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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ J	
	♥ AK97542	
	♦ J9	
	♣ AJT	
West		East
♠ K982		♠ AQT643
♥ 6		♥ T
♦ 86532		♦ AQT
♣ K95		♣ Q72
	South	
	♠ 75	
	♥ QJ83	
	♦ K74	
	♣ 8643	

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 must work out what partner is up to, and in order to do that, we must trust partner's defense.

Can you rely on partner?

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

Lead: ♥ Q

When one side has Hearts and the other has Spades there are often fiercely competitive auctions. Usually the side with Spades wins...

Bidding.

North opens 1♥ and East overcalls 1♠. We raise to 2♥ as South and West raises to 2♠. So far, so quiet.

North now decides to take a shot at 4♥, hoping that this show of strength shuts the opponents up. Nope, East has extras in the shape of long, strong Spades and a good hand. He bids 4♣ as a two-way shot – it might make or it might be a cheap loss against 4♥ making our way. 4♣ wins the pot as everybody Passes.

Play.

We lead the ♥Q against East's 4♣ and, surprisingly, we find ourselves winning the first trick. Given dummy's singleton Heart it is clear that partner has the ♥A K. North could have overtaken our Heart and shifted to a Diamond – dummy's weak suit – but why didn't he? Why did he choose to leave us on lead at trick two?

If we think about it carefully enough we should arrive at the right conclusion – provided that we trust partner. North has left us on lead because he wants us on lead, meaning he wants us to play a suit that would only be effective from our side.

The critical suit is undoubtedly Clubs. In this case we must switch to a Club, hoping to trap dummy's ♣K. Holding trash in the suit we lead the ♣6 (second highest from garbage). We might expect partner to grab the ♣A Q but North only produces the ♣10, won by the ♣Q. Strange...

Declarer draws trumps in two rounds and plays a Diamond to the ♦9, ♦Q and our ♦K. On lead we have nothing better to do than play another Club and this time all is sweetness and light. Partner takes the ♣A J and 4♣ fails.

This is good defense; we need to make use of our two entries to play Clubs twice. If we fail to

do this two of declarer's Clubs would eventually disappear on the long Diamonds.


4♥ would have made our way, you may note.
5♥, though, would have lost a Spade, a Club and a Diamond.



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VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ AQ85		
	♥ AJT6		
	♦ 8653		
	♣ 6		
West		East	
♠ K972		♠ JT4	
♥ 9732		♥ 4	
♦ KQ9		♦ T7	
♣ T5		♣ KQJ9742	
	South		
	♠ 63		
	♥ KQ85		
	♦ AJ42		
	♣ A83		

On this deal, we have to deal with another one of those irritating pre-empts.

What should you do?

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♣	P
P	X	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

East opens with a 3♣ pre-emptive bid. This shows a weak hand (roughly 6-9 points) with a Big Suit. What should we do?

Take-out Doubles can, and should, be used at the three-level as well as at the one-level. The same rules about being **shape-suitable** apply, however, so if we were to Double we'd be promising support for all three unbid suits.

Here we have a low doubleton Spade so the hand is quite unsuitable for a take-out Double. As the hand is also too weak to overcall 3NT, Pass is the only reasonable action that's left. Yes, it might feel disconcerting to sell out with 14 points but sometimes there is no reasonable alternative to inaction.

Luckily, we aren't playing the game of 500 [Try a Google search if you've never heard of it. It's popular down under. Ed] where Passing would mean we would be out of the auction completely.

3♣ is Passed to North who is able to make a take-out Double. "Only 11 points!?" True, but his ideal 4-4-4-1 pattern compensates for any deficiency in points. Furthermore, he is the *balancing seat*, so he can see West has Passed 3♣ out. Also, it is usually right to take action when we have shortage in the opponents' suit.

Now, over the Double, we have to bid something with the South hand. But what? 3♦ and 3♥ would be craven (once again, we would make these calls on trashy hands, compelled to bid by partner's Double). With excellent values (14 points, don't forget) we have to show some muscle.

As partner is marked with values and support for the other suits for his take-out Double we should now jump to 4♥. Our duty is to tell partner about both **length** and **strength**. Were we to change our ♦A J and ♣A to small cards we'd have to bid 3♥ on that.

Play.

West naturally leads the ♣10 (his partner's suit) and success on this hand is a matter of ruffing two losing Clubs in dummy. Our aim is to collect two Spades, four Hearts, one Diamond, one Club, and two Club ruffs. (Or, put another way, **six** trumps, two Spades and two minor-suit Aces). That **count** relies on the Spade finesse working but that's with the odds. East is marked with the ♣K Q J and has announced a weak hand. Is he likely to have an outside King as well?

After winning the ♣A we should take an immediately Spade finesse as entries may get awkward if we don't. After the Spade finesse holds we cross to the closed hand with the ♦A, ruff a Club, take the ♠A, ruff a Spade, and ruff our second Club.


That's the first seven tricks and we have three boss trumps to come. West's four-card trump holding (consisting of small cards) is of little consequence.



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VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ A73		
	♥ QT5		
	♦ K7642		
	♣ 42		
West		East	
♠ 864		♠ QT5	
♥ 963		♥ AKJ874	
♦		♦ AQT	
♣ AQJ9863		♣ K	
	South		
	♠ KJ92		
	♥ 2		
	♦ J9853		
	♣ T75		

Advice is free – and you are free to ignore it.

What is your best play here?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	P
3♣	P	3♥	P
4♥	P	P	P

Lead: ♠ 2

Bidding.

West is the one who starts with a pre-emptive 3♣ this time (cf Hand 2). Here, though, it is East who has the good hand and he replies with a **forcing** bid of 3♥, which West is delighted to raise to 4♥.

Play.

Now the spotlight turns to shine on us; what should we lead holding that South collection?

A "safe" trump lead, a fourth-highest Diamond or a "second highest from rubbish" Club lead may be among our choices but before making our opening lead we invite you to consider the auction.

West bid Clubs (and has shown a Big Suit) and East bid Hearts. As West is known to hold a long Club suit, which may well provide declarer with a rich *source of tricks*, we should be looking to make an attacking (or aggressive) lead. Why? Because if we don't take our tricks before the rats get at them declarer may be able to dump his losers on dummy's Clubs.

Here, a Spade lead is the most attacking lead (the most aggressive lead). Some may have been advised "never to lead away from a King-Jack holding", but such advice is provided *gratis* and can be safely ignored when it suits us. When all is said and done, judgement and evaluation supersedes all "rules" and guidelines.

After deciding that an attacking Spade lead is better than a silly Club lead or a weak Diamond lead that's what we should do. And, on this deal, it proves to be the killing defense. A Spade to partner's Ace and a Spade return (finessing declarer's Queen) enables the defenders to take the first three Spade tricks in rapid time.

Now everything depends on East's view of the trump suit. He can make his contract by finessing against the ♥Q in partner's hand but that is against the odds. With nine Hearts between the hands the percentage play suggests cashing the ♥A K and hope the ♥Q

falls in one or two. Not today, though. With a trump trick in partner's hand 4♥ sinks beneath the waves.

Note 1. On a non-Spade lead declarer would be able to cash the ♥A K and then run off Clubs (by overtaking the ♣K). Sure, our partner could ruff in with the ♥Q at some stage but that would be far too late. By then East would have dumped his losing Spades and the contract would have been secured, with overtricks.

Note 2. Please observe how fatal a trump lead would be. Leading a singleton trump often wrecks partner's holding in the suit. Here, for instance, it would resolve declarer's problem. As an opening lead it would allow East to make all thirteen tricks (!). As a switch (after cashing three Spades) it would simply allow declarer to draw trumps and claim his contract.


The lead of a singleton trump is, in general, to be avoided.



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VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 2S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ A742		
	♥ A83		
	♦ 73		
	♣ AQT3		
West		East	
♠ J6		♠ T9	
♥ J642		♥ KQT9	
♦ AK952		♦ QJT8	
♣ K9		♣ J86	
	South		
	♠ KQ853		
	♥ 75		
	♦ 64		
	♣ 7542		

"To bid or not to bid" that is the question.

*Whether 'tis Nobler in the mind to suffer
The Slings and Arrows of outrageous
Fortune,
Or to Pass against a Sea of troubles*

As Shakespeare did **not** write.

Should you be bidding on this hand and will you suffer the slings and arrows if you do?

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	1♥	1♠
2♥	2♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding.

West opens 1♦, North Doubles (short Diamonds and enough points to bid) and East tries 1♥. What now? Well, many would Pass, exclaiming, "Only 5 points, partner!" but we VuBridge players really ought to be made of sterner stuff.

This game is more about *fit* than points and North has guaranteed something in Spades. 1♠ isn't going to lead to disaster; it indicates a good lead and it may allow us to compete the auction. There, that's three good reasons to bid.

West raises to 2♥, North supports to 2♠ and, perhaps surprisingly, the opponents cave in and allow us to buy the hand cheaply. The opponents should certainly compete to the three-level and put us to the test (should we Pass, allowing them to play 3♦, or compete further to 3♠?) but, luckily, our opponents are feeling pessimistic today.

Play.

Against 2♠, West leads the ♦A. A quick loser count indicates that we have two Diamond losers, one Heart loser and a varying amount of Club losers depending on how they break and who has the missing honors.

Clubs is the only suit we have to worry about and it is clear that a couple of finesses need to be taken in the suit. This is a classic **double finesse**. First, though, we must perform the routine task of drawing trumps. When they break 2-2 we have a little more elbow room.

To gain the maximum number of Club tricks it is best to first finesse the ♣10. On a good day West would be the possessor of the ♣K J and the Ten would win. Not here – East has the Jack and takes a trick with it. Later on we play another Club, intending to finesse the ♣Q. As it happens, the ♣K pops up so we have three Club tricks without a problem.


Nine tricks are relatively easy to obtain, losing just one Club, two Diamonds and one Heart.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 742		
	♥ T92		
	♦ AQJ9		
	♣ K74		
West		East	
♠ A86		♠ QJT93	
♥ QJ764		♥ K8	
♦ T762		♦ 3	
♣ 6		♣ J9853	
	South		
	♠ K5		
	♥ A53		
	♦ K854		
	♣ AQT2		

You often need to see the dangers inherent in a hand as you plan the play.

What should you do here? Win the first trick or not?

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

Lead: ♥ 6

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1NT (15-17) and partner raises to 3NT.

Play.

West makes a sound lead of a low Heart and East plays the ♥K. What should we do? Should we *hold-up* our ♥A until the second or third round?

From our *top tricks* point of view, we have eight "toppers" (four Diamonds, three Clubs and a Heart) with a potential ninth trick coming from a fourth Club or just possibly a Spade trick (if the ♠A lies with East).

The real danger of holding-up our ♥A is that a Spade shift by East may follow at trick two and now our contract would depend on the ♠A being with East.

A better bet is to hope the ♣J falls within three rounds. So we do not hold-up our ♥A; we cash four rounds of Diamonds (who knows, maybe an opponent might misdefend by discarding a Club?) and cash our three top Clubs.

On the run of the Diamonds East does part with a Club. Interesting! Now, the most flexible way that we can play the Clubs is by cashing the ♠A, then a Club to dummy's ♠K then a Club back towards our ♠Q 10, leaving any decision in the suit as late as possible.

Here, West shows void on the second Club, revealing an initial 5-1 split and setting up a classic *marked finesse*. It is obvious to stick in the ♠10 and claim the contract with one Heart, four Diamonds and four Clubs. After that we have nothing – West quickly claims the balance.


As we can now see, with a sight of all four hands, holding-up our ♥A for just one round allows East the chance to find the deadly switch to the ♠Q. Of course, he may well return a Heart, should we let the ♥K win trick one, but why take the chance?



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VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4D
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ J8	
	♥ 764	
	♦ AK432	
	♣ 986	
West		East
♠ Q9543		♠ A762
♥ J9532		♥ K8
♦		♦ Q8
♣ AQJ		♣ KT542
	South	
	♠ KT	
	♥ AQT	
	♦ JT9765	
	♣ 73	

This deal illustrates a common type of competitive auction that we face in the real world. Who will come out on top?

Get ready for an interesting deal as there is a twist in the tail.

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

East opens the bidding with 1♣ and we have to make a decision on a marginal type of hand. Should we overcall 1♦ based on a suit that's lacking the top three honors?

We suggest yes. In fact, this is actually a decent hand to be overcalling on given that we're only at the one-level. We do have a six-card suit, and our ♦J is supported by two helping intermediate cards which does strength the suit quality.

If partner is able to raise our overcall to 2♦ or even 3♦ we would certainly be very happy with the outcome from our overcall. More importantly, if we have a Diamond fit, we certainly should get our foot into the auction to fight for the part-score.

As we can see here, we actually hit partner with five-card support (!)

Over 1♦ West bids 1♠ and partner jumps to 3♦, more as a pre-empt than any sort of game try. This inconveniences East who decides not to bid 3♣ as competing to the three-level would imply additional strength to go along with four-card trump support. East decides (not unreasonably) to discount the ♦Q when valuing his hand, so has a working 10-count.

3♦ gets Passed around to West who makes a a take-out Double. East duly takes it out into 3♣ and, just as we were getting ready to defend, partner decides to put more money in the kitty and raises the ante to 4♦. For better or for worse, this becomes the final contract.

Play.

West leads a Spade to East's ♠A and a Club is returned. The opponents take the first three tricks and continue with a Spade to our King. How should we continue?

The only remaining hope is to take a double finesse in Hearts. If East has both the ♥K and

the ♥J then we could win the first Heart trick by playing a Heart to the ♥10 and subsequently follow with a Heart to the ♥Q.

There is a catch – dummy's lack of entries. Annoyingly, partner's small Diamonds are the three lowest ones, so we can only get to dummy twice via the ♦A and ♦K. In that case, when we first reach dummy we must use that opportunity to play a Heart.

So we play to the ♦K and a Heart to the ♥10...and West's ♥J.

Rats. That's four tricks for the opponents and down goes our contract. We cross over to dummy again to take a second Heart finesse. We find that it wins (in fact the ♥K pops up) so we restrict our losses to one down.

Well, we tried our best and had the 25% shot turned up (the chance that East had the ♥ K J) we would have made the contract. A case of "the operation was successful but the patient died".

Anyway, is it bad news that we have failed to make a part-score? Certainly not! Study the cards held by East-West. They are able to make ten (yes, ten!) tricks in a Spade contract, losing just one Spade and two Hearts.

So, in fact, we have stolen the pot with our 4♦ contract. Even going down one is a great result against their potential 4♠ contract. One off is still a good result against 3♠ making an overtrick.


A score of -50 is a mere fleabite and it is often true in competitive deals that **one down is good bridge.**



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VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ A9532	
	♥ A53	
	♦ 94	
	♣ JT6	
West		East
♠ T		♠ J7
♥ KQ9872		♥ JT
♦ AQ85		♦ JT632
♣ K2		♣ 8743
	South	
	♠ KQ864	
	♥ 64	
	♦ K7	
	♣ AQ95	

The one place that is filled with information is undoubtedly the auction.

How might you use the bidding here to give you the right clues?

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

Lead: ♥ K

The auction on this deal becomes a useful pool of information that should guide us to the right line of play.

Bidding.

We open 1♠ on the South cards and West overcalls 2♥. Partner jumps to 3♠ showing a limit raise and we accept the invitation with pleasure, holding 14 points and a semi-balanced hand. (That's the correct term for these 5·4·2·2 hands).

Play.

West leads the ♥K (what else?) against 4♠ and, as usual, we assess the situation by counting winners and losers.

One Heart must be lost and we are in danger of losing two Diamonds and a Club. Our first thought about the minor suits is that we can take a finesse in each. If either the ♦A or the ♣K is with East then we'll lose at most three tricks.

However, let's look back at the auction. West was the opponent who overcalled 2♥, vulnerable. This makes it very likely that both crucial honors (the ♦A and the ♣K) are with West, so both finesses rate to fail. What should we do?

Our plan is to take the Club finesse, expecting it to lose. This would establish three Club winners for us to discard a Diamond from dummy. There is one danger though – we must keep East, the danger hand, off lead. The only possible way that East may get on lead is in Hearts.

To prevent mishaps we must **duck** West's ♥K opening lead! If we were to take the Ace immediately we would open the door for the defense. West would have the opportunity to underlead his ♥Q to East to get a Diamond lead through the ♦K. True, that's a tough defense but why allow West to see any chink of light?

Note that East drops the ♥J on dummy's ♥A at trick one – that might be all the inspiration West needs...

By allowing West's ♥K to win at trick one,

though, we cut the opponent's transportation in Hearts. We then win the Heart continuation (nothing is any better for them), draw trumps and run the ♣J.

West, after winning the ♣K, cannot do any harm to our contract. If he continues with a Heart (or a Club) we simply cash our master Clubs and dump a losing Diamond from dummy.


All in all, we lose just one Heart, one Diamond, and one Club. Contract made.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#24 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A643	
	♥ A74	
	♦ 5	
	♣ AQ932	
West		East
♠ QJ9		♠ 872
♥ QJT		♥ 8532
♦ KQJ963		♦ 742
♣ 8		♣ K75
	South	
	♠ KT5	
	♥ K96	
	♦ AT8	
	♣ JT64	

Don't play too quickly on this deal.

It's best to make sure that you haven't missed anything...

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

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding.

After West opens 1♦ partner Doubles for take-out and East Passes. Now we have to find a bid with the South cards.

This 11-pointer with a 3-3-3-4 shape, including a Diamond stopper, is best described by a jump to 2NT. This invitational call is better than jumping to 3♣. After all, if we can make game it is likely to be 3NT. (A 2♣ response would be plain silly – we'd be forced to bid that on nothing).

Note that a 1NT response to partner's take-out Double would show about 7-10 points and 2NT shows 11-12 points.

Play.

Against 3NT West kicks off proceedings with the ♦K lead, the best (and obvious) point of attack for the defense.

There are six *top tricks* that we can see (two Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and one Club) and a simple Club finesse against the King would boost that total up to ten tricks. As West opened the bidding with 1♦ we can be fairly confident that the ♣K lies with West.

There are no guarantees in this game, however, and there is just enough space for West to be missing the ♣K and still open the bidding.

To guard against that possibility we should *hold-up* our ♦A until the third round. If Diamonds are distributed 6-3 (as they are in this actual deal) then this careful play exhausts East of Diamonds.

After finally winning the ♦A we take the Club finesse, fully expecting it to win, but East surprises us by taking the ♣K. No matter, we breathe a sigh of relief a few seconds later as it becomes evident that East doesn't have another Diamond to return to West.

With the Clubs established and ready to run there are no further problems. 3NT romps home (two Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and

four Clubs).

The *hold-up* play on this deal is a precaution against the, admittedly unlikely, scenario that the ♣K lies with East. It is a **no-cost play** and, as we can see with a view of all the cards, it is a play that determines the success or failure of the contract.