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A series of six declarer-play deals, intended for V-Blue Year 2.
SA version. ACOL version 2972

VB#1 Y2 David's deals.	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♦ J

We reach 4♠ easily enough and West leads the ♦J.

North

♠ K53
♥ 853
♦ Q862
♣ J96

West

♠ 8
♥ QT97
♦ JT94
♣ KT53



East

♠ 742
♥ KJ6
♦ 753
♣ AQ82

South

♠ AQJT96
♥ A42
♦ AK
♣ 74

There are, apparently, ten top tricks (six Spades, one Heart, three Diamonds). However, sometimes it is not so easy to score all the top cards that we have in a suit, even when they include the Ace, King and Queen. Here the Diamond suit is **blocked**.

After playing the ♦A K, we need to cross to dummy in a different suit to score a trick with the ♦Q. The only entry is the ♠K so that has to be used as a means of access to table. We cannot draw trumps prematurely or we would use up dummy's only entry.

This series introduces VBlue users to the world-renowned author and professional Englishman David Bird.

Each odd-numbered edition of VBlue will publish six deals from David, designed to test your card-playing skills.


In the first deal you have to take your time and think. It is entitled "Wait A Moment!".



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Y2 VBlue #1 David's Deals SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ QJ953	
	♥ J6	
	♦ 92	
	♣ Q963	
West		East
♠ A8		♠ KT762
♥ 73		♥ 98
♦ QJT643		♦ 75
♣ JT5		♣ AK82
	South	
	♠ 4	
	♥ AKQT542	
	♦ AK8	
	♣ 74	

When you make a **Plan** for your contract, you must try to make it as safe as possible.

Try to imagine how the defenders might beat you.

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

Lead: ♦ Q

We open 1♥, hoping that we will not be left high and dry and the one-level. When partner responds 1♠ we have enough to jump to 4♥.

Dummy's black honors aren't worth much to us but the doubleton Diamond is very helpful. We can ruff a Diamond on table for the tenth trick.

When we are ruffing a loser in dummy, we must ruff with a top trump if we can afford to do so.

In other words, ruff high provided we will still have enough high trumps left to draw the defenders' cards in the suit.

By ruffing high we avoid the risk of an over-ruff.



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Y2 VBlue #1 David's Deals SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W


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

Lead: ♥ Q

We open 1♠ and partner raises that to game, a bid based more on good shape than on high-card values.

On many deals we should draw trumps as soon as possible. Sometimes, though, there is a pressing need to do something different.

Here, the top priority is to discard one of our Heart losers on a top Diamond. If we were to play trumps straight away, we'd go down.

	North	
	♠ Q9432	
	♥ 764	
	♦ AQ85	
	♣ 8	
West		East
♠ A7		♠ 5
♥ QJT3		♥ K98
♦ T73		♦ J942
♣ J943		♣ AKT75
	South	
	♠ KJT86	
	♥ A52	
	♦ K6	
	♣ Q62	

When you hold all the top trumps, it is usually right to draw trumps straight away.

When the opponents hold the Ace of trumps (or the King and you are planning to finesse), you must consider whether the defenders can damage you if you play trumps immediately.

Perhaps it is a higher priority to play some other suit.



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VB#1 Y2 David's deals.	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

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

Lead: ♠ K

We reach 3NT after a routine auction of 1NT – 3NT.

West leads the ♠K and we have to determine what to do. Should we take the ♠A and immediately play a Club? Try to see what would happen if we tried that.

The **hold-up** is declarer's most powerful technique in a No-trump contract. The aim is to remove all the cards in the suit held by one of the defenders. He then becomes the **safe hand**, or **safe defender**. We can afford him to win the lead later in the play, as we develop the extra tricks that we need. He will have no card to play in the suit that was led.

Here, we duck two rounds of Spades and take the ♠A on the third round. Now the defensive lines of communication have been broken.

Suppose East had held another Spade when he won with the ♠A. Spades would then have broken 4-4 and would pose us no problem. In that case the defenders would score only three Spades and the ♠A.

North

♠ 83
♥ AK8
♦ QT93
♣ QT76

West

♠ KQJ94
♥ T732
♦ 76
♣ 32



East

♠ T75
♥ QJ54
♦ 542
♣ A98

South

♠ A62
♥ 96
♦ AKJ8
♣ KJ54

This deal illustrates perhaps the most important technique when playing a No-trump contract. Good luck!



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VB#1 Y2 David's deals.	Contract: 4S
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♥ Q

With a magnificent Spade suit we open 1♠ in third seat. Partner's 1NT response is depressing (he only has 6-9 points) but we still have enough for a shot at 4♠.

Sure, East-West might take the first four tricks in the red suits on some days if dummy has the wrong cards but we just have to take some risks at this game. As it is, partner has a useful ♥A and useless ♦Q. At least there are nine winners on top.

There are various situations where it is not right to draw trumps straight away. This is one of them. The ♥Q lead puts us in dummy for the first and last time and we must use this entry to take the Club finesse. If East doesn't have the ♣K then we are dead and buried anyway.

If, instead, we were to draw trumps, we could never get back to the table. We would have to surrender the lead in one of the red suits and hope that the defenders made a mistake by playing Clubs for us.

North

♠ 63
♥ A764
♦ Q84
♣ 8732

West

♠ 97
♥ QJT5
♦ AT73
♣ J94



East

♠ 54
♥ K98
♦ KJ52
♣ KT65

South

♠ AKQJT82
♥ 32
♦ 96
♣ AQ

This is another deal where it is essential to make an early **plan**.

Do you regard 'making a plan' as too much like hard work? Do you call for dummy's first card immediately, muttering "I like to **enjoy** my bridge"?

It's a fair enough approach, I suppose, but not the right one if you want to become a good player!



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VB#1 Y2 David's deals.	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

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

Lead: ♣ Q

The bidding is the relatively easy 1♥ – 3♥ – 4♥.
West leads the ♣Q.

We win the Club lead and see that five Hearts, three Diamonds and two black Aces will bring our total to ten. How can anything go wrong?

Nothing will go wrong, provided we draw trumps straight away. The defenders are welcome to win with the ♥A and cash a Club trick. We win their next lead, draw trumps and score three Diamond tricks, throwing one of our potential Spade losers.

The only way to go down is to attempt to play three rounds of Diamonds *before* drawing trumps. We throw away our Club loser on the third top Diamond but, disaster! West ruffs with the ♥9. This way we'd lose two trump tricks and, later, two further tricks in the Spade suit.

There is no point whatsoever in trying to discard a Club before drawing trumps. It will be just as good to discard a Spade **after** drawing trumps.

North

♠ J64

♥ 8764

♦ AKQ8

♣ 87

West

♠ Q972

♥ A9

♦ 73

♣ QJT94



East

♠ KT3

♥ 5

♦ JT542

♣ K653

South

♠ A85

♥ KQJT32

♦ 96

♣ A2

You will encounter countless deals where it is essential to make a plan right at the start.

These deals occur all over the place – at your local Club, in the neighbors' house, in international tournaments, even in the VBlue Newsletter.