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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated spring 2015

VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ J7	
	♥ A65	
	♦ KQ9874	
	♣ A6	
West		East
♠ A32		♠ QT94
♥ QJ42		♥ T873
♦ JT63		♦
♣ K4		♣ Q9875
	South	
	♠ K865	
	♥ K9	
	♦ A52	
	♣ JT32	

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...

Hand 1. Looks may be deceptive.

What might look like a simple deal might just turn ugly.

Expect the unexpected, as they say.

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

Lead: ♥ 2

Bidding.

North opens 1♦ and we respond 1♠ to show our four-card major. Partner rebids 2♦, announcing a minimum hand (12-14 points, give or take) with a long Diamond suit.

Over 2♦ we now try 2NT, which is a constructive invitation to game. A 2NT bid here should never be bid on weakness with no liking for Diamonds; with a poor hand we would just Pass out 2♦.

Although North is limited to about 12-14 points our side would have enough for game if partner is maximum within his range. If there is a game available it is most likely to be in 3NT so it makes sense to try No-trumps in an attempt to steer the partnership into 3NT.

Partner would Pass 2NT with a minimum hand, of course, or he could raise us to 3NT with a maximum (as here). He could also retreat to 3♦ with a weak, shapely hand, a bid that we would respect by Passing.

Play.

West leads the ♥2 against 3NT and, at first glance, our prospects look bright. Two Hearts, six Diamonds, and one Club seem like they are ripe for the plucking.

When it appears that we are in an easy contract we should pause and consider what might go wrong. What could derail us here? A nasty Diamond split is the answer. With nine Diamonds between the closed hand and dummy there are four Diamonds split between the opponents. If the suit splits 2-2 or 3-1 then we'd have no problem as we would then have nine top tricks.

But what if Diamonds split 4-0?

Well, if East has all four Diamonds then we'd be helpless – we'd have to lose a Diamond trick to East's ♦J 10 6 3 and our contract would be short of winners. What, though, if all four Diamonds lie with West? In that case, we could

play the Diamond suit for no losers, providing we take sufficient precautions.

We win the opening Heart lead in dummy (important!) and play a Diamond to our Ace. If both opponents follow to the Diamond trick then we'd know that the suit was **not** 4-0 and could claim our contract with nine easy tricks.

On this deal, however, East discards a Club on the first round, marking West with all four missing Diamonds. This allows us to take a **double marked finesse** against West. After taking the ♦A we continue with another Diamond. If West follows with the ♦6, we insert the ♦7 (East is void, remember?) and then cash the ♦K Q to draw West's remaining Diamonds.

If West inserts the ♦10 or ♦J (if he *splits his honors* as we say) we win in dummy, cross back to the closed hand with the ♥K and lead our last Diamond. West, down to ♦J 6, is now in a no-win position. It's a classic marked finesse.

If West plays the ♦6, we insert the ♦7 and cash our ♦Q to draw the Jack; if West plays the ♦J, we win with dummy's Queen and play the ♦9 to draw West's remaining Diamond. Either way, our entire Diamond suit is established.

We have West over a barrel. Or, to mix metaphors, heads we win, tails he loses.


Can we see the importance of winning the Heart in dummy at trick one? In the event of a 4-0 break (with West having all four Diamonds), we need an extra entry back to our hand to play Diamonds through West.



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VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ QT63		
	♥ AQ		
	♦ J9742		
	♣ 42		
West		East	
♠ A742		♠ K8	
♥ J9		♥ 7653	
♦ Q86		♦ AK3	
♣ QT95		♣ AKJ7	
	South		
	♠ J95		
	♥ KT842		
	♦ T5		
	♣ 863		

Making mistakes is what makes us all human.

Mistakes at the bridge table (in real life) often occur through lack of concentration.

So, are you thinking hard right now?

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

Lead: ♥ 4

Bidding.

East opens 1♣ and follows with a jump rebid of 2NT to show a balanced hand with 17-18 points. West naturally raises that to 3NT.

Play.

As South, we lead our fourth best from our longest and strongest suit (to wit: the ♥4) and we hit the Jackpot when partner shows up with the ♥A Q.

They say emotions cloud judgment and this deal is a perfect illustration of that. At trick one partner plays the ♥A which pleases us. At trick two partner produces the ♥Q which isn't just a useful supporting card for us, it establishes our suit entirely.

Flushed with success, we must nonetheless be sufficiently alert to overtake partner's ♥Q with the ♥K. Did you observe the crucial fall of the ♥J and ♥9 in dummy? That is what actually solidifies our remaining Hearts.

If partner held a third Heart then it wouldn't matter whether we overtook partner's Heart or not. If partner started off with a doubleton ♥A Q (as is the case on this layout) it is vital to overtake the ♥Q otherwise our Heart suit would rot slowly away in our entryless hand. Note that East has nine top tricks if he is allowed to grab the lead.


This is just a case of concentration, really. It is so easy to lose track of dummy's cards (the all-important ♥J 9) and to forget that the ♥10 8 2 are all winners, consequently neglecting to overtake the ♥Q.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated spring 2015

VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 98642	
	♥ AQ64	
	♦ 76	
	♣ Q4	
West		East
♠ Q53		♠ KJT
♥ 8		♥ J975
♦ KJ842		♦ AT93
♣ T863		♣ 95
	South	
	♠ A7	
	♥ KT32	
	♦ Q5	
	♣ AKJ72	

This deal combines some of the recent topics we have looked at recently in VuBridge.

Yes, bridge hands come in all sorts of flavors.

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

Lead: ♦ 4

Bidding.

The bidding on this deal revolves around strong rebids by the opener, specifically, **reverse bids**.

We open 1♣ and rebid 2♥ over North's 1♠ response. As Hearts is a higher ranking suit than Clubs the 2♥ rebid is a reverse, showing an unbalanced hand (at least five Clubs and four Hearts) and a minimum of 16 points.

North, with four-card Heart support and 8 points, raises to 4♥ as he knows that the partnership has game values (or thereabouts). Note that North should be thrilled about holding the ♣Q as it's likely to be a vital card in our known five-card suit.

Play.

West wisely leads the ♦4, the unbid suit, to East's ♦A and another Diamond is returned to West's King. With no Diamonds left to cash West switches to a low Spade at trick three on which East contributes the ♠K. We are finally on lead with the ♠A; how should this hand be tackled?

With two Diamonds lost and a Spade loser nigh on certain we conclude that the fate of the contract relies on playing the Hearts and Clubs for no losers.

There is nothing hidden in the Club suit – as long as we take the elementary precaution of playing the *high cards from the short side first* and cashing the ♣Q as the first play in the suit. Providing Clubs break no worse than 4-2 there are five running tricks there.

What about the trump suit? If Hearts are 3-2, then cashing the top three Heart honors in any order will get the "drawing trumps" job done. But what if Hearts split 4-1?

Assuming the ♥J is with the four-card Heart holding (a singleton ♥J would be easy to deal with) then there isn't much we can do if West is the one with four trumps.

However, thanks to our ♥10, we can pick up the Hearts for no loser if **East** were to hold ♥J × × ×, provided that the order we cash the Heart honors begins with the Ace followed by the Queen (or the ♥Q followed by the ♥A).

If both opponents were to follow suit to the ♥A and the ♥Q, then we'd know that the trumps were 3-2 and draw one more round.

As it happens, West *shows out* on the second round of Hearts. Now we take the **marked finesse** against East's ♥J 9 by leading the third Heart from dummy and covering East's Heart card as cheaply as possible (East plays the ♥9 so we play the ♥10; had East played the ♥J then we'd have put the ♥K on it).


After four rounds of trumps are drawn we have nothing left but to hope that the Clubs don't break in an evil way. When both opponents follow to two rounds we know we have five Club tricks.

Four trumps, five Clubs and the ♠A tot up to ten tricks.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated spring 2015

VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: West
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A9873	
	♥ 52	
	♦ 753	
	♣ QJT	
West		East
♠ K5		♠ J64
♥ KT6		♥ AQ9
♦ Q92		♦ KJT84
♣ AK532		♣ 84
	South	
	♠ QT2	
	♥ J8743	
	♦ A6	
	♣ 976	

"Rules" at bridge are often nice and simple.

These rules can be useful but should never be followed blindly.

Here is a – ahem – blindingly simple example.

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

A rapid and sensible auction of 1NT – 3NT has West declaring 3NT.

Play.

Partner leads from his best suit, the ♠7, against 3NT and declarer calls for the ♠4 from dummy. What should we play?

Hopefully not the Queen! With the ♠J visible in dummy we can see that our Queen and Ten surround dummy's Jack. Had the Jack been played we would have covered with our Queen but, when the Jack still remains in dummy, we should simply insert the Ten. *Third hand high (enough)*.

After declarer wins the first trick with his ♠K he starts his plan of attack by playing on Diamonds, having counted just six top tricks. After we take the ♦A we turn our attention back to Spades, partner's suit. If partner's ♠7 is his fourth-best he must have an honor and that can only be the ♠A.

Therefore it is important for us, in returning partner's suit, to play the ♠Q followed by the ♠2 in order to avoid blocking the suit. The ♠Q is allowed to hold and the ♠2 is taken by partner's ♠A as the suit becomes established. Four defensive Spades and one Diamond equate to one off.


Third hand high is an important guideline but it doesn't mean we should use it without thought. Here, playing the ♠Q at trick one would be thoughtless with the ♠10 the correct card to play.



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VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ K72		
	♥ JT52		
	♦ AQ86		
	♣ KQ		
West		East	
♠ QJT6		♠ A953	
♥		♥ Q763	
♦ J7532		♦ T	
♣ AT94		♣ 7532	
	South		
	♠ 84		
	♥ AK984		
	♦ K94		
	♣ J86		

When playing on a trump suit we all wish for a favorable break.

Sometimes we run into a nasty split which makes life difficult, even impossible.

Sometimes, though, a bad break can be a blessing in disguise...

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

North opens a 15-17 point 1NT to which we respond 3♥, to show five Hearts and a good hand. Holding four trumps, North naturally raise to 4♥.

Play.

West's ♠Q lead immediately puts partner's ♠K in an inescapable position, surrounded by Her Majesty on the left and the almighty Ace on the right. (West won't have the ♠A as it would be weird – and generally completely doolally – to underlead an Ace against a suit contract).

As it is possible for East to be short in Spades (think ♠A × doubleton), we do best to refrain from playing dummy's ♠K. However, it doesn't really matter what we do at trick one since the Spade lead automatically gives us two Spade losers along with our unavoidable Club loser.

With three inevitable losers we are in a position where we need to pick up the trumps for no loser. Our first thought might be to cash the ♥A K, hoping that the ♥Q falls – and most of the time we would be right.

On this hand, however, West discards on our ♥A. This is both good news and bad news. The bad part is the 4-0 trump break, but the good part is that the normally bad break has allowed us to see through the back of the cards. We know where the ♥Q is hiding and we also know that Queen can be swept up, via a *marked finesse*.

So the play goes... the ♠Q lead followed by a continuation of two more rounds of Spades, which we ruff. Cashing the ♥A exposes the nasty split as West discards a Diamond and now, before we cross over to dummy to draw the trumps, it is a good idea to knock out the ♣A.

The reason for this is that the Spade ruff at trick three reduces our five trumps to four. If we were to draw all four rounds of trumps we would be defenseless against further Spade leads. The ♣A would remain in the opponents' hands, allowing them to gain the lead and cash a


Spade or two.

So we knock out the ♣A before drawing trumps, keeping some Hearts back to deal with the threat of further Spade leads. West has the ♣A, takes it on the first round and, with a Spade lead now futile, returns a Club to dummy's ♣K. In dummy, we run the ♥J for the *marked finesse*. Whether East follows with a low Heart or covers with the ♥Q we are in prime position to sweep up the ♥Q and claim the remainder of the tricks.



Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated spring 2015

VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: East
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 752	
	♥ QT852	
	♦ KJ	
	♣ 983	
West		East
♠ QJ6		♠ KT83
♥ K63		♥ A94
♦ A95		♦ 764
♣ JT75		♣ AKQ
	South	
	♠ A94	
	♥ J7	
	♦ QT832	
	♣ 642	

In bridge we face different problems from deal to deal.

The beauty (if you can call it such) of this is that some problems are similar to previously encountered ones. We get familiar with certain difficulties and learn how to cope with them

Essentially, bridge is a game of *experience*. What previous experience can you bring to this deal?

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

Lead: ♦ 3

Bidding.

East-West bid 1NT – 3NT, leaving East as declarer.

Play.

We lead our fourth-best Diamond, the ♦3. Declarer calls for a low card from dummy and partner produces the wonderful King. Even better, North returns the Jack.

Déjà vu? There's some similarity between this deal and Hand 2 in this series; did you spot it?

Not only does partner's ♦K J solidify our suit down to the ♦10 but, knowing that dummy's ♦9 is about to fall in three rounds, these cards make our suit solid down to the ♦8.

With that in mind it is essential to *overtake* partner's ♦J with the ♦Q. If we were to play a low Diamond at trick two declarer could simply duck the ♦A again and, with partner on lead, the defenders could no longer attack Diamonds.

Note, in passing, how declarer's reluctance to part with the ♦A makes our task harder.

Anyway, after we overtake the ♦J with the ♦Q, what can declarer do? If he ducks the ♦A, we'd simply play another Diamond to drive out the ♦A and establish the suit. We'd then wait patiently to regain the lead with the ♠A before taking the rest of the Diamonds.

On the other hand, if declarer bashes our ♦Q with dummy's ♦A, our ♦10 can be played later to draw the ♦9 from dummy. Either way, thanks to our ♠A entry, declarer's 3NT would be booked for the loop line. The key play is to remember to overtake partner's ♦J with our Queen.

Addendum. Even if the ♦9 weren't in dummy (say dummy had ♠A 7 5) a careful count in the Diamond suit tells us that overtaking is the right play. If partner has a doubleton Diamond then declarer has only three Diamonds so if our ♦Q is taken by dummy's ♦A our ♦10 would still draw the remaining Diamonds.


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VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

West ♠ K ♥ AKT6 ♦ 87432 ♣ 975		East ♠ J94 ♥ 853 ♦ 965 ♣ AT83
North ♠ A5 ♥ J742 ♦ JT ♣ QJ642		
South ♠ QT87632 ♥ Q9 ♦ AKQ ♣ K		

Lucky and **unlucky** are terms that bridge players frequently use when hand goes badly.

Often the terms are used to mask a misplay or misdefense.

Would you consider this hand as lucky or unlucky?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	1NT	P	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

As dealer, we open the bidding with 1♠ and hear partner respond with 1NT, showing 6-9 points. We now have an awkward rebid. We have 16 points yet five of those points consist of a doubleton ♥Q and a singleton ♠K.

On the plus side, we have seven Spades along with no losers in Diamonds. The question is, do we make a slight underbid with a 2♠ rebid, which shows six-plus Spades with 12-14 points (minimum hand), or should we make a jump rebid of 3♠ to show six-plus Spades with about 16-17 points?

It's a close decision and, when faced with this type of close decision, it can sometimes pay to be optimistic. With that principle in mind we choose the aggressive action and jump to 3♠. We all know how difficult defense can be, so it surely can't hurt to put the opponents under some pressure?

Note that 3♠ is *non-forcing* so partner could Pass with a minimum. As it is, holding ♠A × and a whole 9 points partner bids 4♠ in a flash.

Play.

West leads the ♥A against our eventual 4♠ contract and an inspection of the dummy tells us that we might well have done better to have taken the low road instead of the high one. With two Heart losers and a Club loser we need a miracle in the trump suit to avoid a loser there. In fact, even 3♠ might fail.

The only way that this trump suit can be played with no loser is to assume (and hope) that West started off with (specifically) the singleton ♠K. No other layout of the cards is of the slightest use. Luckily, the bridge gods are with us today. You will not always be so fortunate...

After the opponents take their ♥A K and ♣A, we win their return (actually a Diamond) and play a Spade to dummy's Ace. When the ♠K pops on our left we sigh with profound relief. Although there is still the ♠J and the ♠9 outstanding we

know that we can neuter them. We play a Spade back towards our hand, taking the marked finesse against East's ♠J 9.

This is a different sort of marked finesse and the reason why it works is because West would not have played the ♠K unless it were a singleton. So East is marked with an initial holding of ♠J 9 4. We play the ♠10, draw the last trump with the ♠Q and claim the contract – to venomous looks from both East and West


Yes, we were very lucky to have the Spades distributed this way, but we might also say that there was some bad luck in the bidding in that dummy's ♥J, ♦J, ♣Q J were all useless to us. Not that East and West are listening to that, of course. All you can hear is, “You lucky so-and-so...” being muttered in stereo.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated spring 2015

VB#17 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q73	
	♥ K	
	♦ AK9542	
	♣ 872	
West		East
♠ A6		♠ K952
♥ JT5		♥ 98762
♦ JT86		♦
♣ QT65		♣ A943
	South	
	♠ JT84	
	♥ AQ43	
	♦ Q73	
	♣ KJ	

We have come across this theme before. And not long ago...

Can you put your previous experience to good use?

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

Lead: ♣ 5

Bidding.

North opens the bidding with 1♦ and, after we respond 1♥, rebids 2♦ to show a minimum hand with long Diamonds. As this bid denies four Spades (he would have rebid 1♠ with four of them) we simply jump to 3NT, the most likely game contract in which we belong.

Play.

West starts things off with the ♣5 lead which is won by the ♣A. East returns a low Club, won by our ♣K.

By applying the **Count**, we can see that there are ten *top tricks* barring any bad splits (three Hearts, six Diamonds, and a Club). But that's just the problem isn't it? What if the Diamonds **do** break badly? If they split 2-2 or 3-1, then we have nothing to worry about. But what if they split 4-0, is it possible to handle that scenario?

If **East** has all four Diamonds, then there is nothing we can do to prevent losing a Diamond trick but it is possible to pick up the suit if West has the Diamonds, thanks to the innocent looking ♦9.

This is how: On the first round of the suit, we should lead the ♦Q. If both opponents follow to the trick then nine tricks would be easy via one Club, six Diamonds and two Hearts. Suppose on the ♦Q East shows out (as is the case here). Another Diamond follows and we cover West's Diamond card. As West *splits his honors*, dummy has ♦A 9 5 4 against West's ♦J 8.

We then cross back to our hand with a Heart (and the only way of doing that is by overtaking the ♥K with our ♥A), cash the ♥Q, then play our last Diamond, finessing against West's remaining Diamond honor. Yes, we do sacrifice an overtrick (by overtaking the ♥K with the ♥A) but this is for a greater cause.

If **West** were to show out on the ♦Q then 3NT would be in very choppy waters indeed. In fact, it's hard to see it having any chance of making without generous assistance from the opposition.

Can you see what would have happened had we played a Heart to the King (to unblock the suit) at trick two? We would have lost our necessary entry to take two Diamond finesses.

This deal takes the **Marked Finesse** to the next level. Thanks to the ♠9 we are able to take a *double marked finesse* against the (admittedly unlikely) 4-0 break in Diamonds.

If you remember back to Hand 1 of this series we also looked at a very similar suit combination. Just remember, when things look rosy that's when you should stop and take a moment to think about what might rain on your parade.