A mere straw in the wind, it is true...

No chance of beating 3NT, you say? Well, it's not a great chance to be sure – but it's a whole lot better than sitting here and sulking because

we've picked up yet another piece of mouldy cheese.


As the cards lie a Spade lead is a killer. East ducks the ♠J (we won a trick! How cool is that?), so we promptly put another Spade on the table. Turn and twist as he might East can't make 3NT as North can keep him out of dummy by ducking a Club and has the ♦A over the ♦K. Not only that, but partner has the tempo to make three Spades and two Aces – all thanks to our perspicacious lead...

Even an unfortunate Heart discard in the middle of the play, which gives East an extra trick, doesn't affect the outcome. One off – who'd have thought it?



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ J5		♠ T7	South
♥ 732		♥ 86	
♦ J42		♦ KQT6	
♣ AJ953		♣ KT762	
West		East	
♠ AKQ92	West	♠ AKQ92	East
♥ 954		♥ 954	
♦ 875		♦ 875	
♣ Q4		♣ Q4	
South		East	
♠ 8643	South	♠ 8643	East
♥ AKQJT		♥ AKQJT	
♦ A93		♦ A93	
♣ 8		♣ 8	

Here a competitive auction gets you to an uncomfortable level.

At least you have an idea of which defender has what.

How can you put this knowledge to good use?

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

Lead: ♠ A

A typical confused, competitive auction has us winning the pot. Could we have beaten the opponents' contract? Who knows? Can we make ours? Ah...! Now that is the \$64,000 question...

Bidding.

As dealer we open 1♥, West overcalls 1♠ and partner raises us to 2♥.

East now surprises us by Doubling. No, this is not for blood – penalty Doubles are rare in these low-level competitive auctions. East is saying he has some values, lacks good Spade support but wants to compete.

West, having only Spades, rebids 2♠ and that floats to us. We have an awkward call now. Maybe we should Pass and let them stew in their own juices. However, rightly or wrongly, we take the push and go on 3♥.

Competitive auctions are full of difficult decisions like this.

Play.

West starts off with the ♠A and, having thanked partner, we take a little time to **Count** and **Plan**. We are not in charge at the moment, but we can see that dummy's trumps are very low – we are in danger of being over-ruffed. We'd have preferred to see ♥9 8 7 on table, but the Great Dealer in the Sky was not in a good enough mood.

West takes two top Spades and sees his partner's encouraging high-low signal. Sure that East can over-ruff dummy's feeble trumps West plays another top Spade. What now?

Well, to start at the beginning, we can see seven easy winners (five trump tricks and two Aces). To increase that somehow we need to ruff some losers in the *short trump hand* (ruffing Clubs in hand, in the *long trump hand*, would not be profitable). The problem is that ruffing Spades on table would lead to defeat as it is crystal clear that East would over-ruff. What can

we do?

The theme of this deal recurs surprisingly often. We throw Diamond losers away on the top Spades instead of ruffing them – a classic *loser-on-loser play*. West cashes the first four tricks while we chuck two Diamond losers away.

At trick five West shifts to a trump but that is too late for the defenders. A trump shift at trick two would have made the hand too difficult. As it is, we take the trump lead in hand at trick five and play the ♦A and ruff a Diamond. Back to hand, with the ♣A and a Club ruff, and then another Diamond ruff.

Meanwhile, East has been caught in an unusual dilemma. If he kept his Diamonds then we could ruff two of them on table. If he chucked them on the Spades then the ♦9 would be master after one ruff. A strange position...

Anyway, as the play actually goes, we ruff two Diamonds in dummy with no problem and our hand is then only high trumps. 3♥ bid and made.



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Y2 VBlue #24 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

<p>West</p> <p>♠ QT854</p> <p>♥ 82</p> <p>♦ QJT9</p> <p>♣ 42</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ KJ2</p> <p>♥ 753</p> <p>♦ 852</p> <p>♣ AJT8</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ A963</p> <p>♥ A64</p> <p>♦ 743</p> <p>♣ K95</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 7</p> <p>♥ KQJT9</p> <p>♦ AK6</p> <p>♣ Q763</p>		

You reach a decent contract here after a sensible auction.

Do you have enough tricks?

If so, you should draw trumps. If not, you have to find the source of the "extra".

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

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1♥ and see partner respond 1♠. The best way to bid this sort of hand is to show the second suit (Clubs) and see how things develop.

Over our 2♣ rebid partner jumps to 3♥. This *jump preference* is not forcing – it suggests about 11 points with three-card Heart support.

With lovely Hearts and 15 points we are happy to go on to game.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q against 4♥ and we thank partner for a decent dummy. Now it's time to **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners? One Spade, five easy Hearts, two top Diamonds and one Club winner. That's only nine winners.

Losers? No Spades, no Heart losers, one Diamond loser and two Club losers. Just the three losers... This check on winners and losers shows an anomaly. Nine winners, three losers. Oops – something does not add up.

The anomaly is in Clubs, of course. In fact, were we to draw trumps then we'd have **three** Club losers on a 4-2 break (unless a friendly opponent played the ♣A on air). So, the problem is: what do we do about the extra Club loser?

The usual way of eliminating excess losers is to **trump them** or **dump them**. Here there is no side-suit in either dummy or the closed hand on which to pitch anything. Could we ruff a loser, then? Yes, but we mustn't make the mistake of ruffing Spades in hand. That would be the foolish play of *ruffing in the long hand* – usually pointless. What we need to do is to maneuver a Club ruff on table (with the ♥A, probably).

Drawing trumps is wrong (it usually is when we have insufficient winners). What we should do is to take the ♦K and immediately play a Club to

the ♣K. East takes the ♣A and shoots down our other top Diamond.

We now play off the ♣Q and another Club, preparing the ground for a Club ruff on table. The defenders play off a winning Diamond and shift to a Spade. So we take the ♠A, cross to a Heart and play our last Club. In desperation West trumps with the ♥8 to force the ♥A. That doesn't worry us in the slightest – we were going to ruff high in any case!

Our hand is only top trumps now so we can claim the rest. Yes, the opponents could have beaten 4♥ by leading a trump at trick one. That is too difficult a defense for West with his highly attractive alternative lead of a Diamond. *That's the way the cookie crumbles* in this game, sometimes.