




This is a set of four hands designed to complement David Bird's set of six deals for VB#11

VB#11 General hands Y2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AT97	
	♥ QJ5	
	♦ 852	
	♣ 864	
West		East
♠ 642		♠ KJ
♥ 83		♥ A96
♦ AKQJ7		♦ T63
♣ QJ3		♣ AT975
	South	
	♠ Q853	
	♥ KT742	
	♦ 94	
	♣ K2	

This series of four deals contains a theme. You will find out what that theme is in due course - all we are willing to say is that you will be defending all four hands...

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

Lead: ♥ 4

Here is a commonplace deal with a position in Hearts that we have noted before in VuBridge.

East-West reach 3NT in rapid fashion and you are on lead with a five-card Heart suit. You lead your fourth highest Heart and partner produces the ♥J, which forces the ♥A. You can be sure that your partner has the ♥Q as East wouldn't waste his ♥A on the lowly ♥J had he started with ♥A Q.

Note, in passing, that declarer cannot afford to duck a round or two of Hearts. From declarer's perspective it makes no sense to break North-South's communications in Hearts as he must take the Club finesse into your hand (so running North out of Hearts is simply pointless). Also, East is scared that a Spade switch from North might beat 3NT before East got going (imagine that the ♥J were allowed to hold and North switched to a low Spade. East might go off in 3NT even if the Club finesse were working).

So, needing the ♣K to be with North to make his contract East takes the ♥A, crosses to a Diamond and runs the ♣Q. As South you can take this trick and can continue with Hearts, safe in the knowledge that North has the ♥Q.

One cloud may darken your horizon. Suppose North started life with just two Hearts, the ♥Q J alone. Now a low Heart at trick four would **block** the Hearts as North would take the ♥Q and would have no Heart to play back to your ♥K 10 7.


Well, if that were the layout then there is nothing that could be done. East would have ♥A 9 6 5 and there would be no way of untangling the suit for the defenders. You might cash the ♥K (dropping the ♥Q) and follow with the ♥10 but East would have the master ♥9 now and enough tricks for his contract.

The only chance of beating 3NT is that North has three (or even four) Hearts – with that in mind you should continue with a low Heart to partner's Queen. As the cards lie you have four Hearts, the ♣K and still have the ♠A to come. Two down.



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VB#11 General hands Y2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ AT97	
	♥ Q65	
	♦ 852	
	♣ 864	
West		East
♠ 642		♠ KJ
♥ 83		♥ AJ9
♦ AKQJ7		♦ T63
♣ QJ3		♣ AT975
	South	
	♠ Q853	
	♥ KT742	
	♦ 94	
	♣ K2	

This deal has similarities with Hand 1.

However, the difference is crucial.

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

Lead: ♥ 4

As in Hand 1 East-West reach 3NT in rapid fashion and you are on lead with a five-card Heart suit. You lead your fourth highest Heart and partner produces the ♥Q, taken by the ♥A.

Hoping for some luck declarer crosses to a Diamond at trick two and runs the ♣Q. As South you can take this trick with your ♣K and have to find the best continuation.

Now, here declarer is known to hold the ♥J (partner's play of the ♥Q at trick one denies that card). So playing another Heart (especially a low Heart) is just going to give East a cheap trick. You might play the ♥K at this point but that would only be right if East started with ♥A J alone (the ♥K would drop the now-bare Jack). This, however, is against the odds.

East is most likely to have started with ♥A J ×. If he started with four Hearts his ♥J cannot be captured but if he has exactly three cards in the suit a Heart lead from North will pick up four more tricks for North-South. So the crux of the hand is to put North on lead.

The only suit that offers any hope of getting North in on lead is Spades – so you should lead a Spade at trick four. Careful, though! It is easy to disorientate your partner.

If you were to lead the ♠3 (a reflex play, maybe) you would give North a nasty problem. Look at it from his point of view – you lead a Spade to his ♠A and East plays the ♠J. Should North return a Spade (hoping East has ♠Q J and that you have the ♠K) or should he return a Heart? This would not be easy for him. There are many cases where you can see that your initial lead has been a dud and need to switch your line of attack. This might (from North's perspective) be one of these deals.

The answer is to make sure that you are clear with your leads. A low card means, in general "I like this suit – please lead it back". A high spot card, on the other hand, means, "I have no interest in this suit – I am just getting off lead". (If you would like a mnemonic it's **Low** for **Like** and **High** for **Hate**). Here, you want partner to win the Spade switch and to revert to Hearts.

To paint the picture in the brightest colours you should switch to the ♠8. Now North will think


you have nothing in Spades and will assuredly
switch back to Hearts – and that suits you just
fine.

Two down



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VB#11 General hands Y2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ KT972	
	♥ QJ	
	♦ 852	
	♣ 864	
West		East
♠ 64		♠ AJ
♥ 853		♥ A96
♦ AKQJ7		♦ T63
♣ QJ3		♣ AT975
	South	
	♠ Q853	
	♥ KT742	
	♦ 94	
	♣ K2	

This deal is identical to Hand 1, isn't it?

Not exactly, no. And the ever-so-subtle difference is crucial.

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

Lead: ♥ 4

This deal may look identical to Hand 1. Well your hand is exactly the same, as is the bidding. Dummy, though, is slightly different with West having three Hearts rather than two. Is that significant? Oh yes!

East-West reach 3NT in rapid fashion and you are on lead with a five-card Heart suit. You lead your fourth highest Heart and partner produces the ♥J, which forces the ♥A. As before (Hand 1) you can be sure that your partner has the ♥Q as East wouldn't waste his ♥A on the ♥J had he started with ♥A Q.

Once again, declarer cannot afford to duck a round or two of Hearts. From East's perspective it makes no sense to break North-South's communications in Hearts as he must take the Club finesse into your hand (so running North out of Hearts is simply pointless). Also, East is scared of a Spade switch from North at trick two. Now 3NT would fail even if the Hearts were 4-3 and you have the ♣K.

So, hoping for some luck (either the the ♣K to be with North or Hearts 4-3) East takes the ♥A, crosses to a Diamond and runs the ♣Q. As South you can take this trick and can continue with Hearts, safe in the knowledge that North has the ♥Q... or is life as simple as that?

Suppose North started life with just two Hearts, the ♥Q J alone (as is the actual layout). Now a **low** Heart at trick four would block the Hearts as North would take the ♥Q and would have no Heart to play back to your ♥K 10 7.

In this case with dummy having three Hearts East would also have three Hearts and so the suit could be unblocked if you take your ♥K. This would drop partner's ♥Q and clear the path for you to take the remaining Heart winners.

However, what if North started with ♥Q J ×? Now the play of the ♥K would block the suit, **unless** North were astute enough to pitch the ♥Q on your ♥K. The play of the ♥K will test your partner's mettle.

The best chance of beating 3NT is to lead the ♥K. On this layout North needs no celebration – he drops the ♥Q because he has no choice and you run the Hearts off. 3NT down one.



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This is a set of four hands designed to complement David Bird's set of six deals for VB#11

VB#11 General hands Y2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

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

Lead: ♥ 4

On this deal you are in third seat, awaiting partner's lead to a rapidly bid 3NT.

Your partner leads a low Heart and (having seen that dummy is a fair match for the previous three dummies in this set) you contribute the ♥J. We will beat the drum again: from equal cards you play the lower – so here you should play the ♥J and not the ♥Q.

West takes his ♥A, crosses to a high Diamond and runs the ♠Q. North wins the ♠K and lays down the ♥K. Dummy follows and you...

Well, following low would be thoughtless, unkind and plenty of other adjectives, many of which reside in a dictionary of slang.


What is going on? Partner knows that you have the ♥Q. Further you know that he knows that you have the ♥Q... (hold on, this is getting confusing). Why does partner not just continue with a low Heart?

Well, partner is worried that you might have ♥Q J alone and that a low Heart continuation would tangle the suit up. He's entirely right – if that's what you had, it would.

So he's cashing the ♥K from ♥K 10 × × × trusting that you will throw away the ♥Q if you have three cards.

Once you see the play (and have played through Hand 3) it all becomes clear. You must step out of partner's way and allow North the room to take the rest of his Heart suit.

One down.

	North	
	♠ Q853	
	♥ KT742	
	♦ 94	
	♣ K2	
West		East
♠ AJ2		♠ 64
♥ A9		♥ 853
♦ T63		♦ AKQJ7
♣ AT975		♣ QJ3
	South	
	♠ KT97	
	♥ QJ6	
	♦ 852	
	♣ 864	

Here, for a change, you are in third seat - as partner of the opening leader.

How might you influence the defence?