




Eight assorted deals, some declarer play, some defense. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

North		East	
♠ QJ93		♠ KT652	
♥ KQT4		♥ 62	
♦ K6		♦ A732	
♣ 964		♣ 52	
			
South			
♠ 74			
♥ AJ975			
♦ QJ5			
♣ AJ8			
West			
♠ A8			
♥ 83			
♦ T984			
♣ KQT73			

This set of eight deals makes up our General Series. There is no theme to the hands, just enjoy them as they come.

Some are defenses, some are declarer play problems.

Hand 1. How high should you bid here?

Having made that decision you have to ensure that you make the most of your cards.

What is the best line of play?

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

Here we open 1♥ after two Passes and partner raises invitationally to 3♥. Should we bid the fourth Heart?

The answer is no – we have a minimum opening bid with no compensating values in terms of useful shortages (singletons, for example) or decent side-suits to play on.

5:3:3:2 hands are just about the worst shape to have as they contain a lot of losers. With this hand pattern it pays, generally speaking, to take a conservative view.

Play.

West leads the ♣K against 3♥ (a normal enough lead from a sequence or near-sequence of ♣K Q 10), and we take our time as we **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see immediately the truth of the observation that these 5:3:3:2 hands contain a lot of losers. There are two Spades to lose, the ♦A is off the hand and there are two Club losers.

We may be able to dump a Club loser from table on a Diamond but the defense are ahead of us by virtue of having the opening lead.

Were we to take the ♣A we would taste defeat. East would get in with the ♦A and would fire a Club through our ♣J 8, allowing West to make two Club tricks. The defenders would have five tricks before we had organized nine.

The winning play is to duck the opening lead. This is the famous *Bath Coup*. Were West to play another Club he would present us with a cheap trick in the guise of the ♣J. By shifting to another suit he allows us to keep the ♣A, retain control of Clubs and gain a tempo.

Here West shifts to the ♦10, on which we unblock the ♦K from table. East takes the ♦A and fires back a Club but now it's all too easy. We grab the ♣A, draw trumps and dump a Club loser on the third Diamond. The defenders can

have two Spades but that is their lot.


Postscript.

For the purists, East-West can beat 3♥. At trick two West has to lead a low Spade (!) to his partner's ♠K and East has to return a Club. Well, if their defense is as hot as that they deserve to beat us. Also, we'd make a mental note to play against some easier opponents next week...



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ 52			
♥ 96			
♦ KJ7543			
♣ A82			
West		East	
♠ KJ97		♠ AQT83	
♥ T873		♥ KJ4	
♦ QT2		♦ A	
♣ 73		♣ KQ64	
South			
♠ 64			
♥ AQ52			
♦ 986			
♣ JT95			

You are defending a confidently bid game.

What is partner doing in defense?

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

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

East opens 1♠ as dealer; West raises to 2♠ and East goes on to game.

Play.

We have a routine lead of the ♣J against 4♠, dummy displaying with four trumps and 6 points.

North takes the ♣A at trick one and, with a pursuit of Clubs clearly a waste of time, shifts to the ♥9. East plays the ♥J and we take the ♥Q. Next we cash the ♥A and East drops the ♥K. What now?

Well, now we must give partner a Heart ruff. How can we tell? The answer is simple – partner has led high-low in Hearts and therefore has a doubleton.

East, meanwhile, is desperately trying to scramble our signals by playing the ♥J and ♥K (with the ♥10 8 7 on the table he can afford to do this, you may note). Good players do this sort of thing as a matter of routine; playing false-cards as declarer is something of an art that needs practising.

Anyway, the deal is included to show the importance of carding methods. If we play “top of nothing” leads so that North would have led the ♥9 from ♥9 6 and from ♥9 6 4 we wouldn’t know where we are. Playing modern methods, generally accepted worldwide, North would have led the ♥6 from ♥9 6 4 and then followed with the ♥9 on the next round. The general method (for the record) is “second-highest from a poor suit”.

Postscript.

One of the Editor's pet hates is “top of nothing” leads. How can you tell the difference between a lead from x x x and x x? The difference may be crucial if a ruff is in the offing, so it is important to be able to differentiate between the two holdings.



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

<p>West</p> <p>♠ Q974</p> <p>♥ 752</p> <p>♦ KJ9</p> <p>♣ 742</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ KJT832</p> <p>♥ KQT</p> <p>♦ A</p> <p>♣ KQ6</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ A</p> <p>♥ 9843</p> <p>♦ Q8742</p> <p>♣ A53</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ 65</p> <p>♥ AJ6</p> <p>♦ T653</p> <p>♣ JT98</p>		

A defensive problem.

How should you play against East's contract here?

Can you read the position accurately and make the right decision?

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

Lead: ♣ J

Bidding.

East opens 1♠ in fourth seat; West raises to 2♣ and East goes on to game.

Play.

We have a routine lead of the ♣J against 4♣, dummy displaying with four trumps, 6 points but a dispiriting (for declarer) 4·3·3·3 pattern.

Partner takes the ♣A and, with Clubs looking to be a worthless pursuit (East is marked with the ♣K Q), North shifts to a Heart. Holding ♥9 8 4 3 North leads the ♥8 (second-highest from a poor suit) and East promptly plays the ♥K. How should we defend?

It may be tempting to bash that with the ♥A but what would we do next? If we **Read the Lead** we can see that North has no interest in Hearts so East must have the ♥K Q. (North cannot have ♥Q 10 9 8 for example, with that holding he'd lead the ♥10 – the top of an *interior sequence*).

In these circumstances (we have the ♥A J over an opponent's ♥K Q) it is often the right play to hold off the Ace for a round, keeping the ♥A J as a tenace over the remaining honor card. That's the winning defense here.

Here, East's problem is that he wants to dump his third Heart on dummy's ♦K but cannot easily reach dummy. When he plays a trump North grabs his Ace (not that he has any choice!) and plays another Heart. Now we have four tricks in defense – two Hearts, and two black Aces.

Postscript.

Had we taken the ♥A at trick two there would have been no defense to the contract. We could not have attacked Hearts from our hand and could not have prevented East from throwing his losing Heart on the ♦K.



Eight assorted deals, some declarer play, some defense. SA Version. Updated summer 2016.

Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

		North			
		♠ Q5			
		♥ J74			
		♦ KQ983			
		♣ 942			
West		East			
♠ KT843		♠ J962			
♥ Q95		♥ T632			
♦ J762		♦ 5			
♣ T		♣ AK86			
		South			
		♠ A7			
		♥ AK8			
		♦ AT4			
		♣ QJ753			

You are back as declarer here.

Can you play the cards accurately?

It does look to be a simple hand...

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

Lead: ♠ 4

Bidding.

After three Passes we open 1♣ and rebid 2NT after partner responds 1♦.

Knowing of 18 or 19 points in our hand North raises us to game.

Play.

West leads a low Spade (the ♠4) and we thank partner before we take time to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see immediately that this contract is no cakewalk. Firstly, we have mutual shortage in Spades and, secondly, one of our long suits (Clubs) is going to take a long time to set up.

If East has the ♠K sitting over the ♠Q the contract is hopeless, so we are going to have to hope that West has underled the ♠K. So the first play has to be the ♠Q from the table. If we don't play it now we'll never make it.

With that hurdle successfully cleared we need to seek eight further tricks. Two Hearts are easy and the ♠A remains in the bank so everything rests on making five Diamond tricks. No problem if they break 3-2 but what if they don't? So we need to turn our minds to the possibility of a 4-1 split (or even a 5-0 split). Can we cope? Well, yes, but only with very precise play.

First we have to cash the ♦A. If East were to show out (if Diamonds were 5-0 on our left) then it would be easy – we'd lead and run the ♦10 as a marked finesse, picking up the suit without loss. As the cards lie the ♦A draws two low Diamonds (and stony looks) from the opponents. No 5-0 split, then. What next?

Well, we have to play a Diamond to the ♦Q – but which Diamond? It is crucial to lead the ♦10 and, if West follows, overtake it with the ♦Q. Why? Because if West has four Diamonds we mustn't block the suit. If we led the ♦4 to the ♦Q and East showed out what could we do? Return to hand and lead the ♦10? Sure, but West would play low with a smug look and now we'd make no more than three Diamond tricks

whether we ran the ♦10 or overtook it.

By playing correctly we clear the path for a marked finesse. When we lead the ♦10 West plays small (of course) and we take the ♦Q (after all, Diamonds might well be 3-2). When East shows out we know we can return to hand (with a Heart) and play another Diamond, taking the marked finesse of the ♦8.

The Diamonds now run for five tricks and the rest of the hand is just a case of good housekeeping. We can cash our remaining winners and throw the scraps to the dogs.

Postscript.

This holding in Diamonds is a common one and it's important to unblock it in case of a nasty split. If East has four Diamonds the contract is doomed. However, we must do all we can to ensure the success of 3NT in the event of any 3-2 break or if West has a four-card Diamond holding.



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

<p>West</p> <p>♠ K9843</p> <p>♥ 962</p> <p>♦ 6</p> <p>♣ AJT6</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ JT62</p> <p>♥ T853</p> <p>♦ J752</p> <p>♣ K</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ Q5</p> <p>♥ J74</p> <p>♦ KQ983</p> <p>♣ 942</p>		
<p>South</p> <p>♠ A7</p> <p>♥ AKQ</p> <p>♦ AT4</p> <p>♣ Q8753</p>		

Once again here at VuBridge we have two consecutive deals that look to be the same.

Is this Hand 4 all over again?

Not quite...

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

Lead: ♠ 4

This is a remarkably similar deal to the last one...

Bidding.

After two Passes we open 1♣ and rebid 2NT after partner responds 1♦.

Knowing of 18 or 19 points in our hand North raises us to game.

Play.

West leads a low Spade (the ♠4) and we can see a dummy that might ring a few bells. Nonetheless, we must take a moment or two to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see that we have mutual shortage in Spades and, secondly, that our Clubs are a waste of time; we lack the tempo to get them going before Spades are set up for East-West.

As in Hand 4, If East has the ♠K lying over the ♠Q the contract is just going off so we are going to have to hope that West has underplayed the ♠K. So at trick one we have to cross our fingers and call for the ♠Q from the table. It's now or never.

When Her Majesty holds the trick we need eight further tricks. Three Hearts are easy and the ♠A remains in the bank so we just need four Diamond tricks. We will make five Diamonds (and an overtrick) if they break 3-2 but what if they don't? We don't mind losing one Diamond trick – what will sting us is if we hold ourselves to just three tricks in the suit.

First we should cash the ♦A. If East were to show out (if Diamonds were 5-0 on our left) then it would be easy to pull in the suit without loss – we'd run the ♦10 as a *marked finesse*. As the cards lie, the opponents both follow to the first Diamond. Next it is best to lead the ♦10. If West follows we'd be safe to overtake that and play the hand in the manner described in Hand 4.

However, on this deal it is West who shows out,

throwing a Heart. What now? Well, we have counted carefully and know that four Diamond tricks are sufficient for the contract. We simply let the ♦10 ride and allow East to take his pesky ♦J. Nothing can now prevent us from taking the established ♦K Q 9 at our pleasure later in the hand. Note that there is no distribution of Clubs that allows the defenders to take four Club tricks at this stage, even if they were inspired enough to shift to the suit.

East returns a Spade, naturally enough, and we cash out our nine tricks. The last three tricks are the opponents' and we graciously concede them.


Postscript.

Counting our tricks is a vital part of the game. When a suit breaks badly it is important to know if we can afford to lose a trick there. Often it is best to lose the inevitable loser early.



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ QT863	
	♥ 83	
	♦ K92	
	♣ KT4	
West		East
♠ 52		♠ AJ7
♥ AK9		♥ QT5
♦ A753		♦ QJT86
♣ AJ63		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ K94	
	♥ J7642	
	♦ 4	
	♣ Q872	

Back to defensive duties.

Partner has the opening lead this time.

How might you co-operate in defense?

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

Lead: ♠ 6

Bidding.

West opens 1NT after two Passes and East raises to 3NT.

Play.

We are defending 3NT after a rapid bidding sequence that gives little away. Partner leads the ♠6, presumably the *fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest* and we have to decide how to defeat this one.

Declarer studies dummy and calls for the ♠7. What do we play? The ♠K and shift to a Club, maybe? The ♠K and return a Spade? The ♠9? Why?

Well, this is an application of the **Rule of Eleven**. If we take partner's ♠6 lead and subtract 6 from 11 we get 5 (or that was the result when we were at school...). So there are five Spades bigger than the ♠6 in East, South and West – and we can see them all (the ♠A J 7 on table and the ♠K 9 in our hand).

Thus declarer has no higher Spade than the ♠6 and certainly no Spade higher than the ♠9. With that in mind we should put in the ♠9 and, when it holds, continue with the ♠K. Declarer forlornly ducks that and takes the ♠A on the third round.

The contract hinges on the Diamond finesse – when North turns up with the ♦K the hand is over. Declarer sighs mournfully as our partner cashes the long Spades for one off.


Postscript.

The **Rule of Eleven** is a useful tool in defense. Here, it pinpoints declarer's weakness in Spades.



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

North		East	
♠ K942		♠ JT6	
♥ J5		♥ A97	
♦ 72		♦ KJ864	
♣ A9865		♣ Q4	
West		East	
♠ A83		♠ JT6	
♥ KQT2		♥ A97	
♦ AQ93		♦ KJ864	
♣ J2		♣ Q4	
South			
♠ Q75			
♥ 8643			
♦ T5			
♣ KT73			

Another defensive problem and again you have to co-operate with partner in defense.

Can you see what is going on?

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

Lead: ♣ 6

Bidding.

West opens 1NT after we Pass as dealer, and East raises to 3NT.

Play.

North leads a low Club against 3NT and we have to plan the defense. West gravely thanks his partner for the dummy and calls for a low Club from the table. What should we play and why?

On many occasions it is right with this type of holding to *finesse against dummy* and put in the ♣10. Here that would be fatal. West would take the ♣J and then cash the next ten tricks. Oops! *How could we tell?*

Let's apply the **Rule of Eleven**. North has led the ♣6 so we should subtract 6 from 11 and emerge with answer of five. We can see four Clubs higher than the ♣6 in dummy and our own hand so the conclusion is that West has just one Club higher than the ♣6.

This, then, is the crucial question: How could we tell that West's "high" Club is not the ♣A?

We may think this is a guess – but it isn't! Let's put ourselves in declarer's seat. With ♣Q × facing ♣A × or ♣A × × how would we play when a low Club is led? Yes, we'd cross our fingers and call for the ♣Q! (Look at Hands 4 and 5 for confirmation).

So, when declarer doesn't try the ♣Q from a holding of ♣Q × it is a guarantee that he doesn't hold the ♣A.

So our correct defense is to play the ♣K in third seat and to return a careful ♣3. Partner grabs the ♣J with the ♣A and, over-excited, returns the ♣9. (He should be able to read the suit from our carding – the ♣3 return shows four of them. A low Club from North at trick three would be better defense). However, we are on the ball and can rescue partner from his excesses – we overtake the ♣9 with our Ten and play a Club back.

The defenders cash the first five Club tricks and that is that – West claims the rest for one off.

Postscript.

It is possible that declarer started with ♣J × ×. Well, if so he'd have a Club trick come what may after the opening lead, so no harm would be done by playing the King. The inference that declarer could not have the Ace is a powerful one.



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Y2 VBlue #22 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: East
Dealer: North	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ Q96 ♥ Q86 ♦ AJT952 ♣ 6		East ♠ AKJT83 ♥ T53 ♦ 3 ♣ AKQ
North ♠ 4 ♥ AKJ974 ♦ 8764 ♣ 93		
South ♠ 752 ♥ 2 ♦ KQ ♣ JT87542		

This hand is borrowed with thanks from the great Eddie Kantar. (Thanks, Eddie!)

We have altered it around a little, just to fit in with VuBridge (sorry, Eddie!) Still, the central point of the deal has been retained.

[By the way, you may wish to visit www.kantarbridge.com It has Eddie's humor, quizzes, and tips as only Eddie can write them and it's all free].

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

Lead: ♥ 2

Bidding.

As dealer partner opens 2♥. East overcalls 3♣ and West raises to 4♠.

[Note: Whereas many jump bids are preemptive in nature it is a golden rule that you do not "preempt over preempts". Thus 3♣ is a strong bid here, not a weak one].

Play.

With a singleton in partner's suit we don't have to think too long about the opening lead against 4♠ – the ♥2 jumps onto the green baize. When partner produces the ♥J and it wins the trick we know that we have three Heart tricks in defense and that declarer has precisely ♥10 × ×.

So that's three tricks – what about the fourth? We may well have hopes for our nice ♦K Q, as they might provide a defensive trick. What if the declarer has a singleton Diamond, though?

So we trade a possible Diamond trick for a certain Diamond ruff. By chucking two Diamonds on partner's ♥A K we pave the way for a ruff. When we drop the ♦K on the table at trick two, partner's eyebrows may rise a sixteenth of an inch. When we play the ♦Q at trick three, all should be clear as crystal in sunlight. Sure enough, partner plays a Diamond at trick four and the ♠2 comes in handy. A disgruntled declarer claims the rest.

Postscript.

Eddie Kantar points out that if we can just imagine the ♦K and ♦Q as the ♦2 and ♦3, there would be no problem divesting ourselves of them. True, but you still have to see it.