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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ 986	
	♦ KJ943	
	♣ AKQ	
West		East
♠ T9876		♠ 542
♥ AJ		♥ KT542
♦ 875		♦ AQT6
♣ JT3		♣ 8
	South	
	♠ KJ3	
	♥ Q73	
	♦ 2	
	♣ 976542	

Here are eight general practice hands. There is no particular theme to them although *blocked suits* and *entries* are topics that feature in some of them.

Hand 1 requires you to plan thoroughly at trick one (which you should be doing in every hand, right?)

After you have formulated a sound **Plan** you can take your tricks, if you are sufficiently careful.

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

Lead: ♠ T

Bidding.

When partner opens 1♦ as dealer we have an awkward response to make as South. We shouldn't really Pass with 6 points but we have no four-card suit to bid at the one-level. Additionally, we also cannot sensibly bid our suit at the two-level (2♣) since that would promise 10+ points.

With little choice we have to fall back on the "trash-can response" of 1NT. (Why "trash-can response"? Because it's where we put all the garbage hands...)

Partner raises to 3NT and we hurriedly Pass.

Play.

West leads the ♠10 against 3NT, which looks like being the top of a sequence. We can count nine top tricks (three Spades and six Clubs), assuming that both defenders have at least one Club. (Put another way: assuming Clubs split 2-2 or 3-1).

The problem on this hand is being able to reach all the long Clubs and this requires some planning. (Have we ever mentioned about making a Plan?) To ensure we have an entry to the Clubs we must play the ♠A from dummy to the first trick before we cash the top Clubs.

[Try the effect of winning the first trick with the ♠Q. Now try reaching the South hand later in the game...]

This then is the play... We take the first trick on table with the ♠A. We then unblock the Clubs by playing the ♣A K Q, being pleased to note that this exhausts the defenders' supply of Clubs.

We now have four tricks and have five waiting (the ♠K J and the ♣9 7 6) in the closed hand. All we need to do is play the ♠Q, making sure we overtake with the ♠K and cash our winners. After that we have little interest in the deal – we have our nine tricks and don't care much that the defenders are feasting on the scraps.


Note. With 20-20 hindsight and a view of all

four hands the defenders could have beaten 3NT by leading a Diamond initially and by shifting to Hearts. However, what West did was entirely reasonable: he led his longest suit. Had he led a Diamond initially there could well have been a stewards' enquiry...



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Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ K42		
	♥ 642		
	♦ A9876		
	♣ 82		
West		East	
♠ J6		♠ QT987	
♥ QJT53		♥ 98	
♦ T2		♦ J543	
♣ KT97		♣ Q6	
	South		
	♠ A53		
	♥ AK7		
	♦ KQ		
	♣ AJ543		

Here, you will have to adopt a flexible **Plan** to take account of changing circumstances.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

With a balanced 21 count we have a classical 2NT opening bid. Partner, with 7 points and a useful five-card suit, has an easy raise to game.

Play.

West leads the ♥Q against 3NT from the top of his sequence and we pause to take stock and to count our tricks.

We can see eight *on top* (two Spades, two Hearts, three Diamonds and a Club) and so, logically enough, need one more.

Diamonds are the most likely source of an extra trick (or two) and we would like to play three rounds then surrender a fourth round (if needed) to establish our fifth Diamond as a winner. However there is a catch in that Plan as we only have one side-entry to dummy – the ♠K – so it looks as if we need Diamonds to break 3-3. However, initial appearances can be deceptive; the ♦9 8 7 are important spot-cards.

Were we to cash the top Diamonds, cross to the ♠K and try the Ace of Diamonds we'd make ten tricks on a 3-3 Diamond split and eight tricks if the suit did not oblige. The essence of this deal is to make nine tricks. Is there a way of maximising our chances of making the contract?

We win the opening lead in hand with the ♥K. Now we cash the ♦K Q to unblock the suit. On the ♦Q West drops the ♦10. Suddenly, a shaft of sunlight appears through the clouds. This means we can safely overtake the ♦Q with North's ♦A to establish the suit for four tricks.

We then play one of the ♦9 8 7 to knock out the ♦J and make our third and fourth Diamond tricks. As it happens, the ♦9 is ducked but that only delays the inevitable. We continue with the ♦8 which draws the ♦J. East returns his partner's suit by leading the ♥9, which we win with the ♥A.

We now have five tricks and have done all the hard work. All that remains is to cross to

dummy with the ♠K, cash the ♦7, then come back to the Ace of Clubs and take the Ace of Spades to make our contract. After that we lose interest in the hand as the defenders scoop up the rest.


Note that we'd have given up an overtrick with this line of play had West started with ♦J 10 ×. Big deal.



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Y2 VBlue #6 General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ AKQ		
	♥ AJ7		
	♦ QT753		
	♣ KT		
West		East	
♠ 64		♠ JT982	
♥ T9853		♥ Q62	
♦ 64		♦ AKJ8	
♣ A753		♣ 8	
	South		
	♠ 753		
	♥ K4		
	♦ 92		
	♣ QJ9642		

This deal is once again about **counting** and **planning** to identify where your tricks are coming from.

Success depends upon also being able to reach these tricks with limited access to one of the hands.

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

Lead: ♥ T

Bidding.

This hand has strong echoes from Hand 2 – at least the auction has. When partner opens 1♦ we have to find a response with 6 points and with nothing to bid at the one-level. As so often with hands like this we have to fall back on 1NT.

Partner raises us to 3NT and we await the dummy with interest.

Play.

West leads the ♥10 from his sequence and we take time out to assess the hand and to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see just five *top tricks* (three Spades and two Hearts). These can be supplemented with five tricks from Clubs, after the ♣A has been knocked out. We must check our entries to the Clubs and should see that we must preserve the ♥K in the closed hand. At trick one, therefore, we take the ♥A on table.

We have a weakness in Diamonds but can do nothing about that; our priority is to knock out the ♣A to set up the rest of the suit. To follow that plan we play the ♣K (*play the honors from the short hand first*) and, when the ♣A is not forthcoming, we follow that up with the ♠10. West would allow that to hold as well, if he could – to avoid being stranded on table we overtake the Ten with the Jack.


West, realizing the futility of ducking any more Clubs, produces the Ace on the second round and tries his luck with a Diamond. We play low from dummy and East, on our right, produces the ♦J. Patience, patience... East cashes the ♦A K but then runs out of ammunition; he gives us the lead back with the ♥K and we take the rest by cashing our long Clubs and the top Spades.



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Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 2	
	♥ Q543	
	♦ AK	
	♣ QJ5432	
West		East
♠ JT943		♠ 8765
♥ KT2		♥ A98
♦ 432		♦ 87
♣ T6		♣ AK98
	South	
	♠ AKQ	
	♥ J76	
	♦ QJT965	
	♣ 7	

This deal allows you to practise your plumbing skills so your play can flow unhindered, without any blockage.

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

Partner opens the bidding in second seat with 1♣ and rebids 1♥ after we respond 1♦.

With Spades securely held and values for game (13 points facing an opening bid) we decide to take a punt at 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠J against our game contract, probably from a sequence, and we take a time-out for reflection.

We appear to be able to count nine winners (three Spades and six Diamonds) but there is a problem with entries. The opening lead leaves us in hand with the Diamonds blocked by dummy's ♦A K with no obvious way back to the closed hand.

We cannot create a second entry to our hand but there is a way to unblock the Diamonds, although it is radical. We need to play the ♠A K, before we play the Diamonds, discarding the ♦A K from dummy! It may feel strange but it is essential, in fact it is the only winning line.

In detail: we win the lead in hand with the ♠Q. We next play the ♠A discarding the ♦K from dummy. The Diamonds are still blocked so we play the ♠K discarding the ♦A from dummy. Partner is giving us quizzical looks as this is going on. No matter – a smile will appear on his features shortly.

The hard work is done. We have three tricks in the bank and all that remains is to cash our six Diamond winners and make our contract. This is one of those *when-you-see-it-it's-easy hands*. The problem is "seeing" it early enough...


There... didn't we tell you? A thin smile is appearing on partner's usually wintry features.



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Eight General Hands. SA Version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J97	
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ AQ T5	
	♣ K42	
West		East
♠ K54		♠ AT83
♥ 62		♥ J9754
♦ K876		♦ 32
♣ QJT9		♣ 87
	South	
	♠ Q62	
	♥ T83	
	♦ J94	
	♣ A653	

Counting and **Planning** are crucial to success.

Can you count sufficient tricks on this deal?

Can you make a sensible Plan?

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

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

Partner opens 1♦ as dealer and we simply have to respond 1NT.

With 7 points we are obliged to respond and with neither 10 points nor a suit biddable at the one-level, our only option is to fall back on 1NT.

Partner raises us immediately to 3NT with what turns out to be a balanced 19-count.

Play.

West leads the ♣Q against 3NT and we have to take our time to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see six *on top* (three Hearts, a Diamond and two Clubs), needing three more for success. The best chance is to finesse in Diamonds, hoping to find the ♦K on our left and to repeat this as often as needed. The ♣A is the only side-suit entry to the closed hand so we need to be very careful when playing on Diamonds. We may need to finesse Diamonds three times. With this in mind we win the first trick in hand with the ♣A and take the Diamond finesse.

Watchpoint! Which Diamond do we lead to take this finesse? If we were to try the ♦J then it would hold the trick. The next Diamond would be won by dummy's ♦10 and we'd be in the wrong hand at the wrong time. Oops!

To avoid embarrassment we must lead the ♦9 on the first round – no other card will do. This way we can repeat the finesse three times if needed. This particular combination is frequently misplayed.

[Did someone say... "Why not lead the ♦J and throw dummy's Ten on it if West plays low"? Clever, but not clever enough. When we next lead the Nine West covers with the King and – amazingly – eventually makes the ♦8 for a vital trick. Close, but no cigar].

Here, on this layout, the ♦9 holds trick two. Next we lead the Jack and that wins as well (it can do West no earthly good to cover either of


these cards with his King). The lead is still where we need it – in the closed hand – and the third Diamond finesse secures four tricks in the suit. After that it's a simple matter to cash the remaining top tricks and get on with the next deal.

What if East held the ♦K? Then 3NT would fail – sometimes bridge is as simple as that. It would be embarrassing, though, to fail in 3NT when a crucial finesse worked, wouldn't it?



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Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ AQ4	
	♥ 983	
	♦ AQ T94	
	♣ J7	
West		East
♠ JT98		♠ 7532
♥ AJ4		♥ 62
♦ 82		♦ 73
♣ AQ52		♣ K9863
	South	
	♠ K6	
	♥ KQT75	
	♦ KJ65	
	♣ T4	

After five successive 3NT contracts we are going to allow you to declare a suit contract.

Once again, though, you need to make a careful Plan of campaign.

The key question is: Should you draw trumps immediately or do you have other matters to attend to?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	2♦	P	3♦
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

We choose to open the bidding with 1♥ on a minimum hand with a decent suit and easy rebid. When partner responds in our second suit we must find a rebid and make a simple raise to 3♦.

Partner, knowing we have five Hearts, has enough to bid the Heart game.

Play.

West leads the ♠J against 4♥ and we must pause to take stock.

We can count eight top tricks with at least three more to come from trumps once the ♥A J are gone.

Fortunately, we know by now the importance of counting **losers** as well as **winners**. There are two Club losers as well as a hole in the trump suit; a potential four losers. If we were to start by drawing trumps we may well lose two Clubs and two trumps.

To avoid this, we need to **dump** a Club before drawing trumps. The opponents have found the wrong opening lead, we mustn't give them a second chance. In passing, no one could possibly blame West for leading from a solid Spade sequence rather than from an extremely dangerous tenace holding in Clubs.

So, having assessed the hand, we must win the first trick in hand with the ♠K in order to play three rounds of the suit, dumping a losing Club. Now (and not before) we start the process of drawing trumps, playing small to the ♥K Q. When this wins we cross to the ♦Q and play the ♥9. When East plays low we are guessing whether to play the ♥K or the ♥5 – in the event it doesn't matter as West – the dog! – has both the Ace and the Jack.


When West takes the ♥J he shifts to Clubs but this defense comes far too late. We ruff the second Club and revert to our side suit. Contract made.



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Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ AQT		
	♥ 853		
	♦ 752		
	♣ 8642		
West		East	
♠ 432		♠ 8765	
♥ QJT96		♥ 72	
♦ 3		♦ K9864	
♣ KT73		♣ A9	
	South		
	♠ KJ9		
	♥ AK4		
	♦ AQJT		
	♣ QJ5		

In this deal you need to work out where you need to be and when.

It's all a matter of *timing* and *entries*.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding.

As dealer, we have a textbook 2NT opening bid; partner has an easy 3NT raise.

Play.

West kicks off with the ♥Q from his fine sequence, so we settle down to some cogitation.

We can count six *top tricks* (three Spades, two Hearts and a Diamond) and the Diamond finesse is our best hope for three more, but we may have to take it three times. Spades are our only entry to dummy so we will need to be careful in the precise order that we play this suit.

We win the opening lead in hand with the ♥K. Now, there are three Spade entries on table if we are careful. When we lead the ♠9 we must play the ♠10 on that, preserving the ♠A Q as second and third entries to repeat the Diamond finesse. Once in dummy we play a small Diamond to our ♦10 and are relieved when it holds the trick.

We now need to repeat the whole process, so we play the ♠J from hand overtaking with dummy's ♠Q and follow with a low Diamond from dummy to our ♦J. Once again it holds, West showing out.

At this point everything is easy. We cross back to table for a third time (on this occasion it happens to be by using the ♠K to the ♠A) and take the *marked Diamond finesse* for the seventh trick.


Dotting the *is* and crossing the *ts* we cash the red Aces for our eighth and ninth tricks and are happy to concede the rest.



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Y2 VBlue #6 Eight General Hands SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 03/07/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A2	
	♥ J6	
	♦ AK9876	
	♣ 752	
West		East
♠ JT96		♠ Q84
♥ 942		♥ KQT3
♦ T532		♦ J4
♣ KT		♣ Q964
	South	
	♠ K753	
	♥ A875	
	♦ Q	
	♣ AJ83	

This deal involves looking at the best way of maximising your chances.

On a sunny day you might make an overtrick here.

However, can you make your contract if it starts to rain?

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding.

After West Passes as dealer North opens the bidding with 1♦.

That pleases us, holding 14 points (surely we have a game somewhere?) However, as usual, partner bids our worst suit and then rebids it after we respond 1♥.

With no evidence of a fit (North has denied Heart support or a four-card black-suit) we take a pot at the most likely game contract – 3NT.

Play.

West leads the ♠J against the No-trump game and we pause to think about our prospects.

We can count seven *top tricks* (two Spades, a Heart, three Diamonds and a Club), so need to seek out two more. The extras should come from Diamonds, the long suit, but entries to table are few and far between.

We could take the Spade lead in hand, cash the ♦Q, cross to the ♠A and try the top two Diamonds. If Diamonds split evenly that would land us six Diamond tricks, and ten in all. It's a Plan... However, it relies on a 3-3 break, which will only happen about one time in three.

[If you love probability and statistics the odds on a 3-3 break are 36%. Remarkably, the odds on a 3-3 break are the same even if you hate probability and statistics].

Is there a better Plan? Well, this deal has distinct echoes of Hand 2. Plan B is to take the Spade lead in the closed hand and then to overtake the ♦Q, playing off the King, the Ace and another Diamond. Nothing (except an insignificant overtrick) would be lost if Diamonds were 3-3. The gain comes if either opponent holds ♦10 × or ♦J ×. Now the power of the Diamond intermediates would be sufficient to force five Diamond tricks.

Plan B gives no chance of an overtrick, but does increase the chances of making the hand. So that's the line we adopt.

So... we win the first trick in the closed hand with the King, preserving the ♠A as an later entry to our Diamonds. We then play the ♦Q, overtaking with the King. We next play off the ♦A and are delighted to see that the ♦J drops on our right. We now know that 3NT is making; we continue the Diamonds to knock out the ♦10. Had East turned up with ♦J 10 × we'd have given up on an overtrick; as it is, we have found the only line to land nine tricks.

West takes the ♦10 and returns a Spade but the hand is all over bar the shouting. We cash dummy's remaining Diamonds and just require two more tricks. With two Aces lurking in the closed hand that isn't a problem and we claim our game.