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This series is about taking five tricks quickly against 3NT. It involves the same deals as 2098 but this time play is from the perspective of the opening leader. ACOL version. Part 2 of 2. Updated spring 2015.

VB01 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ J9874		
	♥ KT5		
	♦ 8		
	♣ QT94		
West		East	
♠ A63		♠ K52	
♥ 64		♥ J98	
♦ AJT97		♦ KQ4	
♣ KJ3		♣ A852	
	South		
	♠ QT		
	♥ AQ732		
	♦ 6532		
	♣ 76		

**This is the second set of six deals all about defence against 3NT contracts. The first series may be found elsewhere in this edition of VBlue.**

**The principles involved form the bedrock of defensive play. Let's remind you of some of these ideas, which we hope to reinforce with these deals.**

***Leading from long suits (top of sequences or fourth-highest from broken suits);***

***Third player playing high to help establish partner's suit;***

***Returning your partner's suit.***

**On these six deals you are on lead against 3NT. Firstly, you have to decide which card to lead. Secondly (very important, this!) you need to keep careful track of the suit you lead.**

**This involves counting the cards in your suit and knowing when they are winners...**

Hand 1 sets the scene in a gentle manner.

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

Lead: ♥ 3

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (13 points and a 4-3-3-3 pattern). West, holding 13 points and a decent Diamond suit, raises that to 3NT without fooling about.

### Play.

Against East's 3NT we are on lead as South. The normal thing to do against a No-trump contract is to lead our long suit – in this case that's Hearts. Holding a broken suit (one not headed by a three-card sequence) the orthodox lead is the fourth-highest card, the ♥3 in this instance.

Declarer calls for dummy's ♥4 and North agreeably produces the ♥K. It would be a bad mistake for partner to withhold that card on the rather fatuous grounds that "I want to make a trick with it later". Bridge is not an *I* game, it's a **we** game; defenders have to co-operate. Our lead of a low card says, "Let's try to take some tricks in Hearts" and North should do his utmost to achieve that aim.

Once the ♥K has held North should *return our suit* (what is the point in trying for tricks elsewhere?) The correct card for North to return is the ♥10 (*when holding a doubleton, lead the higher*). Here it actually doesn't matter which Heart North returns but it's good practice to train ourselves to do the right thing.

Declarer plays the ♥J on the ♥10 so we win the ♥Q, cash the ♥A and...

By keeping track of all the Hearts (we must count them) we should realise that both of the remaining cards in the suit (the ♥7 2) are winners. It is essential for the defenders to count the suit which they lead so that they know whether or not some of these low-ranking cards are masters.


In this case the defence rapidly cash the first five tricks. That's all we can take (declarer has the rest) but that's quite sufficient against 3NT.



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VBY1 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A4	
	♥ J942	
	♦ QJT96	
	♣ 87	
West		East
♠ 963		♠ QT8
♥ K6		♥ AT5
♦ K52		♦ A743
♣ AKT64		♣ QJ3
	South	
	♠ KJ752	
	♥ Q873	
	♦ 8	
	♣ 952	

Another opening lead problem and more counting.

Counting the cards is an essential skill in this game so this deal gives you just a little more practice.

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

Lead: ♠ 5

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (13 points and a 4-3-3-3 pattern). West, holding 13 points and a decent suit, raises that to 3NT without stopping to admire the scenery.

### Play.

As South we have to find a lead against 3NT. Holding a five-card suit we should select that as our opening shot and, as the suit is broken, the correct choice is the fourth-highest card – in this case that's the ♠5.

North wins that with his ♠A and plays back a second Spade. (*Return your partner's suit.*)

It may look tempting to North to switch to a Diamond from his attractive sequence (after all, North would have led a Diamond at trick one if West had been declarer in 3NT) but it is generally wise for the defenders to keep to the same suit. Here, a Spade return at trick two wrecks 3NT immediately.

Whatever East plays (the ♠Q or the ♠10) we have a counterplay, winning with either the ♠J or ♠K as necessary. Sitting **over** an opponent at times like this is a big advantage.

Now we must count the Spades and should realise that our remaining Spades are all winners and can be cashed immediately.


That's one down in 3NT before declarer gets a foot in the door.



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VB01 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KJ6		
	♥ Q8532		
	♦ 8632		
	♣ 8		
West		East	
♠ 742		♠ Q9	
♥ T97		♥ AJ4	
♦ KQJ9		♦ AT75	
♣ AQJ		♣ K632	
	South		
	♠ AT853		
	♥ K6		
	♦ 4		
	♣ T9754		

Another deal where you have to find a lead against 3NT.

You will also need to keep track of which cards have been played so that you know whether your suit is ready to run off (or not).

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

Lead: ♠ 5

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (14 points and a 4-4-3-2 pattern). West, holding 13 points and a balanced hand, raises immediately to 3NT.

### Play.

We have to find a lead against East's 3NT. As in previous deals (and in many more you will play!) the logical choice is to lead the fourth highest card from our *longest and strongest suit*. In this case that's the ♠5.

Now, this deal has more to do with our partner than it does with us. Firstly, North has to play his ♠K on our opening lead.

[You should note that it is quite wrong for partner to play the ♠J at trick one, keeping back the ♠K. In this case East would score a cheap and unmerited trick with the ♠Q and would be on his merry way].

Secondly, North must lead back a Spade at trick two (Why? *Return your partner's suit*).

All well and good – but which Spade? North only has two Spades left at trick two, the ♠J and the ♠6. If North carelessly leads back the ♠6 the Spades would become tangled up (the correct term is **blocked**).

Play the hand through mentally – the ♠6 returned at trick two to the ♠Q and ♠A, a third Spade is led to North's ♠J. **Partner** is on lead, **we** have the winning Spades. Ugh.

In order to untangle (or **unblock**) the Spades it is important for North to return the ♠J at his second turn. This follows the rule we established in an earlier deal in the previous series (and may explain where it comes from): *When you hold two cards remaining you should lead the higher*.

Played this way, North's ♠J clears the roadblock and we take the first five Spade tricks.

3NT down one.






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VB01 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ JT98		
	♥ J97		
	♦ KQ5		
	♣ 864		
West		East	
♠ A64		♠ K53	
♥ KQ4		♥ A63	
♦ 97		♦ JT8	
♣ KQT73		♣ AJ52	
	South		
	♠ Q72		
	♥ T852		
	♦ A6432		
	♣ 9		

You are on lead to 3NT with an uninspiring collection of cards. What is the best way of trying to garner in five tricks?

As the play progresses you have to count your suit carefully and know whether the remaining cards are winners or not...

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

Lead: ♦ 3

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (13 points and a 4-3-3-3 pattern). West, holding 14 points and a decent suit, confidently raises that to 3NT.

### Play.

We are on lead against 3NT and have a fairly ordinary collection. However, where there's a five-card suit there's hope and we should lead our fourth-highest Diamond, (the ♦3 in this case) hoping to get that suit going.

Our partner produces the ♦Q and this tells us instantly that East has the ♦J (why? Because North would follow suit with the *lowest card from equals*). When the ♦Q holds the trick we can be pretty sure that North has the ♦K as well and partner duly produces that card at trick two. He then agreeably leads a third Diamond to our ♦A and all we have to do is to work out if our remaining Diamonds (the ♦6 4) are winners.

A brief few seconds of counting shows us that the Diamonds are indeed masters and we should waste no more time before cashing them. That's the end of the party (declarer has the rest) but that matters not at all. 3NT is beaten before it starts and we should be happy enough with that.

Note partner's defence, by the way. The first is that North plays the ♦Q rather than the ♦K at trick one (playing the lower – or lowest – of equals). Then, holding just two cards remaining (the ♦K 5), North leads the higher one. Had he carelessly returned the ♦5 at trick two the Diamond suit would have become **blocked** and we would not have been able to cash the suit out.


In effect, this is just another application of *play the high cards from the short suit first* – it's just that it is practised here by the defenders rather than by declarer.



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VBY1 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ K42		
	♥ QT74		
	♦ 743		
	♣ 976		
West		East	
♠ Q5		♠ A63	
♥ K32		♥ A95	
♦ KJT96		♦ Q852	
♣ KJ5		♣ AT2	
	South		
	♠ JT987		
	♥ J86		
	♦ A		
	♣ Q843		

Here you are on lead against 3NT and have to decide what to lead from a sequential suit.

The important point to take from this deal is how you can make partner's life easy by leading the correct card.

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

Lead: ♠ J

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (14 points and a 4-3-3-3 pattern). West, holding 13 points and a decent Diamond suit, is delighted to raise to 3NT immediately.

### Play.

East plays in 3NT and, again, we have to find a lead.

The obvious choice is Spades (it is our longest suit) but *which card*? Since we have a sequence it would be quite wrong to lead the fourth-highest card (the ♠8 in this case). When the long suit is headed by a sequence it is customary to lead the top card so in this case we should select the ♠J.

This alerts partner instantly to the fact that we have the ♠J 10 9 (and at least one other – remember, we are almost certainly leading our longest suit). If partner has a Spade honour he can see (after dummy is displayed) that we can neatly skewer the ♠Q.

If declarer calls for dummy's ♠Q North would cover that with his honour, killing the ♠Q as a useful card. If declarer calls for the ♠5 then North would withhold his honour for now and would play it later, killing the ♠Q in due course. Of course, we don't know at this stage whether North has the ♠A, the ♠K or neither (or both!!) but we can hope.

As the cards lie, declarer calls for the ♠Q from the table and we await partner's card with interest. It's the ♠K! Were declarer to take the ♠A immediately all of our Spades (which now consist of the ♠10 9 8 7) would be promoted to winning rank. As it is, declarer decides to hold on to his ♠A for as long as he can.

North dutifully plays a Spade back at trick two.

[Did you notice that partner obeys two "rules" here? *Return your partner's suit* and *When you hold two cards remaining you should lead the higher*. In case you didn't notice, North leads back the ♠4 from his remaining ♠4 2].

Anyway, we are allowed to win the ♠7 at trick two (East stubbornly keeping back his ♠A) and

simply continue the Spade attack. East is finally forced to take the ♠A and turns his attention to Diamonds – his main source of tricks. No good! We take the ♦A and immediately cash out the remaining Spades. One off – tough bananas, East.

Now... suppose we had led the ♠8 at trick one (*the fourth-highest of our longest and strongest*). Declarer might have called for a low card from dummy and where would that have put North? He would have been in a quandary, uncertain whether to play his ♠K (fatal on this deal) or to play low.


This deal illustrates just why we lead the top card of a sequence when we are lucky enough to be dealt one. *It is to make partner's life easy.*



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VBY1 #4 Defence v NT Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ QJT94		
	♥ 43		
	♦ 87		
	♣ JT74		
West		East	
♠ A6		♠ K82	
♥ T8		♥ AK2	
♦ QJT642		♦ 953	
♣ AQ9		♣ K852	
	South		
	♠ 753		
	♥ QJ9765		
	♦ AK		
	♣ 63		

This deal is just a little different. What do you lead to 3NT and how do you follow up your initial attack?

Partner is unable to contribute anything – on this deal you are defending on your own.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

### Bidding.

East opens 1NT (13 points and a 4-3-3-3 pattern). West, holding 13 points and a six-card Diamond suit, raises that to 3NT without bothering to show his suit.

### Play.

We are on lead against 3NT and have to decide what to do. Leading a Heart is fairly obvious (we do have a six-card suit) but, crucially, *which card*?

Normally we would lead the fourth-highest card from any broken suit and the top of any suit headed by a three-card run. What about in this case? Well, it is customary to lead the top card from *nearly sequential* suits.

What are **nearly sequential** suits? They are ones headed by a two-card sequence, then a missing card, then the next one. Examples are:

♠ K Q 10 × ×

♥ Q J 9 × × (as here)

♦ J 10 8 × ×

or, at a pinch,

♣ 10 9 7 × ×

In each case we'd lead the top card rather than the fourth-highest.

Why do this? Well, look at this deal. Were we to lead a low Heart (the ♥7) as our opening shot then the ♥10 (or even the ♥8) would win trick one on table. Given a third (and cheap) Heart trick declarer would have no problem in setting up the Diamonds for his contract.

By contrast, the ♥Q lead is fatal to declarer. East has no choice but to play on Diamonds but we are always ahead in the race. We take the ♦K and continue with Hearts, taking care to lead the ♥J to crush dummy's ♥10 (the technical term is to *pin* the ♥10).

Having taken the ♥A declarer has nowhere to go – when he leads another Diamond we take our ♦A and can run off the rest of the Hearts for



two down.