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A clone of 826; 6 deals originally used in early VB editions.
ACOL version

VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 86	
	♥ KT6	
	♦ AJ83	
	♣ KQ75	
West		East
♠ KJ943		♠ Q752
♥ 943		♥ A52
♦ K9		♦ T54
♣ T32		♣ 864
	South	
	♠ AT	
	♥ QJ87	
	♦ Q762	
	♣ AJ9	

This set of six deals is by the famous British author David Bird. There is no theme to these deals, just enjoy them as they come.

Hand 1. To plan a No-trump contract, you must start by counting your top tricks. You must then look for the line of play that will give you the best chance of creating the extra tricks you need.

This plan may consist of two parts:

- which suit to play
- how that suit should be played.

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

Lead: ♠ 4

West leads the ♠4 against 3NT, East playing the ♠Q. You win the second round of Spades and see that you are certain to go down if you play a Heart; you will lose one Heart and at least four Spades.

Your only chance lies in Diamonds. How will the cards have to lie to allow you to score four Diamond tricks? West must hold a doubleton ♦K. A low lead to the ♦J will then produce the four Diamond tricks that you need.

How can you tell if a suit is strong enough to allow you to lead a high card for a finesse? You must ask yourself if you will be pleased to see your high-card lead covered. Here you would not be pleased. The defenders would be certain to win the third round in that case.


Suppose you held the ♦10 in one hand or another. You would then hold enough neighboring honours to allow you to lead the ♦Q on the first round. If that was covered by the ♦K and ♦A, there would be good chance that your remaining honours could pick up the rest of the suit.



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VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 6N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 84	
	♥ A53	
	♦ KQ86	
	♣ AJ54	
West		East
♠ QT52		♠ 9763
♥ T64		♥ KJ92
♦ T93		♦ 754
♣ 862		♣ T7
	South	
	♠ AKJ	
	♥ Q87	
	♦ AJ2	
	♣ KQ93	

It is always a good idea to combine two chances of making a contract, rather than relying on just one.

See if you can spot the two chances on this deal and how they can be combined.

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	2NT
P	6NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ T

Adding his 14 points to the 20-22 shown by South, North quite rightly reckons that he has enough to raise to 6NT. When you have 34 points or more, it is usually right to play in No-trumps rather than a suit fit. You avoid the risk of a bad trump break or an adverse ruff.

West makes the safe lead of the ♦10. (You can see how unwise it would be to lead a Spade, the 'fourth-best from longest and strongest', immediately giving declarer the twelfth trick). You win and count eleven top tricks. You have a chance of a twelfth trick in both Spades and Hearts.

Suppose you take the Spade finesse first and it loses. That's no good! With one trick already lost, you will not be able to lead towards the ♥Q. East will simply rise with the ♥K and you will be one down.


Instead, you should lead towards the ♥Q first. This move is successful and you can claim the contract - whether East goes in with the ♥K or not. If West had won this trick with the ♥K, you would still be able to take your second chance - a finesse of the ♠J.



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VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 6N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ AQJ	
	♥ A5	
	♦ T763	
	♣ AKQ6	
West		East
♠ T52		♠ 8763
♥ JT962		♥ Q743
♦ Q95		♦ K8
♣ 94		♣ 853
	South	
	♠ K94	
	♥ K8	
	♦ AJ42	
	♣ JT72	

Sometimes you arrive in a contract that you would rather not have been in.

Never mind. Perhaps you can make it!

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	6NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ J

You open 1NT and partner raises exuberantly to 6NT. West leads the ♥J against your slam. You have just ten top tricks and must create two extra trick from the Diamonds.

The best play in the suit is low to the ♦J. This will give you the slam when (a) East holds both the missing diamond honours, or (b) when East started with a doubleton ♦K or ♦Q. His honour will fall under your ace on the second round and dummy's ♦10 will be good. The second chance pays off here and you make the slam.


Suppose dummy's diamonds were only ♦8 7 6 3. The situation would be grim but not hopeless. You would again lead towards the ♦J, hoping that East held ♦K Q x.



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VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 542	
	♥ 532	
	♦ A9764	
	♣ 54	
West		East
♠ JT986		♠ 73
♥ Q64		♥ K987
♦ QT		♦ KJ8
♣ 862		♣ QJT7
	South	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ AJT	
	♦ 532	
	♣ AK93	

An important element in planning the play of a hand is to ensure that you will have the entries needed.

Don't start playing this contract (or any contract!) until you have made a plan.

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

Lead: ♠ J

With a balanced 21 points you open 2NT, despite the weakness in Diamonds. Partner scrapes up a raise to game and West leads the ♠J.

You start with seven top tricks and must score two extra tricks from somewhere. If Diamonds break 3-2, you can make three Diamond tricks. However, you need to preserve the ♦A entry until the third round of the suit. You must duck the first two rounds of Diamonds.


(If East wins the first ducked Diamond and switches to a Heart, you must put in the ♥J or ♥10. West will not then be able to continue the suit without giving you two Heart tricks).



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VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 863		
	♥ 543		
	♦ Q73		
	♣ KQ76		
West		East	
♠ 72		♠ A9	
♥ 92		♥ AJT86	
♦ T9654		♦ AJ8	
♣ JT94		♣ 852	
	South		
	♠ KQJT54		
	♥ KQ7		
	♦ K2		
	♣ A3		

Sometimes you have to look into the future, as declarer.

By foreseeing what the defenders might do to beat your contract, you at least have a chance of working out a counter.

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

Lead: ♥ 9

East opens 1♥ giving you a small problem as South. A bid in Spades might mislead North so you Double first and then bid Spades. Any suit bid following a take-out Double shows strength and this describes your hand well. If North had nothing (and his 2♣ response promises nothing more) he could Pass. As it is, realising you have shown something good, North raises to game. West dutifully leads his partner's suit - the ♥9.

East wins with the ♥A and returns the ♥J to your ♥K. If you play a trump next, it is evident that East will give his partner a Heart ruff, putting you one down. To prevent this, you must play three top Clubs and discard your ♥Q. You can then play a trump. If East rises with the ♠A and plays another Heart, you ruff with a high trump to prevent an overruff. You can then draw trumps and knock out the ♦A to make the contract.


Perhaps you know a player or two who would say: "That's too difficult for me, throwing away a winner!" Of course, it's not! Declarer knows that he is almost certain to go down if he plays a trump. In that case it is essential to look for some better way to play the contract.



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VB#15 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 86	
	♥ 876	
	♦ J7432	
	♣ AQ5	
West		East
♠ A92		♠ 73
♥ JT5		♥ AK92
♦ T96		♦ KQ85
♣ T983		♣ J62
	South	
	♠ KQJT54	
	♥ Q43	
	♦ A	
	♣ K74	

On this last deal of the set, you and your partner overbid a little.

Is that a social gaffe? Not at all. There are plenty of players who enjoy overbidding, particularly when they manage to make the contract.

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

Lead: ♣ T

West leads the ♣10 against your very thin Spade game. You win in your hand and play the ♠K to West's ♠A. He returns a second round of Clubs, won in the dummy.

The only real chance of avoiding three Heart losers is to lead twice towards the ♥Q, hoping that East holds the ♥A and ♥K. Not a good chance but the only chance.

You cannot draw the remaining trumps at this stage because you are in dummy for the penultimate time and need to play a Heart. When you lead a Heart, East rises with the ♥K and switches to the ♦K. You win with the ♦A, draw the remaining trumps and cross to dummy's remaining Club entry to lead another Heart. East wins with the ♥A and tries to cash the ♦Q.

Not today, my friend! You ruff and claim the contract.