



Clone of 925 (order of deals altered); ACOL version

VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ 94			
♥ K42			
♦ AT874			
♣ K76			
West		East	
♠ 532		♠ QJT86	
♥ AJ853		♥ QT	
♦ 3		♦ K65	
♣ J943			♣ T85
South			
♠ AK7			
♥ 976			
♦ QJ92			
♣ AQ2			

This set of six deals is by David Bird of England.

3NT is sometimes referred to as the 'bread-and-butter contract'. What on earth does that mean? It means that it is the most frequently-occurring contract and therefore the most important one to play well.

Those who earn their living at the rubber bridge table have to know all the wrinkles that allow you make as many such contracts as possible.

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

Lead: ♥ 5

West leads the ♥5 against 3NT. You have six top tricks and a certain three more in the Diamond suit, even if the finesse against the ♦K were to lose.

Rising with the ♥K at trick one can lose in two different ways. If East holds a doubleton ♥A, you could lose the first five tricks in Hearts. When the cards lie as they do, rising with the ♥K will cost in a different way. You will cross to your hand to finesse in Diamonds. The finesse loses and East returns a Heart. You lose four hearts and one Diamond.

If you play low from dummy the contract is guaranteed. Suppose East returns his last Heart. Whether or not West wins with the ♥A, the link between the defenders is broken. When you subsequently take a Diamond finesse, East will have no Heart to play. In fact you would score an overtrick, since the ♥K will be added to your total.

In practice, East switches to the ♠Q but you can win that in hand and take the Diamond finesse in safety. Every suit is still protected.



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VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S


West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♣
P	1♦	P	1♥
P	2♦	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ 4

West leads the ♠4 against 3NT and you see that you have eight top tricks (provided you can score the ♦Q, ♦K and ♦A). The best chance of increasing this total lies in the Diamond suit. What is the best play there?

You win the Spade lead in your hand, preserving the ♠Q as an entry to dummy. If you cash the ♦Q and enter dummy with the ♠Q to play Diamonds from the top, you will need the ♦J to fall in three rounds.

A much better idea is to overtake the ♦Q with the ♦K and then play Diamonds from the top, willing to concede a trick to the ♦J. This will allow you to make five Diamond tricks (for an overtrick) when either defender holds ♦J × × ×

North		East	
♠ Q5		♠ T62	
♥ 874		♥ QT95	
♦ AKT962		♦ J874	
♣ 43		♣ Q5	
West		East	
♠ J9743		♠ T62	
♥ K6		♥ QT95	
♦ 53		♦ J874	
♣ KJ96		♣ Q5	
South			
♠ AK8			
♥ AJ32			
♦ Q			
♣ AT872			

Two thoughtful moves are required to land your game contract on this deal.

Good luck!



Clone of 925 (order of deals altered); ACOL version

VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 6S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

<p>North</p> <p>♠ Q7</p> <p>♥ J8643</p> <p>♦ A3</p> <p>♣ A964</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ 983</p> <p>♥ AQ72</p> <p>♦ T6</p> <p>♣ K853</p>	
<p>West</p> <p>♠ 4</p> <p>♥ K95</p> <p>♦ J8752</p> <p>♣ QJT7</p>		<p>South</p> <p>♠ AKJT652</p> <p>♥ T</p> <p>♦ KQ94</p> <p>♣ 2</p>	

On this deal you hold a near-minimum point-count for an opening bid. Yes, but you have a great hand! See if you can make the most of it.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♥	P	3♠
P	4♣	P	4NT
P	5♥	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ Q

You reach a slam after North makes a **cue-bid** in support of your Spade suit. West leads the ♣Q - how should you play?

The original declarer saw that he could avoid a Diamond loser by taking a ruff in the dummy. He won the Club lead and played off the ♦A K. He then led the ♦9, ruffing with dummy's ♠Q. Just as well, because if had ruffed with the ♠7, East would have over-ruffed.

Did you spot an even better way to play the contract? You could draw one round of trumps with the ♠A before taking your Diamond ruff. This would cater for the minuscule chance of a defender holding one Diamond and one trump. He would not then be able to ruff the second round of Diamonds.

(I did not set this as the required line of play for you to follow because the main lesson of the deal was that you should ruff the third round of Diamonds high, with the ♠Q, rather than with the ♠7).



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VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West ♠ KJ52 ♥ A865 ♦ 875 ♣ T5		East ♠ QT73 ♥ 92 ♦ K43 ♣ 9876
North ♠ 96 ♥ K43 ♦ AT92 ♣ KJ43		
South ♠ A84 ♥ QJT7 ♦ QJ6 ♣ AQ2		

Clues arrive in declarer's lap from all quarters. See if you can spot the most important clue on this deal.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♥
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	3♥	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 2

Many a 3NT contract depends on reading how the defenders' main suit breaks. Here West has led the ♠2, so you suspect immediately that Spades are 4-4.

You have nothing to lose by ducking the first trick and East returns the ♠3. Since he would return his fourth-best card from an original four-card holding, this is further evidence that Spades are breaking 4-4.


You win the third round of Spades and see that the best line is to establish the Heart suit. If instead you were to take the Diamond finesse, you would risk losing three Spades, the ♥A and the ♦K.

The cards lie as you envisaged and you make 3NT.



Clone of 925 (order of deals altered); ACOL version

VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 6S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

North	
♠ Q54	
♥ 72	
♦ AK9762	
♣ AQ	
	
East	
♠ 76	
♥ Q8653	
♦ QT	
♣ KJ63	
South	
♠ AKJ93	
♥ AJT	
♦ 83	
♣ T52	

This is yet another deal where you need to make a plan before rushing to play the first few tricks. Good luck!

West	North	East	South
-	1♦	P	1♠
P	3♦	P	3♠
P	4♣	P	4NT
P	5♥	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ 9

You reach 6♠ after North makes a telling **cue-bid** in support of your Spade suit. West leads the ♣9 against your small slam and you must decide on the best line of play.

You decide that West could be trying to fool you with this ♣9 lead so you try the ♣Q at trick one. No luck - the ♣Q loses and East returns another Club. You now need to establish dummy's Diamonds to discard some losers from your hand. You play the ♦A and ♦K, continuing with a Diamond ruff. If East had followed to the third round of Diamonds, you would have had to ruff high.

With the Diamonds established, you play the Ace, King and Queen of trumps. You can then play the established ♦9 7 6 and discard two Hearts and the last Club from your hand.

What is the point to remember about this deal? When the defenders remove dummy's Club entry, you can see that you will need the ♠Q as an entry to reach the established cards in Diamonds. You cannot therefore afford to draw all the trumps before setting up the Diamond suit.

(Yes, you could play the ♠A and ♠K before playing Diamonds, but this would not help very much. You need Diamonds to break 3-2 anyway).



Clone of 925 (order of deals altered); ACOL version

VB#19 Y2 David Bird's hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

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

Lead: ♥ T

West leads the ♥10 against your Spade game. If you ruff this trick in the dummy, you will lose four tricks in the minor suits and go one down. Instead you should discard a Diamond from dummy.

You win the Diamond switch in dummy and draw trumps in two rounds. You then discard another Diamond from dummy on the established ♥K. You will now be able to ruff two Diamonds in the dummy. The contract is yours, for the loss of one Heart and two clubs.

West		East
♠ 74		♠ 3
♥ T9852		♥ AQJ764
♦ KJ72		♦ Q86
♣ A3		♣ KQ5
	North	
	♠ K982	
	♥	
	♦ AT5	
	♣ JT9764	
	South	
	♠ AQJT65	
	♥ K3	
	♦ 943	
	♣ 82	

Many interesting deals arise when one side holds the Hearts, the other side holds the Spades. See how you fare on this one.