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Four general practice hands to supplement David Bird's six deals

VB#21 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 5D
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A943	
	♥ J	
	♦ KQJT	
	♣ T753	
West		East
♠ Q2		♠ JT86
♥ Q		♥ K97543
♦ 76532		♦
♣ KJ962		♣ Q84
	South	
	♠ K75	
	♥ AT862	
	♦ A984	
	♣ A	

Hand 1: Here, some good bidding lands us in an unusual but good contract.

Can we find equally fine play to land it?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	2♦
P	3♦	P	3♠
P	5♦	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ 2

### Bidding

You open 1♥ in third seat and rebid 2♦ over 1♠. Partner raises that to 3♦ so you now have to decide whether to bid again or to Pass. With 15 points and something useful in partner's Spade suit you simply have to bid on, Passing would be wet. Best is to suggest Spades as a possible resting spot by bidding 3♠. After all, partner might have five of them and 4♣ might be a cake-walk.

North can actually deduce that we have a singleton Club now (we have opened 1♥, rebid 2♦ and supported Spades. Just how many Clubs can we have?) With the information that his four useless Clubs are facing a shortage (a good sign in general) partner decides it's time to take a pot at that rarest of contracts, 5♦.

It is worth noting that 3NT would have been a real struggle on the North-South cards. Eight tricks on top but where's the ninth?

### Play

West leads a trump and you can see only one loser at first (the third Spade). However, eleven winners don't immediately present themselves as there are only eight on top (two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and the ♣A). With insufficient winners it would be potty to attempt to draw trumps, the more so when East discards on dummy's ♦10. What is this? A 5-0 trump break? Ugh!

You have to use your trumps for ruffing and, if the foul trump split is bad news, the good news is that you have all the high Diamonds between you. A recount of tricks shows that you have four tricks in the plain suits so need **seven** trump tricks. Is that possible? Yes, of course! You have four Diamonds by force – you just require three ruffs. This hand requires a **crossruff**.

Now, the "rules" for a crossruff state that you must cash all necessary outside winners before embarking on an orgy of ruffs. To that end we

cash the ♠K, the ♠A and the two other Aces before ruffing everything in sight. (To be precise we ruff Hearts on table and Clubs in hand).


Why are these preliminaries necessary? Well, if you were to play off the ♥A and ruff a Heart on table early West would seize the chance to throw off a Spade. Now you would be unable to cash the ♠A K at any time in the play (West would ruff) and the game would fail.



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VB#21 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ AQ83		
	♥ J		
	♦ A642		
	♣ K753		
West		East	
♠		♠ 76542	
♥ Q987642		♥ K	
♦ J973		♦ T8	
♣ 96		♣ AQJT2	
	South		
	♠ KJT9		
	♥ AT53		
	♦ KQ5		
	♣ 84		

After the nasty breaks of Hand 1 we pick up a nice balanced hand. That surely guarantees that the suits will break well for us, doesn't it?

Doesn't it?

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

Lead: ♣ 9

### Bidding

We open 1NT and partner asks us a question with a 2♣ Stayman enquiry. From a position of being comatose (he Passed as dealer) East now emerges from the bushes with a *lead-directing Double*. You brush that aside by showing your Hearts (with both majors we always bid Hearts first) and North leaps to 3NT.

Now, whatever temptations you may harbour to Pass this they must be resisted. North has not employed Stayman just to pass the time of day; he has a purpose in mind and that can only be because he has a four-card major. As he clearly does not have four Hearts he simply must have four Spades. A 4♠ call from you is mandatory.

### Play

West dutifully leads a Club in response to his partner's *lead-directing* bid and you contemplate dummy with little cause for concern. Four Spade tricks, the ♥A and three Diamonds makes eight "on top" and you just need two ruffs to swell the coffers up to ten.

Looking at **losers** there are none in Spades, none in Hearts (assuming we can trump some – or all – of our three losers), none in Diamonds and two in Clubs. (The ♠A is over the ♠K. The bidding and opening lead have made that abundantly clear. You have more chance of finding Elvis alive living with the Loch Ness monster than you have of finding the ♠A with West).

So you allow the ♣9 to win trick one and the ♣10 to hold trick two. East now leads a trump and your complacency is shattered when West chucks a Heart. What? Another 5-0 trump break? Ouch! Now what?

Well, the idea of ruffing a couple of somethings somewhere, drawing trumps and cashing winners has just left the building. We need Plan B. Luckily, all of our trumps are high so we might get somewhere with a **crossruff**. If we can trump three Hearts on table we could make seven trump tricks. That requires three outside

winners to make the total up to ten. Do we have them?

Well, it appears that we have *four* outside winners, three Diamonds and a Heart. However, you must not be greedy by trying to cash a third Diamond trick. Were you to try to cash three Diamonds East would ruff and play another trump, cutting down on the number of tricks available by ruffing. Best is to hope to cash two Diamonds and the ♥A and then crossruff.


Remember, the "rules" for a crossruff state that you must cash all necessary outside winners before embarking on your ruffing spree. So you must cash exactly two Diamonds and the ♥A before East has the chance to disgorge any of his Diamonds as you ruff Hearts.

The play in detail: win the trump switch at trick three, cash two Diamonds and the ♥A and then ruff three Hearts on table and two Clubs in hand. That lands ten tricks, despite the evil 5-0 trump break.



Four general practice hands to supplement David Bird's six deals

VB#21 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ J3		
	♥ AKQ		
	♦ QJ43		
	♣ 9873		
West		East	
♠ T9854		♠ KQ72	
♥ T5		♥ 98642	
♦ A96		♦ K87	
♣ JT6		♣ 4	
	South		
	♠ A6		
	♥ J73		
	♦ T52		
	♣ AKQ52		

A trivial deal with sufficient top tricks to land your contract without any difficulty.

Or is there something that you might have overlooked...?

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

Lead: ♠ T

### Bidding

A routine 1NT – 3NT auction. With 14 points and a 5-3-3-2 pattern 1NT is a vastly superior call to an opening bid of 1♣. With 13 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape North has an easy raise to game.

### Play

West leads the ♠10 and this, somewhat unsportingly, knocks out the ♠A, leaving you vulnerable in that quarter. So you need to take the next eight tricks in a hurry or you will be swept away by the opponents' Spades. Do you have nine *top tricks*?

The answer appears to be *Yes* as you can see one Spade, three Hearts and five Clubs. The only obvious problem is if Clubs break 4-0, which would give you only three Club tricks. If Clubs are 4-0 then 3NT is simply doomed to fail. *C'est la vie*. Anyway, after Hands 1 and 2 aren't we due just a modicum of good fortune?

If Clubs are 3-1 or 2-2 is the hand not trivial? We just cash five Club tricks, three Heart tricks and throw the rest to the wolves? Not so fast... there is a sting in the tail.

Try the effect of cashing the ♠A K Q and doing the "obvious" thing of calling "small, please" to dummy as you do so. North will oblige with the ♣3, then the ♣7 then the ♣8. Now your last two Clubs in hand are the ♣5 2 and dummy's is the boss ♣9. The fourth Club will be won on the table and the last, winning, Club will be in your hand. Oops! What happened? You *blocked* the Clubs, that's what.

The correct line to avoid this embarrassment (and partner's icy stare) is to jettison dummy's *blocking* ♣9 8 7 under your ♠A K Q leaving the ♣3 as the last Club on the table. This falls on the ♣5 and you can then cash the ♣2.


Easy when you **see** it... and it is best to see it early rather than too late.



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Four general practice hands to supplement David Bird's six deals

VB#21 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ J3	
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ JT43	
	♣ 9876	
West		East
♠ T9854		♠ KQ7
♥ T5		♥ 98642
♦ A96		♦ K872
♣ JT3		♣ 4
	South	
	♠ A62	
	♥ J73	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ AKQ52	

This deal bears a strong similarity to Hand 3. Odd how these things happen in VuBridge, isn't it?

So should you play this hand in identical fashion to Hand 3?

Actually, you should see that's not possible – so what can you do to land your contract?

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

Lead: ♠ T

## Bidding

Here you open 1♣ in fourth seat and North responds 1♦. With an essentially balanced hand (5-3-3-2 hands always count as being balanced) you rebid 1NT to show 15-16 points. With 11 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape North has an obvious raise to game.

## Play

West leads the ♠10 and this hits you in your weak spot, knocking out the ♠A. If you were to lose the lead then the opponents would have enough Spades and Diamonds to defeat you. So, do you have nine *top tricks*?

The answer, as in Hand 3, appears to be Yes as you can see one Spade, three Hearts and five Clubs. The only obvious problem is if Clubs break 4-0, which would give you only three Club tricks. If Clubs are 4-0 then 3NT is simply doomed to fail. *C'est la vie*. Forget that possibility and focus on making your contract if Clubs are 3-1 or 2-2.

Now, in Hand 3 we saw that we had to **unblock** an awkward Club suit. Here, there can be no unblocking of dummy's Clubs on our top cards as they are sequential.

Again, try the effect of cashing the ♣A K Q and observing the effect of a 3-1 split. Your last two Clubs will be the ♣5 2 and dummy's will be the boss ♣9. The fourth Club will be won on the table and the last, winning, Club will wither away in your hand. Not good.

The only way to unblock this suit is to pitch one of dummy's Clubs. If we could throw a Club out of the window we'd be fine as the remaining ♣9 8 7 would fall on the ♣A K Q. Well, we can't do that but we can set up a discard, courtesy of the opponents.

West's Spade lead is covered by the ♠J and East's ♠Q. East continues Spades and we hold off again. On the third round of Spades we make the crucial play of throwing a Club from table on the ♠A. After that it's all plain sailing.

We cash five Clubs and three Hearts and concede the last two tricks. No problem.