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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated winter 2015

VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 2S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ 74		
	♥ AK54		
	♦ KQJT		
	♣ Q64		
West		East	
♠ K63		♠ A52	
♥ QJT7		♥ 932	
♦ 964		♦ A8	
♣ A95		♣ KT732	
	South		
	♠ QJT98		
	♥ 86		
	♦ 7532		
	♣ J8		

Here are eight general practice hands on the themes that we have been looking at in VuBridge. They are in no particular order, just enjoy them as they come.

Here, on Hand 1, we start with a poor hand.

Looks may deceive, though.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

On this deal we remove partner's 1NT opening bid (15 points, 4-4-3-2 shape) to 2♠, despite holding 'only' 4 points. This is a wise decision because in a No-trump contract our hand is largely worthless but in a Spade contract we can at least provide three (trump) tricks.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q and we count up five top **losers**; two in Spades, none in Hearts, one in Diamonds and two in Clubs. Luckily, there are no other obvious losers because dummy's Diamonds are solid enough to cover our feeble Diamonds in the closed hand.

Since there is no rush to do anything else our plan on this hand is to win the opening lead and draw the opponent's trumps. It's not as easy as that though – as we draw trumps we should be keeping track of the number of Spades remaining in the opponents' hands.

As it so happens, trumps split 3-3 on this deal so we only need to draw three rounds of trumps.

At first we might have shied away from the Spade suit because of fears of giving up the lead to the opponents – but that's actually not such a problem. Our Spade suit is quite solid (there's a lovely sequence of the ♠Q J 10 9 8), and our main goal is to force out the ♠A K out of the opponents' grubby mitts.

So we win the ♥K at trick one and play a Spade. West takes that and plays another Heart. We take that on table and play another trump. East goes up with his ♠A and forces out one of our trumps with another Heart lead. This is good defense as it causes us to run low on trumps.


We pull another round of Spades and are relieved to see the 3-3 break. With all trumps safely extracted it's time to *set up the side-suit*. The ♦A gets knocked out of East's hand and nothing the defenders can do now can defeat us. Sure, they can cash the ♠A K but that is the end of the party. We end up with three Spades, three Diamonds and two Hearts.



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VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A95	
	♥ QJT5	
	♦ QJ63	
	♣ T5	
West		East
♠ J762		♠ KT43
♥ 8		♥ A32
♦ 9752		♦ T
♣ KQJ3		♣ 98742
	South	
	♠ Q8	
	♥ K9764	
	♦ AK84	
	♣ A6	

Some deals are hard to play. Others are easier and can be played in routine fashion, in your coffee-break.

Is this such a hand?

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

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

We open 1♥ as South and are pleased to see partner making a *limit raise* of 3♥, showing 10-11 points (give or take a little) and four-card trump support. Holding 16 points and a modicum of distribution (5·4·2·2) it is clear-cut to proceed to game.

Play.

West leads the ♣K and a count of winners and losers quickly reveals that 4♥ is a fine contract. The Club lead sets up a trick in that suit for the defense but, as long as trumps are drawn as quickly as possible, we will only lose a maximum of three tricks.

Which three tricks? The ♥A, the ♣Q, and the ♠K are the only losers that we have. Looking at the other side of the coin, we are entitled to one Spade, four Hearts, four Diamonds and the ♠A. Ten winners, three losers.

Look what happens, though, if we were to neglect to draw trumps. East would score a Diamond ruff, and with the Two of trumps, to boot. We can never avoid losing a trick to the Ace of trumps but it is downright humiliating when we allow an opponent to score a trick with the Two.

This is a very easy deal, a "coffee-time" hand if you like. Deals like this should become a matter of routine and can be played on "autopilot". Draw trumps as soon as possible and then run off tricks in the side-suits.


We take the ♣A and immediately play on trumps. East takes his ♥A and fires back the ♦10 (how he wants a Diamond ruff!) We take that somewhere (it's irrelevant which hand wins it – we chose the ♦A in hand) and draw all the trumps, noting the 3-1 split. Now we cash our winners and concede the inevitable three losers. Game over.



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VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3D
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ T9	
	♥ KQ5	
	♦ KJ853	
	♣ JT7	
West		East
♠ A743		♠ K652
♥ T984		♥ 7632
♦ 9		♦ A
♣ A962		♣ K853
	South	
	♠ QJ8	
	♥ AJ	
	♦ QT7642	
	♣ Q4	

Mistakes. Everyone makes mistakes – even the defenders.

Can you take advantage of a passive opening lead?

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

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

We open 1♦ as dealer with a minimum 12 points and partner raises to 3♦. Where now? Partner's 3♦ shows 10 to 11 points (more or less) and at least four-card Diamond support.

Partner is inviting a game with the 3♦ raise but, because we are holding a minimum hand, we have little reason to accept the invitation despite holding six trumps.

The conclusion is that we should Pass the deal out in a part-score.

Play.

West leads the ♥10 against 3♦ and as we study dummy, we are disappointed by the wasted values. What use are the Spade honors or the Club pictures? When we count up losers we see that there are too many, actually five (two in Spades, one in Diamonds, and two in Clubs). These are top losers, albeit with a twist.

The twist is: West has kicked off with a Heart lead to give us a fighting chance – in fact, it's the only lead to allow us to make the contract! Don't blame West – opening leads are blind and the ♥10 is a perfectly sensible shot. No one wants to lead an unsupported Ace, much less lead away from one.

To make 3♦ we must win the opening Heart lead with the Ace in the closed hand and continue with another two rounds of Hearts – before touching any other suit. By playing three rounds of Hearts, we can quickly shed a Club loser from hand.


After that's done, we can then (and only then) play trumps. The opponents are welcome to take two Spades, one Club and the Ace of trumps

Sometimes, when a contract has little hope, the defenders may make a favorable lead or find a favourable defense. When they do it is essential to capitalize on it.



Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated winter 2015

VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ JT	
	♥ AT853	
	♦ 942	
	♣ 865	
West		East
♠ K975		♠ A82
♥ Q97		♥ 62
♦ AQ5		♦ KJ73
♣ KQ2		♣ A974
	South	
	♠ Q643	
	♥ KJ4	
	♦ T86	
	♣ JT3	

Are you ready for a defensive exercise?

If not, then this should be a good warm-up deal to prepare you for harder defensive problems...

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

West opens 1NT with his flat 16 points and East raises that confidently to 3NT.

Play.

North leads the ♥5 against 3NT (fourth best from his longest suit). "*Third hand high*" should be our maxim as we dutifully play the ♥K and see it win the first trick. What next?

When returning partner's suit we should lead back the higher card with a doubleton remaining and the lowest card with three cards remaining.

The logic for this is similar to the reasoning behind the adage, *Play the honors from the short suit first*. Essentially it is to ensure that a suit does not become **blocked** by a stray honor card.

This deal provides a perfect illustration of this principle.

Here, after taking the first trick with the ♥K, we must return the ♥J to allow partner a clear path so that he can take the rest of the Heart tricks.

If, instead, we were to return the ♥4 from the remaining ♥J 4 then declarer might try his luck with the ♥Q – and what would partner do if that were to happen? If partner took the ♥A the Heart suit would be **blocked** as we'd still have the ♥J remaining in the South hand.

So remember, when returning partner's suit, lead back the top card with a remaining doubleton, and lead back the lowest card with a remaining tripleton (so on this hand, if you had started with ♥K J 4 3, then you would win with the King and return the ♥3).


As it is, the ♥J return at trick two allows you to cash five rapid tricks against 3NT with declarer helpless.



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VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ KQ3	
	♥ A2	
	♦ QJ74	
	♣ QJ83	
West		East
♠ JT985		♠ 7642
♥ 85		♥ T93
♦ K98		♦ A52
♣ K72		♣ A96
	South	
	♠ A	
	♥ KQJ764	
	♦ T63	
	♣ T54	

On this deal, you will need to re-use the same tactic that you encountered a couple of deals ago.

Remember to identify your losers (or winners) and you will be able to pick up on what that tactic is.

West	North	East	South
-	1NT	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ J

This deal is an echo of Hand 3 (two deals ago). You have an opportunity to take advantage of an unfortunate opening lead. Unfortunate for the opposition, that is...

Bidding.

Partner opens 1NT (15-17) and we respond 4♥ since we have enough values for game (10 points) and partner must have at least a doubleton Heart for the 1NT opening.

Play.

West, not unreasonably, leads the ♠J and we are more than happy to see partner put down the ♠K and ♠Q. we are less happy to see the lack of Aces and Kings in the minor suits. Oh well...

With four obvious losers in Clubs and Diamonds we must eliminate two of them quickly by pitching something on the high Spades.

So we take the opening Spade lead with the ♠A in the closed hand, cross to dummy with the ♥A and immediately cash the two other top Spades.

On dummy's two Spade winners we can either discard two Diamonds **or** two Clubs. What we cannot afford to do is to discard one of each minor – otherwise we would still be left with four minor suit losers.

[We chose to pitch two Diamonds but chucking Clubs would have been equally as good].

After the two Diamond discards all we have to do is draw trumps and set up a slow trick in Clubs. This takes a modicum of patience as we have to drive out both the ♠K and the ♠A.

Four quick losers? We prefer to say, "ten top tricks"...



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VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North
 ♠ JT874
 ♥ A97
 ♦ 984
 ♣ 52

West
 ♠ K65
 ♥ 865
 ♦ QT53
 ♣ KJ4



East
 ♠ Q3
 ♥ QT4
 ♦ AK6
 ♣ AQ763

South
 ♠ A92
 ♥ KJ32
 ♦ J72
 ♣ T98

This deal is one of those *counting deals*, where, yes, counting your suit is involved.

Get your counting-hat on, for that might be the difference between the success or the defeat of a contract.

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

Lead: ♥ 2

Bidding.

East opens 1NT and West, holding an Aceless 4-3-3-3 9-count, raises to 2NT. East has no problem going on to game with 17 points and a five-card suit.

Play.

We lead the ♥2 from our longest and strongest suit, hoping to hit partner with either the ♥A or the ♥Q.

Our wishes comes true as partner plays the ♥A and returns the ♥9 to declarer's ♥10 and our ♥J. What next?

We cash the ♥K, of course!

Interestingly enough, everyone follows suit to the ♥K – which can only mean one thing. That is: the Hearts have split 4-3-3-3 around the table and our baby ♥3 has grown up and become a mature winner.

[To double-check this fact we could count that three rounds of four Hearts have been played. This means that twelve Heart cards have gone and confirms that the ♥3 is a "thirteener" and is the master Heart].

Now, having banked the ♥3, should we wait a while or do we grab the ♠A? Would the ♠A "run away" if we don't take it now? Well, study the hand. Declarer has five Club tricks and four Diamond tricks (with the fortunate fall of the ♦J). So if we don't cash out the first five tricks East would secure his contract.


By the way... In similar vein to Hand 4, note that partner returned the ♥9 and not the ♥7 at trick two – abiding by the rule to "return the higher card with a remaining doubleton".



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VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 97	
	♥ K63	
	♦ K532	
	♣ J843	
West		East
♠ Q643		♠ JT52
♥ 9742		♥ QJT5
♦ A9		♦ 76
♣ K95		♣ QT2
	South	
	♠ AK8	
	♥ A8	
	♦ QJT84	
	♣ A76	

You have a nice hand for a change – we at VuBridge can be generous, you know.

But a good hand comes with a price. The price is: you have to make your contract!

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

Lead: ♠ 3

Bidding.

We open 1♦ and partner raises to 2♦, showing about 6-9 points and Diamond support. Between us, therefore, we have 24-27 points and an all-important *source of tricks*.

This is all the information that we need, so we jump straight to 3NT knowing that the partnership is likely to have sufficient values. True, we might be one point short of the "magical" 25 points but we have some compensation in the five-card Diamond suit. A bid of 2NT would put too much strain on partner.

It's also true, by the way, that our side has found a Diamond fit, but would we really want to jump to 5♦ and commit to eleven tricks? When we have a minor-suit fit, we should always think about the nine-trick game of 3NT before committing to the perils of the five-level.

Play.

West leads the fourth-best ♠3 and we (of course) count up our *top tricks*. Two Spades, two Hearts and one Club total five top tricks. Four extra tricks will no doubt come from the Diamond suit and they are easy enough to establish here.

With five Diamonds in our hand and the ♦K on the table, this deal just becomes a matter of knocking out the ♦A to set up nine tricks for the contract.

Although we need to give up the lead to the ♦A, we don't mind one bit as we have a second Spade stopper in the closed hand.

So we take the Spade lead and immediately lead a Diamond – the ♦Q for choice. West takes that with the ♦A and plugs away in Spades. We grab the ♠A and have enough top tricks for the contract. We gorge ourselves on the remaining Diamonds and have the ♥A K and the ♣A for dessert.

A straightforward hand.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated winter 2015

VB#8 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/03/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North
 ♠ A9754
 ♥ T75
 ♦ 64
 ♣ 642

West
 ♠ T2
 ♥ AQJ4
 ♦ A83
 ♣ A853



East
 ♠ Q86
 ♥ K92
 ♦ KQJT75
 ♣ 7

South
 ♠ KJ3
 ♥ 863
 ♦ 92
 ♣ KQJT9

Effective defense requires co-operation and co-ordination.

How should you defend this one?

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

Lead: ♠ 5

Bidding.

West opens 1NT (15 points and a 4-4-3-2 shape) and East gambles a raise to 3NT with 11 points and a good six-card Diamond suit. East reckons (reasonably enough) that his side may well have nine on top in No-trumps.

Play.

Partner leads the ♠5 against West's 3NT. Declarer calls for the ♠6 from dummy, and we play the ... ? Hopefully not the King!

Usually it's right to follow the adage of "*third hand high*" but, of course, there are exceptions. We are looking at the ♠K J and, with the ♠Q visible in dummy, we can simply play the ♠J as it is effectively an equal honor with the King.

So you play the ♠J and, a little surprisingly, it wins the trick. What's next? That lovely, tempting Club sequence? Be honest, did the ♠K jump from your hand and appear on the green baize?

That would be, we have to say, a dereliction of duty. Partner appears to have the ♠A (if West had it why does he not grab the ♠A and play on those gorgeous Diamonds?) If North does have the ♠A he can hardly have anything else in his hand, not even a Jack.

So our defensive Plan is clear – we should *return partner's suit*. To do that, though, we have to lead the ♠K at trick two, remembering to return the top card from a remaining doubleton. This is another example of where returning back the higher card from a doubleton matters (see Hand 4 for comparison).

If we were to return the ♠3 at trick two, North would take the ♠A then play a Spade to our ♠K and then...? We'd be on lead, North would have the Spade winners. A classic case of an unpleasant **blockage** and no plumber to hand. Ugh.

So, we return the ♠K at trick two and, when that holds, another Spade allows partner to cash out his suit. This defense brings a wan smile to partner's normally frozen features.

