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A set of eight unrelated hands for Year 2 V-Blue issue 22;
ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
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	

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 defences, some are declarer play problems.

Hand 1. You are defending a confidently bid game. What is partner doing in defence?

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

Lead: ♣ J

East-West bid rapidly to 4♠ and you have a routine lead of the ♣J.

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

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

East, meanwhile, is desperately trying to scramble your 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 you play “top of nothing” leads so that North would have led the ♥9 from ♥9 6 **and** from ♥9 6 4 you don't know whether you are on your arm or your elbow. 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”.


[Note: One of the Editor's pet hates is “top of nothing” leads!]



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VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

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	1♥
P	3♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ K

Here you open 1♥ in second seat and partner raises invitationaly to 3♥. Should you bid the fourth Heart?

The answer is **no** – you 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.

West leads the ♣K (a normal enough lead from a sequence or near-sequence of ♣K Q 10) and you 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. You may be able to **dump** a Club loser from table on a Diamond but the defence are ahead of you by virtue of having the opening lead.

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

Winning play is to duck the opening lead. This is the famous **Bath Coup**. Were West to play another Club he would present you with a cheap trick in the guise of the ♣J. By switching to something else he allows you to keep the ♣A and gain a *tempo*.

Here West switches to the ♦10, on which you unblock the ♦K from table. East takes the ♦A and fires back a Club but now it's all too easy. You win the ♣A, draw trumps and *dump* a Club loser on the third Diamond. The defenders can have two Spades but that is their lot.


[Note: *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 defence is as hot as that they deserve to beat you. Also, you'd make a note to play against some easier opponents next week...]*



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ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

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

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

East-West bid to 4♠ in double quick time and you have a ready-made lead in the form of the ♣J.

North takes the ♣A and, with Clubs looking to be a worthless pursuit (East is marked with the ♣K Q). North switches 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 you defend?

It may be tempting to bash that with the ♥A but what would you do next? If you **read the lead** you 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*).

When this is the case (you 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 honour card. That's the winning defence 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 you have four tricks in defence – two Hearts, and two black Aces.


Had you taken the ♥A there would have been no way to prevent East from throwing his losing Heart on the ♦K.



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A set of eight unrelated hands for Year 2 V-Blue issue 22;
ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	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

You are at the helm here in 3NT after bidding 1♣ – 1♦ – 2NT – 3NT. West leads a low Spade (the ♠4) and you can see immediately that this contract is no cakewalk.

Firstly you have mutual shortage in Spades and secondly one of your 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 you 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 you don't play it now you'll never make it.

With that hurdle successfully cleared you 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 are 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. 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.



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A set of eight unrelated hands for Year 2 V-Blue issue 22;
ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Once again here at VuBrige 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	3NT
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ 4

You are at the helm here in 3NT after bidding 1♣ – 1♦ – 3NT with a remarkably similar hand to the previous one. West leads a low Spade (the ♠4) and you can see a dummy that might ring a few bells, too...

Anyway, you can see that you have mutual shortage in Spades and secondly that your Clubs are a waste of time. As in Hand 4, If East has the ♠K lying over the ♠Q the contract is just going off so you are going to have to hope that West has underplayed the ♠K. So at trick one you have to cross your fingers and call for the ♠Q from the table. It's now or never.

When Her Majesty holds the trick you need eight further tricks. Three Hearts are easy and the ♠A remains in the bank so you just need *four* Diamond tricks. You 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 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 are 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 can simply let the ♦10 ride and allow East to take his pesky ♦J. Nothing can 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 switch 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.



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ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ QT863	
	♥ 83	
	♦ K92	
	♣ KT4	
West		East
♠ 52		♠ AJ7
♥ AT9		♥ KQ5
♦ A753		♦ QJT86
♣ AJ63		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ K94	
	♥ J7642	
	♦ 4	
	♣ Q872	

Back to defence.

Partner has the opening lead this time. How might you co-operate in defence?

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

Lead: ♠ 6

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

Declarer studies dummy and calls for the ♠7. What do you play? The ♠K and switch 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 you 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 your partner cashes the long Spades for one off.



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ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 3N
Date: 07/10/2015	By: West
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ K942	
	♥ J5	
	♦ 72	
	♣ A9865	
West		East
♠ A83		♠ JT6
♥ QT72		♥ AK9
♦ AQ93		♦ KJ864
♣ J2		♣ Q4
	South	
	♠ Q75	
	♥ 8643	
	♦ T5	
	♣ KT73	

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

Can you see what is going on?

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

Lead: ♣ 6

Another deal when you are defending after a 1NT – 3NT sequence. North leads a low Club and you have to plan the defence.

West gravely thanks his partner for the dummy and calls for a low Club from the table. What do you 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 can you 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 can you tell that West's "high" Club is not the ♣A?**

You may think this is a guess – but it isn't! Put yourself in declarer's seat. With ♣Q × facing ♣A × or ♣A × × how would you play when a low Club is led? Yes, you'd cross your 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 your correct defence 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 your carding – the ♣3 return shows four of them. A low Club from North at trick three would be better defence). However, you are on the ball and can rescue partner from his excesses – you overtake the ♣9 with your 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.



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ACOL version

VB#22 Year 2 General Hands ACOL	Contract: 45
Date: 07/10/2015	By: East
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 4	
	♥ AKJ974	
	♦ T984	
	♣ 93	
West		East
♠ K96		♠ AQJT83
♥ Q86		♥ T53
♦ AJ7652		♦ 3
♣ 6		♣ AKQ
	South	
	♠ 752	
	♥ 2	
	♦ KQ	
	♣ JT87542	

This hand is borrowed with thanks from the great American player and writer 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 humour, quizzes, and tips as only Eddie can write them and it's all free.

West	North	East	South
P	P	1♠	P
2♦	2♥	3♣	P
4♠	P	P	P

Lead: ♥ 2

You are defending 4♠ after North has Passed originally and then entered the auction with 2♥ and East has shown a strong hand in Spades with a 3♣ rebid.

With a singleton in partner's suit we don't have to think too long about the opening lead – 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 defence and that declarer has ♥10 × x.

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

So we trade a possible Diamond trick for a **certain** Diamond ruff. By pitching 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 quarter of a millimetre. 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.

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.