



This is all about third hand play and Reading the Lead. Some deals make use of the Rule of Eleven.

VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

<b>West</b> ♠ A83 ♥ J97 ♦ J94 ♣ AQJ7		<b>East</b> ♠ J4 ♥ A85 ♦ KQT753 ♣ KT
<b>North</b> ♠ 7652 ♥ QT642 ♦ 82 ♣ 84		
<b>South</b> ♠ KQT9 ♥ K3 ♦ A6 ♣ 96532		

**This series of six deals (the second of two series to be found in this edition of V-Blue) is about *third hand play* in defence. We all know about "Third player plays high" but there is more to it than that...**

**We are going to ask you to *Read the Lead* (what has partner led from?) and to work out what to do. Should we play "Third player plays high" regardless? Should we return partner's suit when on lead?**

**The previous series focused on No-trump contracts. In this series we have some suit contracts as well for you to consider.**

Hand 1 just needs you to keep your wits about you. Who has what?

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

**Lead: ♥ 4**

After West shows 13-15 points and a balanced hand we put our brain into overdrive to figure out how to set this contract.

This hand illustrates the importance of figuring out how many points our partner has. This should be so routine you should hardly have to think too deeply about it.

When you add up your points, the dummy's and declarer's opening 1NT bid, you realise that poor partner is big-time broke – except for the Heart honour he has led from.

The arithmetic is primary school standard. West has 13-15 points, dummy has 13 and we are looking at 12. that leaves partner with 0-2 points.

We calculate (by looking at our hand and the dummy) that partner could have the ♥Q. (He could have the ♥J, but then we would have no chance of setting 3NT...)

Our big decision comes at trick one. Firstly, why did declarer play dummy's ♥A? Mostly, players duck a round or two of the suit that has been led. The answer – as you can see now – is that declarer feared a switch to a Spade and, indeed, given the chance you would have taken the ♥K at trick one played the ♠K at trick two.

So, declarer hopped up with the ♥A at trick one and you...? The smart third-hand play is to **unblock** the Heart suit by dumping the ♥K under dummy's ♥A. It only hurts for a second. When we get on lead with the ♦A at trick two (or three), we can now play the ♥3 through the declarer and into partner's five-card Heart suit. Yes, we know North has five Hearts. Would West not have responded 1♥ with four of them?

Good things happen to people who do good things. Everything is where we need it to be, and the poor declarer is down again.





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VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ KQJT876</p> <p>♥ 765</p> <p>♦</p> <p>♣ K93</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ A32</p> <p>♥ 2</p> <p>♦ AKQT9</p> <p>♣ 7652</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ 54</p> <p>♥ KQT8</p> <p>♦ J432</p> <p>♣ AT4</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 9</p> <p>♥ AJ943</p> <p>♦ 8765</p> <p>♣ QJ8</p>		

We have used the phrase before, we will use it again.

In defending this hand you must **Look at the dummy, dummy**.

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

Lead: ♥ K

East-West bid quickly to 4♠. Once the dummy comes down, no one is in a better position to guide the hand than third hand. And that's what happens here.

The dummy contains a spectacular side-suit, promising to provide a happy resting place for all of declarer's losers.

Our **Count and Plan** shows that partner has roughly 11 points. We can see that they aren't in Diamonds and unlikely to be in Spades, so anything outside of Hearts must be in Clubs.

The big question is "Who should lead the Clubs?" With our holding, it must be us. Partner is unlikely to be able to broach the suit from his side.

So, trick one, we overtake partner's Heart winner with our ♥A and, at trick two, lead our ♣Q. With this layout declarer cannot avoid three Club losers, whether he chooses to cover the ♣Q or not.


Three Club tricks is all the defence can take but that's enough. 4♠ is unavoidably one off.

Third hand's job was to once again take control, and we fulfilled our mission.



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VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ KQT9643	
	♥ 8	
	♦ 54	
	♣ AT7	
West		East
♠ 85		♠ J
♥ KQ642		♥ AJT7
♦ 62		♦ AKJ93
♣ J842		♣ Q63
	South	
	♠ A72	
	♥ 953	
	♦ QT87	
	♣ K95	

Often as defenders we're not initially sure how we're going to defeat the contract.

Sometimes we need to attack and grab our winners before the rats get at them. Sometimes it is best to lie low and do nuffin'.

What type of deal is this?

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

Lead: ♠ K

Once again, third hand proves to be the hero.

East has been forced into bidding 4♥ by North's pre-empt of 3♠. North leads the King of his suit and a slightly underweight dummy appears. Not that East could avoid bidding 4♥ (anyone with red blood coursing through their veins would do the same) it's just that it gives us hope of defeating the contract.

The sight of the cards on the table shows that we are sitting **over** the dummy and that we have its side-suit (Diamonds) well covered. This usually means we don't want to be on lead, and we certainly don't want to lead from our honours.

At trick one, we have a big decision to make. Should we or should we not take the trick? We decide to overtake the ♠K with the Ace for several reasons.

Firstly, partner is looking at the dummy too, but he sees a different story. He sees those Diamonds, and visualises them as a **dump** site. We know better, and we have to make sure that partner doesn't attempt to grab as many tricks as he can early in the hand. As we saw in the previous deal, when the dummy is a **dumping ground**, we usually attack our possible side-suits immediately.

Here, if we allow partner to hold trick one he is very likely to continue with the ♣A. (We don't know he has the ♣A, of course, but a Club shift from ♣J × × would be just as poor).

Secondly, we just **love** declarer (or dummy) being on lead. The more that happens in this hand, the better. Let 'em get on with it.

After taking the ♠A we could play a trump at trick two (a really *passive* defense) but slightly better is to **force** dummy by playing back a Spade. This makes it that much harder for declarer to get his Diamonds going. Declarer's plan will be to *ruff out* the Diamonds – he will hope for a 3-3 break (or the ♦Q falling in two rounds). Tough bananas, West, not today.

Ultimately declarer runs out of trumps in ruffing

two Diamonds in hand and drawing our three trumps. Rather unexpectedly partner takes the last three tricks with the ♣A and two boss Spades.

Note, though, that declarer can never play Clubs without giving us three Club tricks. The suit is classically situated – it is a **frozen suit** (whoever leads it, regrets doing so).

*Patience is a virtue*, we've been told. This hand shows exactly the kind of deal where it pays off: The hand where declarer doesn't have enough tricks. Also a hand where your honours, as third hand, are all behind the big hand.

On this type of deal you should pour yourself a drink, sit back, sip your beverage and watch the show. Declarer does all the hard work while your duties are confined to following suit and not falling off your chair.



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VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

North	
♠ KQT9643	
♥ 8	
♦ 84	
♣ K85	
West	East
♠ 85	♠ J
♥ KQ642	♥ AJT7
♦ QT	♦ AKJ93
♣ T974	♣ Q63
South	
♠ A72	
♥ 953	
♦ 7652	
♣ AJ2	

Contrast this deal with the previous one (Hand 3), which has some similarities (!)

Sometimes we need to attack and grab our winners before the rats get at them. Sometimes it is best to lie low and do nuffin'.

What type of deal is this?

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

Lead: ♠ K

This hand looks eerily familiar. The bidding, the dummy... is this an old episode of the *X-Files*? At least the thirteen cards we have in our own hand are different, so that may give us cause to reflect.

East is forced into 4♥ by North's 3♠ pre-empt. 4♥ is a slight overbid but I'd do it, you'd do it, even educated fleas'd do it...

North kicks off with the ♠K lead and at trick one, we have a decision to make, just as we did in Hand 3. Spooky! Should we or should we not overtake the ♠K with the ♠A? If so, *why*? If not, *why not*?

As we have seen previously, when the dummy is a **dumping ground**, we usually attack our possible side suits immediately. Here, we should be alarmed by our Diamond holding.

♦7 6 5 2 could be considered a nuisance value by precisely nobody. We can see clearly now (just like Johnny Nash) that declarer will be able to pull trumps and cash five Diamonds. If North has the ♦Q it's useless for the defence – if declarer has it he'll be beaming from ear to ear.

Right... drastic action required. We need four tricks and we need 'em fast. Like now (or even earlier). Partner, if left on lead, might funk leading away from the ♠K, fearing opening up the Clubs.

Partners must be protected from themselves so we must take the ♠A and immediately switch to the ♣2. North wins the ♠K (if he didn't have that card, by the way, it's very hard to see where four defensive tricks are coming from) and plays another Club. Two seconds later we are four-nil up with nine to play. Game over.


It was hard work, but **so** satisfying. Partner opens his mouth to say something. We expect the words "Well defended". Nope. "If you'd have bid 4♠", the horrible creature whines, "I'd have made that with seven Spade tricks and three Clubs". Right. Thanks. In the doghouse again...





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VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 2S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J5	
	♥ Q8653	
	♦ Q63	
	♣ 974	
West		East
♠ AKQ98		♠ 72
♥ 42		♥ AJ9
♦ KJ8		♦ T742
♣ KT2		♣ 8653
	South	
	♠ T643	
	♥ KT7	
	♦ A95	
	♣ AQJ	

Here we have a tricky deal where you have to think carefully. What's that expression again? *Two-level contracts are the hardest to make and the hardest to defeat?* Something like that. Well, here you'll have to be at your sharpest.

For once you are about to pick up a decent hand; not that it's going to do you much good, mind...

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
X	2♥	P	P
2♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ 5

Here we (South) are looking at a promising hand and open 1NT after two Passes. West Doubles (for penalties) and partner rescues into 2♥. West then tries his luck with 2♠ and that buys the auction.

Partner leads the ♥5 and 5 points go down in the dummy – more than we'd hoped to see but worse than declarer wanted. Anyway, West courteously thanks his partner for the collection duly displayed and calls for the ♥9.

Trick one crisis (again!) What should you play? It might be disastrous to play the ♥K – in time declarer might finesse the ♥J and make two Heart tricks, dumping a loser from hand. On the other hand it might be a calamity **not** to play the ♥K. If declarer has ♥Q × (we know he can have at most two Hearts) then he might win trick one and lose no more Hearts.

What to do? Well, coming to our rescue is the Rule of Eleven. Well educated players lead fourth-highest from broken suits in suit contracts as well as in No-trumps.

Partner has led the fourth highest Heart (so one strong inference is that he has something in the suit) but we can confirm that with simple arithmetic.  $11 - 5 = 6$  so there are six cards higher than the ♥5 shared amongst dummy, our hand and declarer. We can see all six (three on table, three in hand) so declarer has none, de nada, zilch. We are quite safe in putting in the ♥10, confident it will hold the trick.

The deal isn't over, though. At trick two we should play back the ♥K (to knock out the entry to dummy). Declarer tries his luck in Diamonds, finessing into partner's ♦Q.

West ruffs the Heart return and plays three top trumps, hoping for an even split, before playing the ♦K. We do best to duck that, isolating the ♦10 on table. Now we come to a trump trick and, eventually, two Club tricks.

One off again. East-West are having a bad day...







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VB#19 Year 2 Third Hand play Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

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

Lead: ♣ 7

North leads the ♣7 against 3NT and Declarer takes the ♣K over your ♣J. This leaves North in the dark as to the location of the ♣Q – declarer could as easily have ♣K Q × as ♣K × ×.

Declarer, naturally enough, plays on Diamonds, and North has a problem. In essence he has to decide whether to play you (South) for the ♣Q or whether to play you for a major-suit Ace and ♣J × ×. North does the best he can by holding up the ♦A for two rounds in the hope that you can make a helpful discard. So what can you pitch on the third Diamond that will open North's eyes as to the true layout of the cards? This is the £1,000,000 question.

Well, the **Rule of Eleven** may help you here. From the South seat you can see that North must have all the winning Clubs. (Why? Because  $11 - 7 = 4$  and you have seen all four higher Clubs in the other three hands – the ♣9 on table, the ♣Q J in your hand and the ♣K in West).

So you know that the Clubs are North's to run whereas North does not. How can you let partner know? If you were to throw the ♠8 or the ♥8 North might think it a signal for a lead of that suit (after all, you could logically hold the ♠A or the ♥A together with ♣J × ×)

The correct discard is the ♣Q! With his vision unclouded North can now cash out the Clubs for an easy one off.

West	North	East
♠ AT54	♠ 76	♠ K32
♥ AQ4	♥ 765	♥ K32
♦ T74	♦ A52	♦ KQJ96
♣ K65	♣ AT872	♣ 93

South
♠ QJ98
♥ JT98
♦ 83
♣ QJ4

Bridge is a partnership game. Well, it's supposed to be...

Can you work out partner's problem here?  
Can you help him solve it?

Be warned! This is not easy!