



This series is about setting up suits by ducking an early round of the suit.

VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 1 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 21/09/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ J73	
	♥ 754	
	♦ A976	
	♣ T86	
West		East
♠ 852		♠ T964
♥ JT98		♥ K6
♦ QT4		♦ KJ2
♣ J93		♣ Q754
	South	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ AQ32	
	♦ 853	
	♣ AK2	

This set of six deals (and its previous sibling to be found elsewhere in this edition of V-Blue) covers the theme of *ducking* to establish a long suit. This play is usually made in No-trumps and is a way of retaining communication between the closed hand and dummy.

It is often the right play at this game to allow the opposition to take their trick(s) early in the piece rather than later in the hand. This way you keep control of matters.

Hand 1. Now that you have played through the first series and understand the rationale of what we are trying to do on these deals you will surely find this one easy.

Won't you?

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

Lead: ♥ J

With 22 points and a balanced hand there is little alternative to a 2NT opening bid on the South cards, even with three low cards in Diamonds. Partner's 5 points is sufficient for a raise to game.

Dummy is a disappointment in that the ♠J is a waste of pasteboard and there is no obvious source of tricks (it's a truism that 4-3-3-3 hands facing 4-3-3-3 hands often play disappointingly).

After the ♥J lead there are two guaranteed Heart tricks but it is highly unlikely that Hearts will break 3-3 given that West saw fit to lead the suit. As well as two Hearts there are three Spades, one Diamond and two Clubs so that makes eight *top tricks*. So what else is there?

The only real chance is to hope for a 3-3 Diamond break and that means ducking two rounds of Diamonds. Not a great chance but what other play can we make?

Right, with little alternative we must get on with it. East plays the ♥K on the ♥J (from his perspective the lead might have been from ♥A J 10 × ×) and we take the ♥A. A Diamond is ducked to East who returns a Heart.

We can take that and duck another Diamond, this time to West. That player cashes his two boss Hearts and then has to lead a black card. We can win that and cash all our top winners (on some hot, sunny days a non-concentrating defender might throw away a Diamond from a four-card holding) before testing the Diamonds right at the end of the hand. Fortune is again on our side and the suit breaks 3-3, making the ♦9 the decisive ninth trick.

Lucky? Certainly, but there was nothing else to play for. Good things happen to those who do things good. And all that jazz.



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VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 2 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 21/09/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♥ J

Here you open a strong No-trump and partner raises you to 3NT (there is no point in North bidding Clubs on that hand – where would that get him?)

West has an easy and obvious ♥ J lead and you take stock. As usual you must **count your tricks**. Here you can see four top tricks in hand (three Aces and a second Heart trick, guaranteed by the lead).

Dummy appears to have six Club tricks and there are many players who would grab the Heart at trick one and play off the top Clubs. When Clubs split 3-2 these players would record ten tricks and look around for congratulations; when Clubs are 4-1 they would bemoan their fate to all who would listen.

This is sloppy thinking and poor play. Landing your contract is what this game is all about – overtricks are icing on the cake, froth on the coffee. When you can count more tricks than you need look to see if some nasty adverse distribution might trip you up and whether there is a way to take out an insurance policy against it.

Here, it is clear that the play of cashing the ♣ A K Q will leave you with just three Club tricks if there is a 4-1 Club split, and six tricks with a 3-2 break. You require just five tricks, though, and can almost guarantee that by **ducking the first Club**. Sure, you will look very faintly foolish if Clubs are 3-2 but, crucially, you will ensure your contract if they are 4-1.

This type of play (giving up a trick that might be yours by right) goes under the name of a **safety play**.

Here, East takes the Club and plays back a Heart. The rest of the deal is trivial – you can run all of the remaining five Clubs and your top tricks in hand and record your contract.

North
 ♠ 93
 ♥ 52
 ♦ T53
 ♣ AKQ853

West
 ♠ KT2
 ♥ JT986
 ♦ Q972
 ♣ 4



East
 ♠ Q754
 ♥ K7
 ♦ K64
 ♣ JT72

South
 ♠ AJ86
 ♥ AQ43
 ♦ AJ8
 ♣ 96

This deal (we have to confess) is something of an old chestnut. Deals like this have appeared in countless textbooks down the ages.


Still, if you have never read these textbooks this hand may be as fresh as a daisy to you.

Can you land your contract on this deal?



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VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 1 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 21/09/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ 942		
	♥ A5		
	♦ AKQ74		
	♣ J52		
West		East	
♠ 865		♠ JT73	
♥ J8762		♥ K94	
♦ 52		♦ JT93	
♣ AKT		♣ 97	
	South		
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ QT3		
	♦ 86		
	♣ Q8643		

Another deal on the key element of *Counting* your tricks.

Once or twice in the past we might have mentioned this point to you...

What was that phrase again? Oh yes...
Count – Plan – Execute

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

Lead: ♥ 6

Here you open 1♣ and rebid 1NT over a 1♦ response. Partner has plenty to raise you to 3NT.

West leads the ♥6 and you take stock. As ever you must **count your tricks**. Here you can see three top Spades, two Heart tricks (not immediately, maybe, but for sure you will make two Hearts in time) and three top Diamonds. That's eight top tricks and so one more is required.

You play low from table at trick one, of course, and East takes the ♥K. A Heart return is a little annoying as it takes out the entry to the table. What now?

Any attempt to set up Clubs is doomed to failure. Not only do you lack the intermediate cards to make that venture safe you would also lose the race to set up your long suit. Even if you could lose just two top Clubs you run the risk of losing two Clubs and three Hearts. No good.

What about Diamonds? Well, a 3-3 break would allow you five Diamond tricks and an overtrick. If you were desperate for five Diamond tricks that is what you'd have to play for. Here, though, you only need **four** Diamond tricks and the **safety play** (compare with Hand 2) is to *duck a Diamond*.


Sure, this play would cost you a trick should Diamonds split 3-3 but on the more common 4-2 break it ensures four Diamond tricks (and the contract).

East takes his ♦9 and plays another Heart but you are home and dry. You can take the ♥Q, cash four Diamonds and take the three top Spades. Contract made.



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VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 2 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 21/09/2014	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ J6	
	♥ A4	
	♦ AQ7653	
	♣ J83	
West		East
♠ Q74		♠ KT82
♥ T9872		♥ K63
♦ KT2		♦ J9
♣ 97		♣ QT54
	South	
	♠ A953	
	♥ QJ5	
	♦ 84	
	♣ AK62	

This deal is not as straightforward as those in the previous series.

How can you land your contract here? What layout of the opponents' cards will give you a chance?

West	North	East	South
P	1♦	P	1♠
P	2♦	P	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ T

Partner opens 1♦ and rebids the suit after our 1♠ response. With enough points for game (we have 14 and partner has opened the bidding) we try 3NT.

North's hand is not quite what we wanted – the Diamonds are of poor quality and the black Jacks aren't of much use to us – but you can hardly blame the guy; he has what he said he had.

After the ♥10 lead a mandatory **Count of tricks** shows only six (one Spade, two Hearts – they aren't actually winners yet but there will be two Heart tricks quickly enough – one Diamond and two Clubs). So, we have just six top tricks and need three more.

The only realistic source of tricks is Diamonds – the long suit. There is no point in taking the ♥A so we run the lead to the closed hand. East takes the ♥K and, irritatingly, plays back a Heart, thereby removing dummy's only outside entry to the Diamonds.

Now, the \$64,000 question. **How can we set up and run the Diamonds, given that there is no way of reaching them?**

We need West to hold the ♦K, for sure, as we cannot succeed if the Diamond finesse fails. However, playing a Diamond to the ♦Q is futile – even if it wins what do we do next?

Unsurprisingly, given the theme of these deals, the answer comes from ducking a Diamond, furthermore – ducking a Diamond early. So, we take the ♥A, perforce, and immediately lead a low Diamond from the table.

On a good day a weak defender sitting East may play the ♦K if he has it (wouldn't that be just what the doctor ordered?) but here East contributes the ♦J to return a Heart. We take the ♥Q and lead a Diamond towards the dummy... hoping for good things.

When West plays the ♦10 we try the ♦Q knowing that Diamonds will provide us with five tricks or – if East has the ♦K – exactly **none**. Here it's our lucky day. East follows small so all the Diamonds are ours to run. Not looking a gift-horse in the mouth we cash the suit out and

take the rest of the top tricks. That actually totals ten tricks so we record an overtrick.

On a bad day we might have gone as many as four down. That's the way the game goes sometimes... Live with it.



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VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 2 SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 21/09/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ JT983</p> <p>♥ JT5</p> <p>♦ 9</p> <p>♣ KJ53</p>		<p>North</p> <p>♠ 64</p> <p>♥ 8743</p> <p>♦ AK753</p> <p>♣ 72</p>	<p>East</p> <p>♠ 752</p> <p>♥ K92</p> <p>♦ QJT8</p> <p>♣ Q98</p>
<p>South</p> <p>♠ AKQ</p> <p>♥ AQ6</p> <p>♦ 642</p> <p>♣ AT64</p>			

Many deals rely on good suit breaks for success.

Can you change your tack and alter course if the wind blows from the wrong direction?

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

Lead: ♠ J

You reach 3NT as South after opening 1♣ and rebidding 2NT to show a balanced 18-19 points. Partner has an easy raise to game, expecting that his decent five-card suit will provide a useful source of tricks.

West leads the ♠J, which does you no harm with your ♠A K Q. Thanking partner gravely for his contributions you count the *top tricks* that you can see. These total seven (three Spades, one Heart, two Diamonds and the ♠A), which means you are fishing for two more.

The usual source of extras is a long suit and here Diamonds will produce four tricks if the suit breaks 3-2. As ever, it is usually best to concede the losing trick(s) as early as possible rather than later.

So... you win the Spade lead performe and duck a Diamond trick two. East decides to take his partner's ♦9 with the ♦10 and leads a Spade back (it isn't clear to East exactly what the Spade position is – he may be hoping that West has led from ♠K J 10 9 or ♠A J 10 9).

You take East's Spade return and revert to Diamonds, hoping and expecting that the suit breaks 3-2. West, though, shows out on this trick. So much for Plan A. Do we have a Plan B?

Realizing that we have yet to call for a card from dummy we should see that we can duck a second Diamond to East. True, that means we are down to three Diamond winners rather than four but that's still better than making just the two top Diamonds. However, it also means that we need another trick from somewhere. There is nothing else – we need the Heart finesse.

East takes his second Diamond and fires back yet another Spade, taken by the ♠A. We cash the three remaining Diamonds (the ♦7 is a trick now) and, holding our breath, lead a Heart to the ♥Q.


If West had the ♥K we'd lose the trick and a couple of Spades to boot. As the cards lie, the Queen holds and the contract makes. That's the way it is with finesses – you win some, you lose

some.



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VB#21 Year 1. Ducking to set up a suit. Part 2 SA	Contract: 6S By: South
Date: 21/09/2014	Board #: 6
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: E / W
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ Q3		
	♦ Q64		
	♣ AK763		
West		East	
♠ 5		♠ 7642	
♥ JT9862		♥ 754	
♦ KJ8		♦ 9532	
♣ J94		♣ QT	
	South		
	♠ JT983		
	♥ AK		
	♦ AT7		
	♣ 852		

Your partner's exuberant bidding leads you to an "interesting" contract here.

How might you reel it in?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	2NT
P	6♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ J

You open 1♠ here and rebid 2NT over partner's 2♣ response. To your surprise and alarm North suddenly emerges with a bid of 6♠. Well, there's nothing you can do about it now. Pass and await the dummy with trepidation.

North's hand is pretty good – 20 points and the three top Spades. Not bad – not bad at all! The fly in the ointment is that the ♥Q is useless as it clashes with the doubleton ♥A K in hand. 'Twas *ever thus*.

A count of *winners* and *losers* (we are in a suit contract, remember) shows that we have too many losers – a Club loser and a Diamond loser (or two). Bad news. Winners are a little on the thin side as well: five Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs. That's two tricks short.

When trying to generate extra tricks (or to eradicate losers) we often look to long suits. After all, with excess losers we either **trump 'em** or **dump 'em**. Here we can't trump them so we had better look for a way of dumping them. Dummy's long Club suit may well prove to be the dumping ground for our two Diamond losers.

Let's recount. On a 3-2 Club break we might have five Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and four Clubs. That totals twelve.

Right, let's get to work. We win the Heart lead and then...? First we must pull trumps. They (irritatingly) break 4-1 so we have to play off the ♠A K Q, cross to the other top Heart, draw the last trump and set up the Clubs. As dummy is now bereft of outside entries we have to *duck a Club*.

We win the Diamond return and discover our luck in Clubs. A 3-2 break will allow us our contract; we would be two down with a 4-1 split.

Lady Luck resides with us today – the Clubs all fall on the ♠A K and we dump our Diamond losers on the long Clubs. Contract made.