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Four assorted deals to supplement David Bird's hands for VBlue Year 2, issue 1. Updated autumn 2015

VB#1 Y2 Four General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ JT7		
	♥ J92		
	♦ A73		
	♣ 7642		
West		East	
♠ 9643		♠ 852	
♥ 5		♥ K8763	
♦ QJT96		♦ 85	
♣ AKT		♣ 985	
	South		
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ AQT4		
	♦ K42		
	♣ QJ3		

This set of four boards forms an collection based on some card-play techniques met in year one of your studies. Let's see how you fare.

Hands 1 and 2 contain a link as do Hands 3 and 4.

That's all the help you are going to get!

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

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

We reach 3NT after a rapid sequence. We have a textbook hand for a 2NT opening bid with a flat hand of 21 points and North has an easy raise to game.

Play.

West attacks us with the ♦Q opening lead, suggesting a long suit headed by the ♦Q J 10. We should, as always when declaring the hand, pause while we **Count** and **Plan**.

Here, our count comes to six *top tricks* (three Spades, the ♥A and two Diamonds), so three more need to come from somewhere. We can't generate three Club tricks so, realistically, it's all down to Hearts; if we could make four Heart tricks we'd be home and dry. (There isn't time to set up three Heart tricks and a Club because the opponents would get their Diamonds going).

So the focus of the hand is how to make four Heart tricks. Take the finesse? Yes, quite – but **how**, precisely? Many players would win the ♦A (correctly) and then lead the ♥J (incorrectly).

Note what happens if we try this line of play. East allows the ♥J to hold the trick and the next Heart is won perforce by the ♥10. Now what? Although the Heart finesse works we have no means of taking it as dummy is bereft of entries.

Correct technique is to lead the ♥9 at trick two, running it when East plays low. Now we can lead the ♥J at trick three, underplaying it with the ♥10 when East ducks. Conveniently, we are in the right hand at the right time to take the third Heart finesse.

Now, there's always someone, somewhere who raises an objection. "Why", asks our objector, "can't I lead the ♥J on the first round and throw the ♥10 underneath it? Now on the next round I can run the ♥9". Nice try, sir, but definitely no cigar.

If we try this malarkey East would (should, anyway) cover the ♥9 with the ♥K on the second round. This would promote the ♥8 and


we would make only three Heart tricks. Take out some cards and try it if you don't believe us.



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VB#1 Y2 Four General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 982		
	♥ KQ5		
	♦ T843		
	♣ 873		
West		East	
♠ QJT43		♠ 75	
♥ 7642		♥ T83	
♦ 5		♦ AQ76	
♣ K96		♣ QT54	
	South		
	♠ AK6		
	♥ AJ9		
	♦ KJ92		
	♣ AJ2		

Here you pick up another good hand and, as usual, partner has been dealt very little. You are going to need a little luck to land your contract – and some skill, too.

Yes, there is a link to Hand 1. What is it?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

As South we reach 3NT after opening 2NT and North scratches up a raise to game.

Play.

West leads the ♠K and we have to count our tricks. We have two Spades, three Hearts and one Club *on top* so need, therefore, three Diamond tricks. To make this contract we need to hope East has the ♦Q; if West has it we are doomed to defeat.

We take the ♠K at trick one (we might think of playing low but a Club switch could cause us some embarrassment) and cross to table with a Heart to lead a Diamond for the finesse. However **which Diamond?**

This deal is the companion piece to Hand 1. Leading small is no good – if we try that East plays low, we win the ♦9 and are in the wrong hand. True, we can cross to dummy and lead another Diamond but East can take his ♦A and leave us with only two Diamond tricks. One off.

All right then, suppose we lead the ♦10 on the first round – that would work, wouldn't it? Not against accurate defence it wouldn't. Should we lead the Ten on the first round of Diamonds, East would (should, at any rate) take the ♦A and return a Spade. Now what could we do? Cross to a top Heart and play another Diamond? Again, we'd be in hand with the ♦9, unable to finesse Diamonds again.

The winning play, the **only** winning play, is to lead the ♦8 on the first round. No other card works. What can East do? If he plays small we let it run and lead the ♦10 next, picking up the suit for three winners regardless of East's defence. If East takes his ♦A on the first round we are still well off – we win the Spade return, cross to a Heart and lead the ♦10, able to underplay that with the ♦9 and take the Diamond finesse again.

We have our objector speaking from the back again. "Why", says our protester, "can I not lead the ♦10 on the first round and throw the ♦9 on it


if East plays his ♦A? On the next round I run the ♦8 and pick the suit up that way”.

Good question, sir. Here is a good answer. If we adopt this unblocking line, East will cover the ♦8 with the ♦Q and make a trick with the ♦7. Try this line out with a few cards and check the truth of this statement.



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VB#1 Y2 Four General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ Q6	
	♥ KQ9	
	♦ AT84	
	♣ AT63	
West		East
♠ J9742		♠ KT8
♥ 86		♥ T7532
♦ 63		♦ K2
♣ KQ72		♣ 954
	South	
	♠ A53	
	♥ AJ4	
	♦ QJ975	
	♣ J8	

Here, your partner puts down a good hand as dummy

He won't be pleased if you fail in your contract but be careful; you have to play the with a certain amount of technique.

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

As South we reach 3NT after opening 1NT, giving North an easy raise to game.

Play.

West leads his fourth-highest Spade (the ♠4) and we have to Count and Plan. Here we see one Spade trick, maybe two (West may have led away from the ♠K). There are three Heart tricks, four or five Diamond tricks and the ♣A. So there seems to be ample tricks. *What's the problem?*

Well, it's possible that the opponents might set up five tricks before we make nine (four Spades and the ♦K) so we must be careful to time the play correctly. Firstly we must try the ♠Q on the opening lead. This is a shot to nothing – if West has the ♠K it's a free trick, if East has it then the ♠Q is dead anyway.

As the cards lie, East has the ♠K and covers the ♠Q. Now, it is vital that we break the East-West communications by ducking the first trick. East returns a Spade and we duck that too. East clears the Spades so we take that and can now attack Diamonds by taking the finesse. Although it loses to East's ♦K that player has no Spade left to lead; we have isolated the West hand by holding up the ♠A.


Of course, if East did have a Spade left then the suit would have broken 4-4 and the defence would only have had four tricks anyway, Heads we win...

Once East forlornly leads a Club we cash our top tricks and claim our contract, giving up a Club at the end.



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VB#1 Y2 Four General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ Q6	
	♥ KQ9	
	♦ AT84	
	♣ AT63	
West		East
♠ J9742		♠ K85
♥ T763		♥ 852
♦ 63		♦ K52
♣ 75		♣ KQ92
	South	
	♠ AT3	
	♥ AJ4	
	♦ QJ97	
	♣ J84	

Dummy on this deal is eerily similar to that of Hand 3. Isn't it strange how that happens in VuBridge?

Does this mean that the play on Hands 3 and 4 is identical...?

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

As South we reach 3NT after opening 1NT and North has an easy raise to game. Not only that but dummy is uncannily familiar to that of Hand 3. Odd, that...

Play.

West leads his fourth-highest Spade (the ♠4) and we have to **Count** and **Plan**. Here there are three Heart tricks, three or four Diamond tricks and the ♣A. Two Spade tricks would guarantee nine in all, even if the Diamond finesse were to fail. So is this the same as the last deal? Try the ♠Q as a shot to nothing and then hold up the ♠A if East produces the ♠K?

No, certainly not! The addition of the ♠10 to our hand changes everything. Without it, the ♠Q is the correct play – a 50-50 shot for an extra Spade trick. With it, we have a 100% shot for two Spade tricks by **not** playing the ♠Q!

Try the play out and see. Arrange the East-West Spades any way you like and you will find that by playing low from the table at trick one there are always two tricks in the suit.

Here, East produces the ♠K (if he played the ♠8 we would just take the ♠10, of course) and we can take the Diamond finesse. Although it loses we have two Spades, three Hearts, three Diamonds and the ♣A for a total of nine. Contract made.