




This is all about one-level suit openings and limit raises. The play theme reinforces drawing trumps and setting up extra tricks in side-suits. SA version. Part 2 of 2. Updated winter 2015.

VB#7 Openings & limit raises 2 SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ QJ92		♠ AK8	
♥ KJ84		♥ 2	
♦ T7		♦ 6532	
♣ K62		♣ A9754	
West		East	
♠ 6		♠ AK8	
♥ T653		♥ 2	
♦ QJ94		♦ 6532	
♣ QJT8		♣ A9754	
South			
♠ T7543			
♥ AQ97			
♦ AK8			
♣ 3			

This set of deals is a follow-up to the previous series on limit raises, found elsewhere in this issue of VBlue.

In general, an immediate raise by partner of your opening bid is a *limit bid* – it tells you that partner likes your suit but also that he has a certain strength of hand. Armed with this knowledge it is your decision how high to bid. Essentially, do you want to stay in a part-score or advance to game?

Now, we need to dot a few *is* and cross some *ts*.

A simple raise shows *about* 6 to 9 points (eg 1♠ – 2♠);

A jump raise shows *about* 10 to 11 points (eg 1♥ – 3♥);

Why do we say "about" and not "exactly"? After all, we don't say an opening 1NT shows "about" 15 to 17 points. The answer, while subtle, is important.

In No-trumps almost all the high cards play their part. In a suit contract this isn't true; *shortages* (in the guise of singletons, doubletons and voids) can have a profound effect on the play. So the value

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

Lead: ♣ Q

### Bidding.

On this deal we open 1♠, despite the poor quality of the suit, and partner raises to 3♠. Now, with just 13 points and a trump suit with more holes than a Swiss cheese should we take the plunge and bid 4♠ or should we let the bidding die in a part-score?

The answer is that we should be bold with hands like this. 5-4-3-1 hands play well in general, the more so when we have a lot of trumps, and here we know of a nine-card Spade fit. Should we be worried about the poor quality of our trumps? We shouldn't be! The fact that partner has primary support for Spades means that they have increased in value.

The conclusion of these arguments is that we should bid 4♠ with a song in our Hearts. True, there are hands we could construct where partner would raise to 3♠ and 4♠ would fail. However, there are more hands where 4♠ would be an easy contract and that is the point. We can't get every hand right – we just have to go with the odds.

### Play.

We need to take stock when dummy appears and West leads the ♣Q. It is inconceivable that West has the ♣A so the ♣K on table is useless. We have, therefore, three certain losers (two top Spades and the ♣A). It is in our interests to persuade the defense to carry on with Clubs (a Heart shift, threatening a defensive ruff, would be tiresome) so we put the ♣K up anyway.

East (predictably) bashes that with the ♣A and plays another. We ruff and immediately set about *drawing trumps* by leading Spades. East takes his ♠K and shifts to his singleton Heart but he is helpless as the cards lie.

We win the Heart lead on table and play another Spade. That forces the ♠A and we are all but home and dry. We take the Diamond shift, draw the last trump and run for home.

With winners in Hearts and Diamonds we easily take the rest.

of a responding hand might be augmented by having helpful shape, together with trump support.

So by all means think of the point-count as being the basis for negotiations when you are assessing how high to raise partner. Look upon side-suit shortages with approval and flat distributions (especially 4·3·3·3 hands) with disfavor. This is not an exact science!

The card-play once more reinforces the idea of *drawing trumps*.

In Hand 1 you have to decide whether to advance to game or remain where you are.


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VB#7 Openings &amp; limit raises 2 SA

Contract: 4S

By: South


Date: 24/03/2016

Board #: 2

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

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		North		
		♠ J753		
		♥ A65		
		♦ KQ		
		♣ 9754		
West				East
♠ A				♠ 986
♥ JT97				♥ KQ832
♦ 86432				♦ A5
♣ KJ2				♣ T63
		South		
		♠ KQT42		
		♥ 4		
		♦ JT97		
		♣ AQ8		

How should you value your hand here after partner makes an invitational raise?

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

Lead: ♥ J

### Bidding.

On this deal we open 1♠, and partner raises to 3♠. Now, with just 12 points should we accept the invitation and bid 4♠ or should we let the bidding die in a part-score?

This is a close decision and no one would criticize us for Passing. However, the crucial point is that we are 5-4-3-1 and not the dreaded 5-3-3-2 shape that would demand a Pass. With minimum hands we should Pass invitational raises with flat hands such as 5-3-3-2 or 5-4-2-2 but this hand pattern is more beguiling.

We won't always be right to bid game with a 5-4-3-1 hand but we'll make it more often than not. The conclusion, therefore, is that we should reach for the stars. Bridge is a game for the bold, not for the timid.

### Play.

When North displays his hand you might note that the dummy has been seen before (if you don't recognize it have another look at the previous series on limit raises).

Counting our tricks we see that we have four Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds and one Club for a total of nine. Counting losers we can see one sure trump loser, one Diamond loser and an unknown number of losers in Clubs (one or two).

What is possible, though, is that Club loser can be thrown away on the Diamonds. How does this work? Well, the hand plays itself. We win the Heart lead on table and play a trump. West takes that and plugs away in Hearts. We ruff, draw trumps and force out the ♦A.

East takes that and plays a Club. We try the effect of the ♣Q now (if East had the ♣K the Queen would win the trick) but West takes that and knocks out the ♣A. Worried? Not a bit of it! When we cash our winning Diamonds we chuck away dummy's losing Clubs and ten tricks appear from the mist.


Game made on a combined 22 points, you may note.




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VB#7 Openings & limit raises 2 SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ Q942		♠ J63	
♥ K653		♥ Q7	
♦ JT		♦ 96	
♣ QT2		♣ A97543	
West		East	
♠ T		♠ J63	
♥ JT982		♥ Q7	
♦ A8742		♦ 96	
♣ K6		♣ A97543	
South			
♠ AK875			
♥ A4			
♦ KQ53			
♣ J8			

What should you do on deals where you have an in-between sort of hand?

Like this one...

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

Lead: ♥ J

### Bidding.

On this deal we open 1♠ and partner raises us to 2♠. Just how do we value our hand with 17 points and a 5-4-2-2 shape?

Well, what we should realize is that we are not strong enough to insist on game (partner is promising 6-9 points or thereabouts) so 4♠ would be an overbid. On the other hand we are too strong to Pass as partner might have enough to allow us to make game.

It is important to understand that we don't have to make the choice ourselves – we have a partner over there and he may be able to help with the decision. Between 2♠ and 4♠ there is a halfway house and we might go there as a consulting room. In fact, any bid after 2♠ is known as a **trial bid** (we are making a try for game) and it asks partner to reassess his 2♠ response.

How does he do this? Well, in general, with a minimum 6 points he *signs off* in 3♠, with a maximum 9 points he jumps to 4♠. What does he do if he has an in-between hand? Well, that depends on the flavor of our trial bid. Rather than bid an insipid 3♠ we are better off bidding a second suit.

Here, on this hand, we bid 3♦ to show that suit. If that happens to suit partner's hand (he may have Diamonds too) then he can bid 4♠ on something less than the maximum 9 points.

So, putting this together, the bidding having started 1♠ – 2♠ we make a **trial bid** of 3♦. Partner is expected to bid 3♠ or 4♠ now (he can't Pass!) With his actual hand (four trumps, 8 points, something helpful in Diamonds – the ♦J 10 – he leaps to 4♠). Had he bid 3♠ we would have respected his decision and Passed.

### Play.

In terms of the play there isn't that much of a problem after West leads the ♥J. We win the ♥A and naturally draw trumps. This takes three rounds as they split 3-1. Then we knock out the

♦A to set up the side-suit. East-West are entitled to the ♣A K, the ♦A and no more.

Note that failure to draw trumps would lead to defeat as West would over-ruff us in Clubs and East would over-ruff dummy in Diamonds.

Extract the poison from your opponents!


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VB#7 Openings &amp; limit raises 2 SA

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: West


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Contract: 4S

By: South

Board #: 4

Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ T942		
		♥ Q72		
		♦ KJ2		
		♣ T75		
West		East		
♠ Q		♠ J6		
♥ JT98		♥ K653		
♦ T764		♦ AQ985		
♣ A942		♣ 86		
		South		
		♠ AK8753		
		♥ A4		
		♦ 3		
		♣ KQJ3		

Another deal where partner makes a single raise of your suit.

Is this another occasion for a *trial bid*?

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

Lead: ♥ J

### Bidding.

Again (as in Hand 3) we open 1♠ and partner raises us to 2♠. Just how do we value our hand with 17 points and a 6·4·2·1 shape? Should we heed the lessons of the previous deal and make a trial bid of 3♣?

Well, what we should realize is that this hand is much more powerful than the hand we had previously. The hand pattern is better, our trumps are longer, our side-suit stronger. Yes, this hand has 17 points and Hand 3 had 17 but bridge is not played by points alone. (This is heresy to some, we realize. However, we at VuBridge are committed to leading you along we the true path...)

In short, this hand is worth 4♠ over a 2♠ raise every day of the week.

### Play.

When dummy appears we should note that it is a heap. 6 points only and a horrible 4.3·3·3 shape. Ugh. Not only that but look at the way the honors are placed. The ♥Q is useless and the ♦K J 2 may as well be the ♦5 4 2 for all the trick-taking potential they represent.

Nonetheless, 4♠ is an easy contract. On the ♥J lead we try our luck with dummy's ♥Q. Not today – East crushes that with the ♥K. So we win the ♥A and pull trumps as quickly as we can. That's in two rounds as Spades split 2-1.

We then set up the side-suit by driving out the ♣A and are rapidly in a position to claim the contract. The requisite ten tricks are six Spades, one Heart and three Clubs.

Note that dummy was, to all intents and purposes:

♠ 9 6 4 2  
♥ 5 3 2  
♦ 5 4 2  
♣ 10 7 5

In other words, we made 4♠ all by ourselves. The essential value provided by dummy was

the all-important trump length, allowing us to draw trumps easily.


Can you see what we mean when we say trump-fit is often more important than point-count?





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VB#7 Openings & limit raises 2 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ 52		
		♥ T3		
		♦ A9852		
		♣ KQJ3		
West				East
♠ AQ94				♠ J876
♥ 98762				♥ J54
♦ T74				♦ 6
♣ 2				♣ A8654
		South		
		♠ KT3		
		♥ AKQ		
		♦ KQJ3		
		♣ T97		

You have a normal opening bid of 1♦ here – and partner raises your suit.

What now?

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

Lead: ♥ 9

### Bidding.

Here we open 1♦ (being too strong to open 1NT) and partner raises us to 3♦. Where are we going now, with this hand?

Well, with 18 points we have to bid something, we can't Pass when our partnership has 28 points or so between us.

Bidding 5♦ would not be ridiculous (and some would try it) but we have a better call. Where there are eleven tricks there are frequently nine – and where there aren't eleven tricks there are frequently nine as well. In other words, before opting for the dangerous heights of the five-level we should consider the possibilities of 3NT.

We may think that 3NT with no Club stop is dangerous but we should ask ourselves where partner's length and strength is likely to be. North would have bid a four-card major had he been dealt one so it's at least likely that he has length in Clubs.

It's difficult (not impossible but difficult) to construct a hand opposite a 3♦ raise where 3NT fails and 5♦ makes. On that basis we suggest that the right bid is the world's most popular contract – 3NT.

Here, 5♦ is beaten by a Club lead and a Club ruff (or even a Spade shift at trick two). There is no defense to 3NT, which is bomb-proof on correct play.

### Play.

West leads the ♥9 and we take the ♥Q. With eight tricks *on top* (three Hearts and five Diamonds) we need a Club trick so we lead the ♣10 at trick two. East takes his ♣A and, appreciating the Heart layout by *reading his partner's lead*, East tries his luck in Spades by shifting to the ♠6.

Now we need to take care here. Playing the ♠K is too risky, East-West might cash the next four Spade tricks (as, indeed, they can). Playing low is also the wrong play as East would retain the lead to play another Spade. The right play is to

cover the ♠6 with the ♠10, forcing West on lead. Another Spade lead from the Western quarter (high or low) would only establish the ♠K so the contract is safe.

West forlornly cashes the ♠A (maybe he thinks East has the ♠K?) and we have the rest. In fact we have an embarrassment of riches. Mind you, we'd have made **eleven** tricks if West hadn't cashed the ♠A.

So we record an effortless overtrick in 3NT for our troubles.


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VB#7 Openings &amp; limit raises 2 SA

Contract: 5D

By: South


Date: 24/03/2016

Board #: 6

Dealer: East

Vulnerable: None

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		North		
		♠ JT		
		♥ 42		
		♦ A8532		
		♣ KQ63		
West				East
♠ A942				♠ 865
♥ T987				♥ KQ3
♦				♦ JT9
♣ J9872				♣ AT54
		South		
		♠ KQ73		
		♥ AJ65		
		♦ KQ764		
		♣		

You open 1♦ again – and once more (as in Hand 5) partner raises your suit.

What now?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♦
P	3♦	P	5♦
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ T

### Bidding.

Again (as in Hand 5) we open 1♦ and partner raises to 3♦. Where are we going now, with this hand?

Well, this deal is a rarity. Take a photograph – you won't see its like for some time. We have to bid again with 15 points and a side-suit void but bid what?

There is little point in trying 3♥ or 3♠ – partner would have responded 1♥ or 1♠ had he held four of either of those so we have no major suit fit. 3NT is looking unlikely, to say the least, with our hand pattern so what is left?

The answer is that this is one of those unusual occasions where we take a pot at five-of-a-minor. This is not a level we venture to all that often (the five level is just one trick short of a slam, remember) but on this deal it is appropriate. After 1♦ – 3♦ we jump to 5♦.

### Play.

The play of the hand isn't too difficult. After the ♥10 lead to the ♥Q and ♥A we draw trumps (in three rounds) and set up our side-suit by playing on Spades. When the opponents take the ♠A they cash the ♥K and try their luck with the ♣A (wouldn't you?) Nice try, no cigar.

We ruff that (watching with amusement as East-West's shoulders slump simultaneously) and claim the rest.

We make three Spades, two Hearts, five Diamonds and a couple of Clubs. Yes, that totals twelve, but we have to lose to the ♠A and the ♥K. Once more we have an embarrassment of riches.

Would we (or our partner) have made 3NT? No, not on a Club lead. This is a rare deal where 5♦ makes and 3NT fails.