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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East
♠ AQ2		♠ KT954
♥ K72		♥ 964
♦ AQ762		♦ KT83
♣ KJ		♣ 9
West		South
♠ J7		♠ 863
♥ QJT83		♥ A5
♦ J5		♦ 94
♣ A642		♣ QT8753

Here are eight general practice hands on the themes that we have been looking at in VuBridge. They are set in contrasting pairs (so Hands 1 and 2 are similar as are hands 3 and 4 and so on).

You might spot that some of them share a theme of *entries and communications*.

Here, on Hand 1, we start out with a deal that needs some careful planning and execution.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

North opens 1♦ and we have little choice as South but to respond with an uneasy 1NT. North raises that to 3NT and no one has anything else to say.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q from his long suit headed by a sequence. Now, the major issue on this deal is one of *entries* – we need to make sure we can set up our long Club suit and reach it.

Firstly we have to be careful to win the opening Heart lead in dummy with the ♥K – the Ace is required for later to reach the closed hand.

Secondly we have to play Clubs accurately. This entails playing the ♣K as the first play in the suit (the ♣J would lead to defeat) and then (after the defenders stubbornly refuse to take the ♣A) we have to lead the ♣J and overtake it with the Queen.

Now a 4-1 Club break might well sink our ship here – had West been dealt ♣A 9 × × then neither overtaking the Club nor letting the ♣J ride would have succeeded against best defense. However, the providential fall of the ♣9 allows us to overtake the Club as the remaining ♣10 8 7 are all *equals*.

West takes his ♣A and, in response to a signal from East, shifts to a Spade. With nine top tricks we have the rare luxury of being able to play for overtricks. We can try our luck with the ♠Q to see if we can make ten tricks.

Nope, not today. East takes the ♠K and shoots down our last Heart stopper, forcing us to **hit and run**.


We cash the remaining Clubs and the ♦A and concede the remainder.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: West
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ 4		
	♥ T98743		
	♦ 63		
	♣ K763		
West		East	
♠ AK62		♠ 753	
♥ QJ2		♥ A5	
♦ KJ		♦ QT8752	
♣ AQJT		♣ 54	
	South		
	♠ QJT98		
	♥ K6		
	♦ A94		
	♣ 982		

For this deal we have switched your seat so that you are a defender.

That may not appear as exciting as being a declarer but it is every bit as important.

You mustn't allow an opponent's game contract to make!

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

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

After two Passes West opens 2NT, showing 20-21 points and a balanced hand. With 6 points East raises to 3NT, ignoring his six-card Diamond suit. After all, what is the point of bidding Diamonds? 5 ♦ is miles away...

Play.

Partner leads the ♥10 as the top card from a sequence and a swift piece of arithmetic shows that North must have a pretty poor hand (3-4 points, in fact).

Dummy plays a low Heart, allowing us to score the ♥K. Now, it may be tempting to switch to the ♠Q at trick two – after all, we have a magnificent Spade suit and there is little prospect of getting partner's Heart suit going.

However, it is imperative that we play back a Heart at trick two. Not just as a gesture of partnership solidarity (adages such as *always return partner's suit* have their place at this game but should be taken with a pinch of salt) but because we must knock that ♥K off the table. That is declarer's entry to the long Diamonds and it needs to be surgically removed.

A Heart return at trick two is a killer. Without it declarer could make five Diamond tricks; this way he can make one. That's a big difference to the outcome of the deal.

Stuck in dummy, a desperate declarer tries the Club finesse next. North takes his ♣K and plays another Heart. West now leads the ♦K and we mustn't take our ♦A as West would have a link with dummy. Now comes the ♦J, overtaken with the ♦Q.

A careful count of the Diamond suit reveals that West can have no more so we take the ♦A (disconnecting dummy and declarer) and switch to the ♠Q. Declarer now needs a 3-3 Spade break so he ducks the ♠Q, takes the next Spade and runs off his Clubs.


Still, he can't avoid a Spade loser at the end and 3NT is one down.



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VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ 943		
	♥ Q6		
	♦ A932		
	♣ KJ73		
West		East	
♠ J86		♠ QT75	
♥ KT873		♥ J94	
♦ 65		♦ QJT4	
♣ A94		♣ T8	
	South		
	♠ AK2		
	♥ A52		
	♦ K87		
	♣ Q652		

This deal (and the next one) provide you, as declarer, with a *first trick crisis*.

How many contracts are dashed on the rocks by thoughtless play at trick one?

Don't worry, we'll guide you through the stormy weather – but we'll make you think about it first!

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

Lead: ♥7

Bidding.

With a balanced 16 points we open 1NT; partner (with 10 points and a balanced hand) has an easy raise to 3NT.

Play.

For all the combined 26 points this isn't a very good contract and we need a little luck to land nine tricks. After the ♥7 lead we have to count up our winners and make a plan. (**Count – Plan – Execute**. Remember?)

In terms of *top tricks* we have just two Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds, making a total of five. So four more tricks have to come from somewhere. Clubs should produce some – two for certain and maybe three if the suit were to break 3-2. That swells the total to eight – what about the ninth?

Well, everything hinges on Hearts and our decision at trick one. What is the right card to play from dummy? We assume West has led the fourth-highest-of-his-longest-and-strongest so has at least four Hearts, possibly headed by the ♥K. If so, the ♥Q could provide us with a trick (the vital ninth trick) but only if we play it at trick one.

We cannot delay – playing a low card would leave the singleton ♥Q in the dummy and West would gobble that up later with his ♥K. If the ♥K is with East, on our right, then the contract is sunk. The ♥Q would be covered by the ♥K and we can only ever make one Heart trick. *C'est la vie*.

As the cards actually lie, with the ♥K in the West hand, the ♥Q wins the first trick and now it's just a question of hoping for three Club tricks. When holding such a suit combination it's always best to start off by leading a low card from one hand or the other.

This gives the defense the opportunity of doing something dopey (by playing the ♣A on a low card – ghastly defence but some players do it) and also gives us the chance that one of the opponents started with the ♣A singleton.

As the cards lie, though, the Clubs break 3-2 so a low Club to the ♣Q forces the ♣A, leaving the rest of the suit as winners.


Nine tricks come from two Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and three Clubs.



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VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 943	
	♥ Q6	
	♦ A932	
	♣ KJ73	
West		East
♠ J876		♠ QT5
♥ J8753		♥ K94
♦ J64		♦ QT5
♣ A		♣ T984
	South	
	♠ AK2	
	♥ AT2	
	♦ K87	
	♣ Q652	

We've been here before, haven't we?

This hand looks very familiar... It's Hand 3 all over again.

Well, not *quite*.

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

With a balanced 16 points we open 1NT; partner (with 10 points and a balanced hand) has an easy raise to 3NT.

Isn't this deal the same as the last one? Spooky...

Play.

After the ♥5 lead we have to count up our winners and make a plan.

In terms of *top tricks* we have just two Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds, making a total of five. So four more tricks have to come from somewhere. Clubs should produce some – two for certain and maybe three if the suit were to break 3-2. That swells the total to eight – what about the ninth?

Well, everything hinges on Hearts and our decision at trick one. What is the right card to play from dummy? Now, at this point we may think that this position is the same as that of Hand 3. It isn't.

In the previous deal we had ♥A 5 2 facing ♥Q 6 and the only rational play was to try the ♥Q and hope the sun shone. What a difference a Ten makes! Here, if we try the ♥Q we'd make only one Heart trick (and eight in total). Unlucky? Maybe – it's 50-50 whether West has the ♥K or East has it. However, why rely on a 50% shot when we have a 100% chance?

By playing a low Heart from the table we are sure of two Heart tricks, regardless of who has the ♥K and who has the ♥J.

If you don't "see" this (and many players don't) we suggest you get out some cards and lay out some possible Heart distributions. Regardless of whether West has led from the ♥K, the ♥J, both the ♥K J or neither honor we are assured of two Heart tricks eventually.

Here, East, faced with a two-way losing shot, puts in the ♥9 and we win the ♥10. Playing the ♥K is equally fatal to the defenders' cause, of course. Now it's time to set up our side-suit and

that, of course, is Clubs. Naturally enough, we should start off by leading a low card from hand towards the dummy rather than lead an honor.

This gives the defense the opportunity of doing something idiotic (by playing the ♣A on a low card – horrible defense but some players do it) and also gives us the chance that one of the opponents started with the ♣A singleton.

Here, to our surprise, West pops up with the ♣A. Either he's an escapee from a local institution or he was only dealt the singleton Ace. There is rarely a reason to fly in with an Ace so early in the piece, unless we know we have a suit to run off.

A Heart continuation is taken by the ♥A and we have nine tricks easily in sight. A second round of Clubs reveals that West is an unfortunate victim of the Great Dealer in the Sky. Much as it pained him to play his Ace on thin air he had no choice.

Note that we were lucky. It was possible that **East** had the singleton ♣A. If that were the case then we should have led a low Club from North. Of course, we couldn't have known either way. The lead just happened to be in the South hand so we led low from there.


Good things happen to people who do things good.



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VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ K5		
	♥ J8753		
	♦ QJ3		
	♣ 942		
West		East	
♠ QJT86		♠ 943	
♥ 96		♥ KQT2	
♦ 9		♦ AT65	
♣ QT753		♣ J6	
	South		
	♠ A72		
	♥ A4		
	♦ K8742		
	♣ AK8		

Here is a deal that's easy to play if the main suit breaks in friendly fashion.

And if it doesn't?

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

With 18 points we open 1♦ and rebid 2NT over a 1♥ response. In *Standard* methods this shows 18-19 points. North has just enough to raise to 3NT, eschewing any possibility of finding a 5-3 Heart fit. With poor Hearts and values outside that is an eminently sensible decision.

Play.

West has an easy ♠Q lead and we must count our tricks. There are just five *on top* so the Diamonds need setting up for four tricks and this seems easy enough – all that is required is a helpful 3-2 split.

Now, entries are something to be considered as is the possibility of dealing with certain 4-1 Diamond breaks. It is important to take the first Spade in hand and lead a low Diamond towards the table. It would be friendly defense should West turn up with the ♦A and play it on air. Nope, not today, but West does produce a significant spot-card, the ♦9. The ♦J is allowed to hold the trick and now we have reached the crunch-point of the hand. What next?

Well, we have to lead the ♦Q off the table (coming to hand with a Club and leading low to the ♦Q amounts to exactly the same thing). Why? Well, if Diamonds are 3-2 then all roads lead to Rome. What if Diamonds are 4-1? There's nothing to be done if West is the culprit but if this ♦9 is a singleton we can pick up East's ♦A 10 6 5 by means of a marked finesse.

East takes the ♦Q with the ♦A (it was clever play on his part to hold off on the first Diamond) and plays another Spade. Now the wisdom of leaving the ♠K on table becomes apparent – we are where we want to be at the crucial moment, in dummy.


A low Diamond to the ♦7 brings home the bacon via two Spades, one Heart, four Diamonds and two Clubs.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ JT	
	♥ J63	
	♦ KJ75	
	♣ KJ42	
West		East
♠ Q962		♠ K854
♥ QT98		♥ K72
♦ T842		♦ 63
♣ 7		♣ AT85
	South	
	♠ A73	
	♥ A54	
	♦ AQ9	
	♣ Q963	

The bidding is straightforward to an obvious contract.

The play, though, needs just a modicum of thought.

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

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

With a balanced 16 points we open 1NT; partner (with 10 points and a balanced hand) has an easy raise to 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♥10 (the top of an interior sequence) and we have to count up our winners and make a plan.

In terms of *top tricks* we have six (one Spade, one Heart and four Diamonds). So three more tricks have to come from somewhere and that "somewhere" is clearly Clubs. There are two Club tricks for certain and maybe three if the suit were to break 3-2.

What if Clubs break 4-1? Are there any holdings that can be catered for?. Note the ♣9 – that's a significant card. We can pick up a holding of ♣A 10 × × with East but would have to admit defeat if West were to hold that combination.

So... We take the ♥A at trick one and play a low Club towards the dummy at trick two. Would West care to play the ♣A on air? No, so we try the ♣K and East cannily holds up his ♣A. Now we must play the ♣J. (Coming to hand with a top Diamond and leading low to the ♣J amounts to exactly the same thing).

If East were to show out on this trick we'd have to admit defeat but then no play would have worked. As it is, East takes his ♣A and plays off his side's Hearts. We can pitch a useless Spade from dummy and the same from hand on the last Heart. When West has exhausted all of his Hearts (not enough to beat the contract, fortunately) he gets off lead with a Spade.


Now the hand is simple enough. We take four Diamond tricks, ending on table, and then are in a position to take the marked finesse of the ♣9. The ♣Q is the ninth and final trick.

3NT bid and made, job done.



Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ AT		
	♥ QJ653		
	♦ KJ		
	♣ KQJ2		
West		East	
♠ Q962		♠ J853	
♥ 94		♥ AKT7	
♦ 642		♦ 8753	
♣ AT85		♣ 6	
	South		
	♠ K74		
	♥ 82		
	♦ AQT9		
	♣ 9743		

Another deal where the play is just a little trickier than the bidding.

Your contract is in no danger if a critical suit breaks well.

What if it doesn't?

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

Lead: ♠ 2

Bidding.

North opens 1♥ in third seat and we are obliged to respond 1NT. A two-level response promises more than this flat 9-pointer.

North has a slightly awkward bid now with 17 points and a 5-4-2-2 shape. He would like to bid his second suit but thinks No-trumps might be right with 8 of his points in the short suits. Accordingly he raises to 2NT and we have an easy continuation to game.

Play.

West leads the ♠2 (a better lead in principle – and practice – than a Club). With a choice of two four-card suits it is usually better to lead a major rather than a minor against 3NT and it is often best to keep an Ace as an entry card while developing another suit.

A count of tricks reveals six *on top* (two Spades and four Diamonds) so three more have to come from other suits. Clubs might oblige were they to break 3-2. However, they might break 4-1 and we need to play carefully just in case they do.

The first play is to try the ♠10 from dummy (you never know – it might win!) and take trick one in hand with the ♠K when East produces the ♠J. Next comes a low Club to the ♣J. It should not surprise us that this holds the trick...

Much as it might be tempting to lead the ♣K off the table now it is actually best to come to hand (by overtaking the ♦J with the ♦Q) and lead another Club. West plays small again (playing his Ace on air can only help us) and the play of the ♣Q reveals the 4-1 break.

Now we have to cash the remaining Diamonds (by overtaking the ♦K with the ♦A and then taking the ♦10 9) and finally lead a Club towards the ♣K 2.

West can do nothing now. Whatever the defenders do we must make two Spades, four Diamonds and three Clubs.


Any variation in this precise order of play leads to defeat. A tricky hand.



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Eight General Hands. SA version. Updated spring 2015

VB#21 Y1 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 24/01/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ KJ952	
	♥ Q63	
	♦ AJT	
	♣ AQ	
West		East
♠ 8643		♠ T7
♥ K875		♥ AJ9
♦ KQ4		♦ 9752
♣ 93		♣ JT86
	South	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ T42	
	♦ 863	
	♣ K7542	

A deal with (apparently) sufficient top tricks.

Can you reach them, though?

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

Lead: ♥ 5

Bidding.

North opens 1♠ in second seat and we are obliged to respond 1NT. A two-level response promises more than this 5-3-3-2 shaped 9-pointer.

North has a reasonable raise to 2NT with 17 points and a 5-3-3-2 shape. This might be a horrible contract were we to Pass with a poor 6 points but there are no prizes for strolling in a 100 metre sprint.

We have an easy bid of 3NT with our maximum 1NT response.

Play.

West leads the ♥5 and at first glance the hand appears to have nine *top tricks* (five Spades, three Clubs and the ♦A). However, the black suits are **blocked** and a few moments thought should show us that the to-ing and fro-ing between the closed hand and dummy is very tricky.

We play low on the Heart lead and see how our luck is today. Not good, but not too bad. The defenders cash the first four Heart tricks on which we have to find a discard from each hand. Well, the Diamonds are not worth much so we pitch the ♦10 from dummy and the ♦3 from hand.

Next comes the ♦K so we need the rest of the tricks. We need to hope that one of the black suits behaves by breaking nicely – there is no other line. So we unblock the ♣A Q and come to hand with the ♠A (not the ♠Q – we can't afford to block the Spades).

Now comes the ♣K with the hope that the suit breaks 3-3. No, no luck here, although a cunning East does play the ♣J hoping we'll be fooled into trying the ♣7 next.

Giving East a contemptuous look we revert to Spades, leading the ♠Q and overtaking it on the table. We need the Spades 3-3 or the ♠10 to fall in two rounds. Well, Spades are 4-2 but the Ten does fall and West's ♠8 6 4 3 provide no obstacle to our progress.

The ♠J 9 5 provide the last three tricks and the contract.