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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ KQ4	
	♥ K2	
	♦ KQT65	
	♣ QT4	
West		East
♠ JT97		♠ A852
♥ 954		♥ 87
♦ J72		♦ 9843
♣ A98		♣ KJ6
	South	
	♠ 63	
	♥ AQJT63	
	♦ A	
	♣ 7532	

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, you face a situation where it is helpful to count winners and losers.

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After a 1NT start from North (fair enough with 15 points and a 5·3·3·2 shape) our hand is definitely worth a jump to 4♥.

We can rely on there being at least an eight-card Heart fit and we know of game values. A 3NT raise instead of 4♥, while it may work on this layout, is a tad risky given the unbalanced nature (6·4·2·1) of the South hand.

Play.

West leads the ♠J against 4♥, how should we play?

We can count five losers in all – four Clubs and a Spade. However, a count of our winners suggests that we have ten tricks. One Spade, six Hearts and three Diamonds brings our *top tricks* to ten. This is yet another one of these deals where winners and losers do not total thirteen.

The defenders can beat 4♥ if they are brilliant. We have to play the ♠Q at trick one, taken by the ♠A, and now a Club switch from East at trick two will allow East-West to take three Club tricks. That's an exceedingly difficult defense (East risks looking stupid if we have the ♣A) so he makes the natural return of the ♠2.

We take the ♠K and now have to rattle off ten tricks. The art of this type of deal is to take ten winners in an orderly fashion. We must unblock the ♦A and draw two rounds of trumps ending in dummy. It is important to note that we cannot afford to draw three rounds of trumps because North's hand is lacking entries to those master Diamonds. The one and only entry (after the ♠K has gone) is the ♥K and we must make good use of it.

After drawing two rounds of trumps ending on the table we then cash two Diamonds to discard two losers while crossing our fingers (and toes) hoping that nobody ruffs with the remaining trump.

As the cards lie, Diamonds break 4-3 so the ♦K Q stand up with no adverse ruff and we are able to rake in ten tricks.



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VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 02/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North

♠ 7643

♥ A62

♦ QJT9

♣ T5

West

♠ KQT2

♥ 984

♦ K63

♣ 874



East

♠ AJ5

♥ QJT3

♦ A54

♣ AQ2

South

♠ 98

♥ K75

♦ 872

♣ KJ963

Opening leads against No-trumps generally form a pattern. When in doubt, lead the fourth highest of your longest and strongest.

What if an opponent has bid the suit, though?

What if that suit is Clubs?

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

Lead: ♣ 6

Bidding.

East opens 1♣ followed by a jump to 2NT, indicating a balanced hand with 18-19 points. West, of course, raises this to 3NT with 8 points and we find ourselves on lead with the South cards.

Play.

Although our longest and strongest suit is Clubs, should we still lead it despite the 1♣ opening? This is an important question.

The answer to that is it usually depends on a lot of factors. For example, is our suit good enough to be established? Do we have many (or any) entries back to our hand if the suit does become established? And also, did the opening bid promise three cards or five cards?

Since East's 1♣ opening only promised three cards we should definitely lead our long suit. Clubs are quite promising as they contain the ♣J and the ♣9 and, besides, if partner is able to help us by having just one honor card (or even the ♣10), then our suit can easily be established. On this deal, North is able to provide us with the ♣10 – but is it enough?

Declarer has eight tricks on top (counting two Club tricks on the lead) and the only way to establish the ninth trick is by establishing his Heart suit.

After winning trick one with the ♣Q declarer naturally plays a Heart. As long as we allow North to win with the ♥A (rushing in with the ♥K would be poor play) then a Club return immediately sets up our Clubs with the ♥K as the all-important entry card.

We **have the tempo** and come to five tricks (three Clubs and two Hearts) before declarer can come to nine. This deal is a classic example of the defenders beating 3NT by going first in the race to develop long suits.


Note. One point of interest is that declarer may try to be tricky at tricks two and three. He might decide to play a Spade to dummy in order to play a Heart up to his ♥Q J 10. In this case,

*partner must be awake and hop up with his ♥A.
If North plays low (as many would, it has to be
said) then our ♥K would be forced out
prematurely before our Clubs are established.*



Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3D
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AQ862	
	♥ K7	
	♦ Q73	
	♣ T95	
West		East
♠ T9753		♠ J
♥ QJT4		♥ A96532
♦ 98		♦ 42
♣ AJ		♣ KQ62
	South	
	♠ K4	
	♥ 8	
	♦ AKJT65	
	♣ 8743	

We've faced this type of problem before...will you be able to recognize it?

More importantly, will you be able to solve it?

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

We begin by opening 1♦ (only 11 points? Yes, but in compensation there is a magnificent Diamond suit that cannot be ignored). Over partner's 1♠ response we ignore the pathetic Clubs and rebid 2♦. Partner now knows we have a minimum hand with long Diamonds.

Over 2♦, partner invites us to game with 3♦, an invitation which we have to reject rapidly as we have a minimum opening hand.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against our 3♦ contract.

In terms of our losers we have (at first glance) four Clubs and a Heart. One too many. This problem is easily solved thanks to the strength of dummy's Spade suit. With our supporting ♠K, we can play three rounds of Spades to dump a loser from our hand.

There's a slight catch however. The question to ask ourselves is, should we first play on Spades, or should we draw trumps?

As our Spades and Diamonds are in the form of top tricks (in that we do not need to force out any Aces), the answer is clear – we must draw trumps first.

After drawing all of the trumps we can follow it up with the ♠K (play the high cards from the short suit first) followed by the ♠A Q to discard a loser. As the cards lie Diamonds are 2-2 – had they been 3-1, or even 4-0, we could have coped by drawing sufficient rounds.

With this plan in mind, we can try the doomed ♥K on the opening lead but, whatever the opponents do, they cannot take more than three Clubs and a Heart.



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VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North
 ♠ J863
 ♥ AK743
 ♦ J
 ♣ A85

West
 ♠ QT5
 ♥ JT
 ♦ 9732
 ♣ QJT6



East
 ♠ 97
 ♥ Q952
 ♦ AQT4
 ♣ 943

South
 ♠ AK42
 ♥ 86
 ♦ K865
 ♣ K72

4-4 trump fits are a mixed blessing. At first, we are glad to have found an eight-card fit but, upon declaring the hand, we often find ourselves wide open to a lot of options.

Should we draw trumps?

Should we set up a side suit?

Should we aim for ruffs? If so, which hand should we ruff in?

There's plenty to think about – but with practice, the thinking involved will become easier.

We hope.

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

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

After North opens 1♥ we respond 1♠ and partner gives it a little bump with a 2♣ raise to show a minimum hand with (probably) four-card trump support. With a full opening bid ourselves we advance to game.

Play.

West leads the ♣Q – how should this 4♠ contract be played?

Two options come to mind – we could either try to set up the Hearts (hoping for a 3-3 Heart split) or we could ruff as many Diamonds as possible in dummy. With five or six potential losers (one Spade, three or four Diamonds and a Club) ruffing Diamonds probably offers us the best chance.

We should therefore begin this hand by winning the ♣A (we want to keep our ♠K as a later entry back to hand to ruff a Diamond in dummy if needed) and lead a Diamond from dummy.

East promptly takes his ♦A and switches to a trump. In principle this is good defense (if we aren't drawing trumps the opponents should be playing the suit). However, this does us no harm on this deal as we can win the trump switch in hand, cash the ♦K (discarding a Club) and ruff a Diamond on table.


Because our ♦K was established into a winner we only need to ruff two Diamonds in dummy. The play becomes quite simple then – return to hand via a Spade to our ♠K and ruff our last Diamond. Thanks to the friendly 3-2 split in Spades we ultimately lose just one Spade, one Diamond and one Club – 4♠ made on the nose.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ K854	
	♥ Q6	
	♦ A76	
	♣ AQ64	
West		East
♠ QJ7		♠ AT92
♥ 82		♥ 954
♦ QT95		♦ J4
♣ T873		♣ KJ92
	South	
	♠ 63	
	♥ AKJT73	
	♦ K832	
	♣ 5	

On this deal you may more than one plan to make your contract.

This isn't a bad thing, it just means you are taking as many options as possible.

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

There is a very straightforward auction of 1NT by North and a 4♥ response by us, South.

Play.

West leads the ♠Q against our 4♥ contract. What is the best way to tackle this hand?

The ♠Q lead indicates that the ♠A lies on our right as leading away from an Ace against a suit contract is a play that should be avoided. (If we underlead an Ace we run the risk that an opponent may win an undeserved trick with a singleton King).

Therefore we can count two Spade losers and two (slow) Diamond losers. *Counting winners* (as we should) we see that we have no Spades, six Hearts, two Diamonds and one Club. Well, the arithmetic balances – nine winners, four losers. One obvious chance for ten tricks is that Diamonds break 3-3. If that were to happen we'd have one fewer loser and one extra winner. That's against the odds, though, and we ought to look for something better. What other chances exist?

Our first chance on this hand is to drop East's ♠A. That is, duck the ♠Q lead and hope East is obliged to play his Ace "on air". When another Spade is led we duck that again and repeat the procedure when West persists with a third round of Spades. Whenever East has a singleton, doubleton, or tripleton Spade (with the ♠A) then dummy's ♠K would become established as a winner. If the ♠K does not become established then we need a second option.

West leads three rounds of Spades and we try ducking three rounds. No luck – the ♠A remains out. So we turn to Plan B; we have to do something magical with the Diamonds – and this plan does work.

Before touching trumps (in general *only draw trumps when you can count sufficient winners*) we cash the ♦A K and give up the third round. If Diamonds split 3-3 we are home and dry but let's say they break 4-2, as on this layout. It

doesn't matter which opponent has the Diamond length because, with dummy now void in Diamonds, we can ruff the fourth round of Diamonds in dummy (with the ♥Q).

Usually it's when we see a singleton or a doubleton in dummy that the option of ruffing a loser on table becomes a viable option. Here, it is slightly different. Thanks to the power of the ♥Q we can be confident about ruffing the fourth round of Diamonds with a big trump, not needing to worry about a Diamond being over-ruffed.


If dummy's Hearts were two low cards then we'd have no hope of ruffing the fourth Diamond on the table as we'd be certain that it would be over-ruffed. In this case, we'd have to rely on Diamonds splitting 3-3 (or hope that the Clubs came in for two tricks).

Anyway, ten tricks materialize from seven Hearts (six in hand and one on table) two Diamonds and a Club.



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VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ AT73		
	♥ K87		
	♦ J863		
	♣ QJ		
West		East	
♠		♠ 8652	
♥ QJT2		♥ 953	
♦ QT42		♦ AK97	
♣ AT942		♣ 87	
	South		
	♠ KQJ94		
	♥ A64		
	♦ 5		
	♣ K653		

Often in bridge we find ourselves changing our plans as we proceed.

This is normal enough given that new information arises as play proceeds and may suggest that Plan A needs altering.

Do you need a Plan B here?

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

This is a fairly straightforward auction of 1♠ by us and 3♠ from partner, showing a *limit raise*, and that tempts us into bidding 4♠.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 4♠ and to our delight, partner provides us with a decent dummy.

At first glance we can see a sure loser in Diamonds and three losers elsewhere (one Heart and two Clubs). Since nothing can be done about the Diamonds and Hearts, the focus on this hand is the Club suit.

The easiest solution here is to ruff a Club in dummy. That is, after the ♣Q forces out the ♣A, the ♣K and ♣J would become winners but there would still be a small Club idling in South's hand that needs to be ruffed on table. Note that aiming to ruff Diamonds in the closed hand may not be the best idea as we would be ruffing in the *long trump hand*.

Ruffing a Club in dummy requires caution – after the ♣A is knocked out and the ♣Q unblocked from dummy, our first hurdle to overcome is not to attempt to cash the ♣K. Instead, we should play the ♣6 and ruff it in dummy.

The second hurdle to overcome is that we must make sure to ruff the ♣6 with a big trump in dummy, whether it be the ♠A or the ♠10. This is at no cost to our trump suit, since we still have the power of the ♠K Q J 9 in our hand to draw the remaining trumps.

So the order of play here is to win the opening Heart lead (in dummy) and test the waters of the trump suit by playing a Spade to the King. If both opponents follow to this trick we could draw the remaining trumps (even if they split 3-1) since we only need one trump in dummy for the Club ruff.

As the trumps actually split 4-0 we must cease drawing trumps and immediately play a Club to dummy's Jack. West can take his ♠A to fire

back the ♥J to our ♥A but we now unblock the ♣Q, cross to the closed hand with a Spade to the ♠9 and play the ♣6, ruffing it in dummy with the ♠A.


Following the Club ruff we draw the rest of the outstanding trumps and claim the contract – in the end we just lose just one Heart, one Diamond and one Club. Put another way, we score six trumps (five in hand and one ruff on table), two Hearts and two Clubs.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 653	
	♥ K9	
	♦ 86432	
	♣ QJ6	
West		East
♠ Q842		♠ KT9
♥ QJT5		♥ 8762
♦ 5		♦ A9
♣ A753		♣ T984
	South	
	♠ AJ7	
	♥ A43	
	♦ KQJT7	
	♣ K2	

We all know that Aces take tricks (or we certainly hope so!) but Aces have another role in No-trumps.

What do you think that is?

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

We start off the auction by opening 1♦ (with the intention of rebidding 2NT if partner responds 1♥ or 1♠).

Partner surprises us a little by supporting with 2♦, showing Diamond support with 6-9 points. We know the partnership has a combined total of 24-27 points but we also know that we have a fine source of tricks with those lovely Diamonds.

Bidding more Diamonds (what? 3♦? 4♦? 5♦?) would be misguided. With our balanced hand (5-3-3-2) we should be looking at No-trumps and the realistic choice is between the slight underbid of 2NT and the slight overbid of 3NT.

We suggest and support the aggressive approach. There are bonuses for making games, you know! (Yeah, we also know there are penalties for failure. Are you a glass-is-half-empty type or a glass-is-half-full type?)

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT and, upon seeing the minimum dummy, we realize that there is some work to do. Our first task is to count our *top tricks*, and here we have only three(!) on top – the ♠A, and the ♥A K. Of course, Diamonds are our main source of tricks and that requires knocking out the ♦A.

After the ♦A has been driven out we'd be able to collect four Diamond tricks – and a recount of our tricks indicates that two more tricks would still be needed in order to fulfil our 3NT contract. Clubs can produce those two extra tricks but, once again, we need to knock out the ♣A. So our plan is to force out both minor suit Aces – but what is the best way to execute this plan? Logically, with a 5-5 Diamond fit, we should play on Diamonds before we play on Clubs.

So we start by winning the opening Heart lead in hand and play out a top Diamond (the ♦K for choice). East takes his ♦A and, naturally enough, returns a Heart to dummy's King; we now play a Club to our ♣K to force out the other

Ace.

West grabs his ♣A and, luckily for us, can only cash two Heart winners. Had Hearts been 5-3 we would have been defeated. Well, it happens – been there, done that, got the tee-shirt. Our 3NT contract here needs the Hearts to be 4-4 for us to succeed. Whether this is good fortune or normal odds is a matter of viewpoint.

As we can see on this hand the Aces can play a key role in determining the *tempo* of a hand. We need to force out the minor suit Aces, which requires us to lose the lead twice. However, we escape with no casualty as the Hearts prove to be splitting 4-4 and the defenders lack the ammunition to shoot us down.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#15 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 02/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North
 ♠ KJ532
 ♥ 763
 ♦ AQ
 ♣ J82

West
 ♠ 86
 ♥ KT842
 ♦ T983
 ♣ A5



East
 ♠ T974
 ♥ Q9
 ♦ 642
 ♣ KQT9

South
 ♠ AQ
 ♥ AJ5
 ♦ KJ75
 ♣ 7643

A nice easy deal to finish with.

Ten top tricks in 3NT – how easy is that?

Or is there a devious trick...?

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

Lead: ♥ 4

Bidding.

We open 1NT after three Passes and partner jumps to 3♠. With no support for Spades (we need three-or four-card support to raise) we revert to No-trumps and bid 3NT.

Play.

West leads his trusty fourth highest Heart (the ♥4, in fact) against 3NT and we take a few moments to plan the play. Note, *en passant*, that the 11 point North hand is not an opening bid with its stumpy shape (5-3-3-2). Only open 11 point hands with decent shape and good suits.

Anyway, a count of tricks shows this hand to be a rarity (at least, for VuBridge). There are (apparently) nine on top with ten available on a normal Spade split (3-3 or 4-2). So **what's the problem?**

The answer comes from the **blocked suits**. It is, in fact, impossible to make ten top tricks after a Heart lead as the entries are fouled. To make nine we have to overtake one of our tricks (sacrificing two honors on the same trick).

We take the ♥A at trick one (**not** taking it could prove disastrous if East were to shift to Clubs) and we have to play the suits in the right order. This means taking the ♠A Q, crossing to the ♦A (**not** the ♦Q) and cashing the remaining Spades. Having finished with that suit we have to play the ♦Q and overtake with the ♦K. This allows us access to the closed hand to cash the ♦J.

Our nine tricks come from five Spades, one Heart and **three** Diamonds. Any attempt to make four Diamond tricks would lead to failure on this deal.