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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. SA version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 2S
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ Q954		
	♥ KJ86		
	♦ Q9		
	♣ AJ2		
West		East	
♠ 8		♠ AT7	
♥ AQ53		♥ T97	
♦ AKT76		♦ 84	
♣ T87		♣ Q9543	
	South		
	♠ KJ632		
	♥ 42		
	♦ J532		
	♣ K6		

This series (together with its brother, also in this edition of VBlue) is all about the take-out Double. This is the first of the two series.

Most of these deals concern the response to a Double. Do you simply bid your best suit at the lowest level?

Hand 1: Bidding accurately opposite a take-out Double is fairly simple.

The "rule" is not to make the same bid on very different hands.

Partners are delicate flowers and they need careful nurturing...

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding

This is a very straightforward hand. West (on our left) opens 1♦, North has a respectable but minimum take-out Double to which we (South) should respond 2♠ after East Passes.

Not 1♠, notice, which could be based on nothing, but a jump to 2♠, which shows this sort of hand (8 to 11 points, more or less). This should end the auction; North has done his bit with a Double on a minimum hand, so it would be foolish for him to bid on.

Now, one may say that bidding 2♠ instead of 1♠ has gained nothing and – on this deal – that is probably true. However, on other deals, partner will have an easy time assessing our values (and, more importantly, our lack of them) if we bid with clarity.

If we respond 1♠ on this type of hand and also on, say,

♠ 10 6 3 2
♥ 7 4 2
♦ J 5 3 2
♣ Q 6

... how is partner supposed to evaluate accurately when he has a good hand?

Play

Anyway – onto the play of the dummy. Against 2♠ West starts off with three rounds of Diamonds (East having made a "come-on" signal by playing the ♦8 before the ♦4). This is awkward and demands that we ruff with one of dummy's high trumps. As the cards lie, we cannot avoid losing two trump tricks to East whether we ruff first with the ♠Q or the ♠9 – West can always regain the lead with the ♥A and lead yet another Diamond.


However, losing two trump tricks is no disaster; all the defense can take is two Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds. We still record the requisite eight tricks.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 2C
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AK73	
	♥ A953	
	♦ T4	
	♣ A72	
West		East
♠ T9		♠ Q8642
♥ KQJT		♥ 74
♦ AQ875		♦ K62
♣ QJ		♣ T84
	South	
	♠ J5	
	♥ 862	
	♦ J93	
	♣ K9653	

Not every hand can be a game contract, full of easy tricks. More often, you will have hands like this, a little skirmish for a part-score.

It has been said that two-level contracts are the hardest to make and the hardest to set.

Amen. Let's see how you do.

West	North	East	South
1♦	X	P	2♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding

We all shudder when we have a poor hand and our partner makes a take-out Double; all we want to do is quietly Pass and leave the table. But as we know, one simply cannot pass a take-out Double with no intervening bid from our right-hand opponent.

Our partner's take-out Double on this deal is straight from the textbook. The shape is perfect, even more points than needed (compare with Hand 1), and a serious desire to compete in any suit.

We have to make a decision. With no chance of a major fit, we look to our pathetic, ratty, sickly Club suit. We bid it at the cheapest possible level, showing zero to 8 points (or thereabouts). We might pray for East-West to bid again, but no such luck.

Anyway, in these cases, we should reflect and ask ourselves, "How much worse might this hand have been?" We have a five-card suit and we have 5 points. These features are not nothing. Indeed not. How would we have felt after the same auction with either of the following hands?

♠ J 7 6
♥ J 4 2
♦ J 9 3
♣ 9 6 5 3

or - horror of horrors:

♠ 9 7 6
♥ 8 4 2
♦ 10 9 3 2
♣ 9 6 5

Let's thank our lucky stars for a decent five-card suit and a King!

Anyway, after our 2♣ call, North recognises a stop sign when he sees it, and Passes. (Could it be our tears? Answer: No – it's the fact that we have made a minimum response and have not jumped the bidding).

Play

When the opening lead of the ♥K (promising the ♥Q) is made and dummy comes down, we dry our tears. We are made of stern stuff, and partner's hand is terrific. All is not lost.

Our preliminary **Count** shows no Spade losers, two Hearts, two Diamonds (planning to ruff the third in dummy) and at least one Club loser. We can make this contract with good timing. It will take three rounds of trumps to extract them all (assuming that the 68% chance of a 3-2 split comes home), but we must keep one in dummy to ruff that Diamond with.

Our first order of business is to remove dummy's Diamonds in order to ruff one on table. Thus, at trick two, we lead a Diamond.

We get our first surprise at trick three when West leads a Club. Good for them! The best advice I can give defenders is, "*Look at the dummy, Dummy*" and that's what West did. He saw that we were stripping the dummy (else why wouldn't we be pulling trumps?) in preparation to ruff Diamonds, so he decided to cut down on our ability to ruff by leading trumps himself.

When we regain the lead at trick four, we stick to the plan and get rid of dummy's second Diamond. At trick five, West leads another trump, but it's too little too late. We carefully retained the ♠K to get back to hand with, and we duly ruff the third Diamond.

The hand is over. We will get the ♠A K, and two more trumps after they take their master trump trick. Contract made!

Now, a couple final words. **Trumping** in dummy and **Dumping** in dummy require two different strategies. Most of the time, we cannot afford to pull trumps till we Trump in dummy. If we are going to Dump in dummy, we want to pull trumps so "they" can't ruff your long suit.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East
♠ AT73		♠ 982
♥ 7		♥ 9652
♦ A753		♦ T9
♣ K842		♣ A976
West		South
♠ 4		♠ KQJ65
♥ AKQT8		♥ J43
♦ J842		♦ KQ6
♣ QJT		♣ 53

On the previous deal, you were obliged to bid with a poor hand. This time you will see the other side of the coin.

Here are a couple of hints:

- During the auction, bid what your hand is worth – don't put undue pressure on your partner.
- During the play, focus on the timing of the hand.

West	North	East	South
1♥	X	2♥	4♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding

North's take-out Double of 1♥ is perfect. He only has 11 high card points, but adds on something extra for the singleton in the opponents' suit. Notice what a brave soldier East is, not prepared to simply roll over and play dead. He knows his side has a good Heart fit, so he raises Hearts just for nuisance value.

But we are not to be denied our game. To stress this theme one more time...

When responding to partner's take-out Double, our bid should reflect the nature of our hand, both in terms of suit length and high card strength.

Were we to be so timid as to bid a feeble 2♣, partner would/should Pass, assuming that this was merely a competitive effort over the enemy 2♥. Even a jump to 3♣ would not convey the full strength of this hand, and partner would pass that bid too. By jumping all the way to 4♣, we are showing a hand that is good enough to attempt a game contract opposite a minimum opener. And just look at the quality of our Spades – gracious!

Play

West makes the expected Heart lead and we pause to reflect. We have Heart losers in hand, two of which can be ruffed in dummy. We have no Diamond losers and two Club losers. In order to make this contract, we must therefore ruff Heart losers. (What do we do with losers? We **Trump** them in dummy or **Dump** them on dummy's long suits.)

When we plan to ruff losers, we must be aware of the number of trumps in dummy's hand. Here we need to ruff two losers, so if we were to draw three rounds of trumps right away, we'd only have one left in dummy. That would leave two Heart losers to go with our two Clubs.

At trick two, West leads the ♣Q, and we know immediately our ♣K isn't worth the cardboard he's printed on. The defenders duly cash the first three tricks, so we need the remainder.

At trick four, we are finally in when we get to ruff

a Club. We have a plan and we stick to it, leading a Heart and ruffing on the table.

At trick five we need to get back to the closed hand. We could do so with a Diamond, but it's much better to do it with trumps. We won't be giving up the lead and we'll be extracting some of theirs. If you can afford it, it's better to use trumps first for entries.


At trick six, we ruff our last losing Heart, and go about the business of drawing the rest of the outstanding Spades. Then we are in a position to cash our winners and claim.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AJT2	
	♥ J983	
	♦ A6	
	♣ A84	
West		East
♠ K964		♠ Q8
♥ A5		♥ 74
♦ KQJT7		♦ 9842
♣ JT		♣ 97653
	South	
	♠ 753	
	♥ KQT62	
	♦ 53	
	♣ KQ2	

Here's another deal that requires a careful response to a take-out Double. After that, it's a question of hand evaluation – or rather, re-evaluation.

In terms of the card-play... you'd think that with billions of possible hands, you'd never see the same thing twice, but there are certain card combinations that crop up over and over again.

Here's an old friend that will help you to make the contract. But will you recognize him when you see him?

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

Lead: ♦ K

Bidding

North has an ideal hand for a take-out Double of West's 1♦ opening bid. Our 2♥ response shows about 8 to 11 points (give or take). 1♥ would be a travesty of an underbid with South's cards.

Partner needs a more detailed description. If we're at the bottom end of our advertised range, a game contract would be a bridge too far. If we have a maximum though, game should be a worthwhile venture. Partner's raise to 3♥ is an invitational bid asking this very question. We're near the top of the range, so we accept the invitation.

Play

Our **Count** and **Plan** reveals two potential Spade losers plus one Heart and one Diamond. The only loser we can hope to get rid of is the Spade. Consider the Spade suit.

It's time to remember the combination finesse (otherwise known as the "75% Solution"). When touching honours are out against us, they are generally split between the opponents' hands. If they are divided (or if they are both in the West hand), we will only lose one Spade trick. Only when they are both with East, will we lose two. That gives us a 75% chance of success. Those are pretty good odds, and in fact they are actually much better than 75% because West has opened the bidding, which increases his chances of holding the high cards.

We consider whether or not we should pull trumps first. In general, there are two reasons **not** to draw trumps. One is when we need to ruff in dummy and can't afford to shorten dummy's holding. The other is if pulling trumps would lose us the lead when we absolutely cannot afford to give it up. Neither condition appears here, so we plan to take out trumps, then attack Spades.

We take the first trick with our ♦A, and start on the trumps immediately. They take their Ace and cash a Diamond winner. With nothing better to do, West then tries a Club.

We win this (in either hand) and draw the last of the trumps – we even get a friendly 2-2 split. Now it's time for the Spades. We lead from our hand up to the ♠10. The East honor (the ♠Q) takes the trick. We win the Club return in hand, and with bated breath, play another Spade.

Dummy's ♠J holds the trick. We did it! The ♠A provides the tenth trick. A possible 3-3 Spade break is irrelevant – we have the rest of the tricks regardless.


What a nifty little hand. A take-out Double and clear responses, followed by our old friend the 75% Solution brought home another contract.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KQ32		
	♥ 95		
	♦ KJ6		
	♣ AKQJ		
West		East	
♠ AT8		♠ J5	
♥ AKQ63		♥ T872	
♦ T98		♦ 7542	
♣ 63		♣ T95	
	South		
	♠ 9764		
	♥ J4		
	♦ AQ3		
	♣ 8742		

This deal requires you to reappraise the worth of your hand during the auction.

After that, you're going to have to take care with the declarer play.

West	North	East	South
1♥	X	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

Bidding.

Responses to take-out Doubles should show both shape and point count (a familiar refrain, no?) We have an unexciting 7 points with a miserable Spade suit, so, after partner Doubles 1♥, the cheapest reply possible is appropriate here – 1♠.

On the next round of the auction, partner jumps to 3♠. We haven't encountered such a bid previously, so let's reason it through. This is an invitational raise, and essentially all invitational bids say the same thing: *If you are at the top of your previously-stated range, take us up to the next bonus level.*

Note that 2♠ is also an invitational raise. The latter asks us to proceed only if we are right at the top of our range, while 3♠ invites us to bid game with anything useful – for example, a five-card Spade suit headed by the Ace would be enough on its own.

For partner to be willing to play in game opposite our maximum of 6 to 7 (maybe a bad 8), he has to have 19+ points or thereabouts.

We like our chances. We do have that lovely Diamond tenace in hand. In these cases it's worth asking ourselves how much worse our hand might have been. In this case – a lot worse, so we are fully justified in advancing to game. Go team!!

Play.

When dummy comes down, we can see that Partner has a nice 19 points although his hand isn't quite as good as he thinks it is. This is because we have identical distribution, meaning that it won't be possible to ruff any losers.

Our preliminary **Count** shows some problems. We have two fast losers in Hearts and the Ace of trumps is AWOL too, meaning that we must bring the trump suit home for no more than one loser.

The bidding pretty much guarantees that West holds the ♠A. (If East has it then West has

opened the bidding on peanuts and we are definitely going off in 4♠). If we can lead twice from our hand up to the ♠K Q, we can make it. To succeed we need trumps 3-2 with West holding the ♠A.

What if we get a 4-1 trump split? Well, we will go down, but we will have given it the old college try.

For the first two tricks, we take our punishment in Hearts. After this, look at West's hand. He studies the dummy (highly recommended for defenders) and sees no future in leading either black suit. He knows of one more guaranteed trick in the shape of the trump Ace, and works out that if there is another trick to come, it has to be in Diamonds. He duly shifts to the Ten.

We smartly take the ♦10 in hand with the ♦A (just to give West hope his partner has the ♦Q), and at trick four, we take our first Spade finesse. West, of course, plays low and allows the ♠Q to win on the table. We then come back to hand with another Diamond in order to lead a second Spade through West. When East follows suit in trumps, we know we have the contract in the bag. We got our much needed 3-2 split.


West can have his trump trick when he wishes; the rest of the tricks are ours. Another winning hand, thanks to careful planning. Oh, and a little luck.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ T4	
	♥ AQ83	
	♦ KT72	
	♣ KJ5	
West		East
♠ AKJ953		♠ Q6
♥ J		♥ T94
♦ 984		♦ QJ65
♣ 762		♣ QT94
	South	
	♠ 872	
	♥ K7652	
	♦ A3	
	♣ A83	

Here, the opponents fire their low-level weapon at you (a weak two opener).

How should you deal with it?

West	North	East	South
2♠	X	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ A

Bidding.

West opens 2♠ as dealer, a classic weak-two bid, showing 6 to 9 points and a good six-card suit.

North has a problem now. Passing could be wrong (our side could be frozen out the auction), bidding could be wrong (if East-West have the balance of the cards the three-level is no place to compete).

Following the principle that you should strain to bid if you are short in the opponent's suit, North Doubles. To take this action on a 4-4-3-2 hand with only 13 points, partner is rock-bottom minimum and is not going to bid again unless moved by an earthquake.

East Passes the take-out Double and we have to respond. 3♥? Well, we'd be forced to bid that on a far, far weaker hand. One thing's for sure, North would Pass that without a backward glance – he would fear we had nothing. **How could he tell?**

No, with a near opening bid (albeit with a poor shape), and a five-card suit sure to find a fit with partner, we have to bid 4♥. If it's the wrong thing to do – well, we have been wrong before.

Better to overbid, trying for game, than underbid and end up with an embarrassment of overtricks...

Play.

West leads the two top Spades against 4♥ and the lie of the Spade suit becomes apparent to everyone when East drops the Queen on the second round. West presses on with the third Spade and we have a decision...

Rewind. Before the play to the first two tricks we performed a **Count** and **Plan**, naturally enough. We counted five Hearts (on normal breaks) and two Ace-King combinations in the minors. That's nine winners. There are two Spade losers and a Club loser. Umm. Three losers, nine winners. However, a tenth winner would materialize via a Spade ruff in the short trump hand.

However, the way the play is going – three rounds of Spades – Plan A may have to be rejected. Why? Well, with what Heart do we ruff this third Spade? High? Then East-West would make a trump trick on any 3-1 trump break. Low? No, East is sure to over-ruff. A quandary – what is the solution?

The answer is easy when you **see** it. We don't ruff the Spade at all – we dump a Club from dummy. What does West do next? He leads a Club, say (nothing else is any better). We take that (in either hand), draw trumps and gain the tenth trick with a Club ruff on table.


Ten tricks come from five Hearts, two Diamonds, two Clubs and a Club ruff in the dummy.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 5D
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 7
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ 84		
	♥ AQT		
	♦ A532		
	♣ AK62		
West		East	
♠ AKQJ92		♠ T5	
♥ 974		♥ 8653	
♦		♦ J976	
♣ QJ98		♣ T43	
	South		
	♠ 763		
	♥ KJ2		
	♦ KQT84		
	♣ 75		

This series (together with its brother, also in this edition of VBlue) is all about the take-out Double. This is the second of the two series.

Most of these deals concern the response to a Double. Do you simply bid your best suit at the lowest level?

Hand 1: You will need to overcome some obstructive bidding by the enemy in order to reach the best contract here.

Are you up to the task?

West	North	East	South
1♠	X	P	3♦
3♠	5♦	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ A

Bidding.

West opens 1♠ and partner Doubles. When East Passes we have to find an appropriate response, with 2♦ being unspeakably feeble. To show some muscle we jump to 3♦, promising round about 8 to 11 points (these things are flexible and depend on shape and suit quality).

West battles away with 3♠ but partner swats that aside with a leap to 5♦. Someone around here has a good hand...

Play.

When dummy hits the table, we are a little surprised that partner only has three Hearts for his take-out Double. We can forgive him because of the extra strength contained in his hand. The doubleton Spade is a disappointment – 5♦ would have been much easier with a singleton Spade on table.

Our **Count** and **Plan** shows that we will require the balance of the tricks after two Spades have been cashed. West will have at least six Spades to account for his bidding.

We are comfortable until West tries a third round of Spades. Both the bidding and East's signal (the ♠10 followed by the ♠5) make it clear that we cannot afford to ruff the Spade with one of dummy's pathetic low trumps.

So the third trick is won by ruffing with the ♦A and now we start to draw trumps. A Diamond to the ♦K reveals the nasty 4-0 break but at least means that we can play with a knowledge of how the cards lie. In fact, it is a simple matter to take two *marked finesses* on this hand.


First we cross to the table to lead a Diamond *through* East, covering the ♦7 with our ♦8. When that wins (as it must!) we cross to dummy again and repeat the dose. Another trump lead *through* East allows us to score the ♦10. Now we draw the last trump and we have only winners left.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 3D
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 8
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North		
	♠ 87		
	♥ KQ87		
	♦ AKT5		
	♣ AJ6		
West		East	
♠ AQ964		♠ J32	
♥ A9		♥ JT64	
♦ Q62		♦ J7	
♣ K85		♣ T732	
	South		
	♠ KT5		
	♥ 532		
	♦ 9843		
	♣ Q94		

Responding in No-trumps to a takeout Double is a bit different from responding in a suit.

Can you work out why that is the case?

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

Lead: ♣ 5

Bidding

West opens 1♠, over which partner has a suitable hand for a take-out Double. Our problem is deciding how to respond to partner's request.

We have a Spade stopper, so because of the poor Diamond suit and the 4.3.3.3 shape, our first inclination might be to respond 1NT. Unfortunately, this response promises about 7 to 10 points – and we are a few points shy of that. And we certainly can't pass the Double – so that only leaves 2♦.

So why does the cheapest bid in No-trumps (1NT) promise 7 to 10 points while the cheapest bid in a new suit (such as 2♦) has a range of 0 to 7 points?

It's to do with the fundamental difference between playing in a suit contract and playing in No-trumps. In the former, additional tricks can be generated by way of ruffs – high cards are not essential to achieve this. In a No-trump contract, the ruffing option is not available, so the only way to generate tricks in No-trumps is by using *high cards* to set up the tricks.

Therefore, a response of 1NT to a takeout double not only promises a stopper in the opponent's suit, but also shows around 7 to 10 points. It then follows logically that a jump response of 2NT would show 11 to 12 points, while a game bid of 3NT bid would indicate even more – say 13 to 16 points.

So on this hand, we bravely bid a confident 2♦. Partner doesn't give us a break, raising to 3♦. Thanks, partner (!) Given that our 2♦ response ranges from 0 to 7 points, his 3♦ raise is invitational and should indicate about 17 to 19 points.

Unfortunately for partner, we reject his invitation. In actual fact, we are not **that** far off from accepting by bidding 3NT. Since the original 2♦ bid limited our hand to 0 to 7 points, we would now accept with 6 or 7 points, or even 5 if we had a potential source of tricks –

such as a decent Diamond suit containing five or even six cards. Not this hand though....

Play.

West, with no obvious opening lead, picks what looks like the least of all evils in the ♣5. (Generally it is not a good idea to lead from unsupported Kings in a suit contract as they rate to fail more often than they would succeed. On this deal, he has to lead *something!*)

Looking at dummy, we can see that a Diamond (trump) lead turns out to be the best one for the defenders – but whoever leads a trump from ♦Q x x?

We run the Club lead around to the ♣Q in hand, which wins the trick. We probably expected to have one loser in each suit, with the possibility of losing a second Spade to boot.

With the Club finesse being successful, we might just bring this contract home. At the second trick, it would be nice to lead both a Heart and a Club at the same time, because our hand is short on entries for leading anything. So which suit is better to play on first?

Probably the Hearts.

We don't want to provide the opponents with any opportunities to ruff our winners. Playing on Clubs could be paving the way for that to happen – for example, the Clubs could be breaking 5-2.

The second reason why a Heart might be better is a psychological one. In many suit contracts, declarer's first move is to start drawing trumps. When West sees declarer lead a low Heart from hand instead of a typical trump, he may suspect a singleton Heart, causing him to grab his ♥A before it runs away, which would suit us just fine.

As it turns out, West does rise with his ♥A but for a different reason. He has a doubleton Heart and prefers to unblock his ♥A now as he may be stuck with it later on. Remember that he had a selection of unappetizing options for his opening lead. He certainly does not want to keep the lone ♥A in his hand, else he may find himself back on play later on with it!

So West takes the ♥A and exits with a safe Heart. We win this in dummy and follow with the top two trumps. The Diamonds break 3-2, so we are eventually able to return to hand with a trump (via a Heart ruff) in order to take another Club finesse.

All in all, we lose two Spades, one Heart, and


one trump. Nicely stopped.



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Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 9
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ AJ84	
	♥ 98	
	♦ QT5	
	♣ AQ73	
West		East
♠ Q6		♠ K9732
♥ KJT742		♥ 53
♦ A8		♦ 9732
♣ K65		♣ T4
	South	
	♠ T5	
	♥ AQ6	
	♦ KJ64	
	♣ J982	

When partner makes a take-out Double, how do you make an invitational bid in No-trumps?

How many points do you need for this action, given that a take-out Double could be made on a hand with as few as 11 points and a perfect shape?

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

Lead: ♥ J

Bidding

West opens 1♥, over which partner makes a take-out Double. We have 11 points and two four-card minor suits, so is it simply a matter of jump-bidding in the best suit?

Not quite. In addition, we have (most likely) two Heart stoppers so we can actually respond in No-trumps. But how many No-trumps?

As explained on a previous deal, the 1NT response to a take-out Double promises at least one stopper in the enemy suit, with a hand containing 7 to 10 points. Here with 11 points, we must show the extra values – *by jumping to 2NT*.

It is true that partner might have as few as 11 points (if he has the perfect shape for a take-out Double) and this would result in an uncomfortable 2NT contract. However, he will often hold 13 or 14 points, which is just enough to try for game opposite the 11 to 12 points shown by our 2NT bid. That is exactly the case on this deal; North has 13 points and raises us to a thin 3NT.

Although partner has a fairly minimum point-count, it turns out that it's a good minimum. The ♦10 is a useful card, and the ♣Q is a helpful supporting honor. In fact, dummy complements our hand quite nicely.

Play.

West leads the ♥J (top of an interior sequence), which at least prevents us from making a really cheap trick with dummy's Eight. A lead into the Heart tenace provides us with a second Heart trick but there is still work to do. Our **Count** and **Plan** shows that there are only four tricks on top, but there is potential to build up extra tricks from all the other three suits.

It might feel intuitive to play on Clubs, as we have eight cards between the two hands. However, the auction suggests that going after Diamonds first is the better play. Given West's 1♥ opening bid, he rates to hold the ♦A. If he

doesn't have that card, it's fair to say he will definitely hold the ♣K.

The ♦A is a certain entry, so it is a better plan to knock out this card before the Hearts become established. Let's say that we started by playing a Club to dummy's Queen. If this were to lose to East's King, a Heart would come back, dislodging our second stopper. West could sit back nursing the ♦A as a certain card of entry to go along with his good Hearts.

By playing on Diamonds first, we aim to knock out West's sure entry before the Hearts have been set up. Later, we can take a Club finesse into the **non-danger hand**, East, not caring whether it loses or not (since we can expect East to be out of Hearts).

So we win the opening lead with the ♥Q, and play on Diamonds until West is forced to take his Ace. Unsurprisingly, once he has taken it he continues with a top Heart.

We must hold up the ♥A on this trick, to break defensive communications. We intend to take a Club finesse of course, but in the event that the ♣K is with East, we don't want him to have any Hearts left to lead back. This is why we must duck the Ace – in order to run East out of Hearts.

After taking the ♥A, we do a quick recount of our tricks. One Spade, two Hearts and three Diamonds means we must collect three Club tricks. But what is the best way to play the Club suit, given that the primary consideration is to keep West off lead?

One possibility is to play low to dummy's Queen and subsequently cash the Ace. However, if West originally started with three Clubs including the King, he'd be left holding the master ♣K on the third round, as an entry to his Heart winners.

The way to counter this is to lead the ♣J, intending to run it. West, recalling the adage "**cover an honor with an honor**" sticks the King on it, so we take the Ace.

Still anxious not to allow West the lead we cash the remaining Diamonds (pitching Spades from table) and run the ♣9. As the cards lie, East takes the Ten but has nothing good to lead. A Spade return enables us to take one Spade, two Hearts, three Diamonds and three Clubs. The last trick is East's


Sure, with X-ray vision, we could have felled East's ♣10 on the second round and made an overtrick. However, that is hardly the point. Ensuring the contract is.



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. SA version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 10
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 653	
	♥ J87	
	♦ 643	
	♣ KQ65	
West		East
♠ 72		♠ AJT94
♥ QT42		♥ 96
♦ T98		♦ KJ72
♣ 9832		♣ A4
	South	
	♠ KQ8	
	♥ AK53	
	♦ AQ5	
	♣ JT7	

On this deal, we have changed the seats! Not only will you face a problem as the take-out Doubler, but you will also be confronted with a very interesting play problem later on.

Patience and hard work is key - don't give up!

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

On this deal, we become the "ake-out Doubler". Because our hand is too strong for a 1NT overcall (which shows 15 to 18 points), the only way to describe it is to Double first and follow it up with a No-trump bid.

By Doubling East's 1♠ and then bidding No-trumps later, we are showing a hand that was too good to overcall 1NT. Since a direct 1NT overcall shows 15 to 18 points, logically the longer route would then show 19 to 20 points – which is what we have!

Over partner's 2♣ response, we press on with the plan and rebid 2NT. Partner is able to raise this to 3NT holding 6 points since we have promised 19 to 20 points and a balanced hand.

Play

In 3NT, we only have three top tricks: the ♥A K and the ♦A. Additional tricks can potentially be set up from all the suits, but what is the best way to proceed?

On this particular hand, it would be helpful to ask these questions:

- Where is the ♠A?
- Where is the ♦K?
- Where is the ♣A?

In fact, we can use this technique on other deals too, as asking and then answering such questions often points us in the right direction.

On this hand, we expect both missing Aces to be with East. Our combined total of 25 points leaves the opponents with the remaining 15. If West had one of those Aces, that would leave East with 11 points, and he probably wouldn't have opened the bidding.

But what about the ♦K? Well, we hope that the ♦K is likely to be with East as well, although this is by no means a certainty. So where does that leave us with the trick count?

We can set up two Spade tricks (since the ♠A is known to be with East), three Club tricks, and a second Diamond trick if the ♦K is onside. Along with the three top tricks (♥A K and ♦A), this adds up to a total of nine tricks.

East wins the first trick with the ♠A and returns the ♠J. We win and immediately turn our attention to Clubs. The best way to play the Club suit is to unblock the honors from the short hand.

Here, the ♣J and ♣10 are considered "equal honors" because they have the same value as dummy's ♣K Q. Since dummy has the Club length, we should unblock the Club honors from hand.

The ♣J holds the trick. A common declarer-play technique is to hold back a winner, when the defense attacks a weak suit. In similar fashion, the defenders can often apply this technique to their advantage.

That doesn't stop us from continuing Clubs. This forces East to take the second Club trick as he no longer has any small cards to hold up with. A Spade is returned to our Queen and this is where we should stop and pause and reflect on our tricks.

We have taken two Spades and one Club so far. We still have ♥A K in hand, to go with two good Clubs in dummy, the ♦A and a potential winning ♦Q.

Instead of committing to the Diamond finesse, we can actually improve our chances by seeing whether the ♥Q is dropping doubleton. If it is, after cashing ♥A K, dummy's ♥J will become good and we will no longer need to bank on the Diamond finesse.

This is considered to be high-class declarer play, as we are combining our chances rather than committing to just one possibility.

And if the ♥Q doesn't drop doubleton? No worries, cross over to dummy with a Club, cash the remaining good Club, and fall back on the Diamond finesse like we intended earlier.


After all, two chances are better than one, right?



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. SA version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 11
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North		
	♠ AJ75		
	♥ AK96		
	♦ T432		
	♣ 3		
West		East	
♠ T942		♠ 8	
♥ T842		♥ QJ5	
♦ KQ8		♦ 76	
♣ T4		♣ KQJ8762	
	South		
	♠ KQ63		
	♥ 73		
	♦ AJ95		
	♣ A95		

Let's face it, when we have some points, we all love to make a bid. But should "Pass" be a more frequent word in our vocabulary?

Is "Pass" our friend, or foe?

West	North	East	South
-	-	3♣	P
P	X	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ T

Bidding.

East opens the bidding with a pre-emptive 3♣.

It seems very tempting to take some sort of action, doesn't it? Passing with 14 points causes guilt feelings! But what else could we do?

A take-out Double with a doubleton major is definitely *verboten*, and overcalling on a four-card suit at the three-level is asking for a lot of trouble. Unfortunately, we are constrained to Pass on hands such as this.

3♣ is Passed around to partner who makes a take-out Double showing an opening bid, support for all three suits (with emphasis on the major suits), and shortness in the opponent's suit (Clubs in this case).

Over partner's Double, we must definitely jump to 4♠. After all, we would bid 3♠ on

♠ K x x x x
♥ x x
♦ Q x x
♣ J x x

... wouldn't we?

A strong hand of our own coupled with partner showing enough to open the bidding means that there are sufficient points for game. Therefore, it is our duty to tell partner that we have a good hand by jumping to 4♠.

Take-out Doubles at the three-level work in a similar way to lower-level take-out Doubles. What they have in common is that when we hold good values in the responding hand, we must be sure to tell partner about it by making a jump response.

Play.

West leads the ♠10 and dummy shows a suitable collection.

Counting winners, we see a total of eight top

tricks via four Spades, two Hearts, and two minor suit Aces. Requiring two additional tricks, our first instinct might be to set up the side suit, Diamonds. However, given the 3♣ preempt, the trumps may not be breaking in friendly enough fashion for us to have time to set up the Diamonds.

The better play is to take two Club ruffs in dummy. Generally speaking, it is quite normal to ruff in the *short trump hand* in order to generate more tricks. However, when playing in a 4-4 fit, there is no predefined "short trump hand" or "long trump hand". In fact, either hand can be designated as the *short* or the *long* trump hand! Here, by ruffing two Clubs on the table, we are effectively assigning dummy to be the short trump hand.

After winning the first trick, we immediately ruff the first Club with dummy's ♠5. Now the next hurdle. What is the best way to cross back to hand in order to ruff another Club?

We don't want to return to hand via a trump – for we will then be obliged to ruff the last Club with a Spade honor in dummy – that would generate an extra loser if trumps split 4-1.

What about Hearts? Crossing back to hand via ♥A, ♥K, and a Heart ruff is definitely a possibility. However, something nasty could happen, such as East ruffing the second Heart. (He did open 3♣ after all, so may well hold a singleton Heart).

Therefore, it is much better and safer to cross back to hand with a Diamond.

So we cross to hand via the ♦A and ruff the remaining Club while West discards a low Heart. What now? Let's take stock and count our tricks.

We have taken four tricks via the ♣A, ♦A and two Club ruffs. We still have four trump tricks left to go along with the top two Hearts, meaning that we have the ten tricks that are needed for the 4♠ contract!

To take those tricks, we should be careful and play off the ♠A and ♠J from dummy first. This starts the process of extracting the enemy trumps, and it also unblocks the Spade honors from dummy.

When East shows out on the second round of trumps on this hand, the 4-1 Spade break shouldn't be a hindrance. We intended to take four trump tricks (along with two Club ruffs) from the start, and the 4-1 break hasn't changed that fact.

After the ♠A J are unblocked, we then cash the ♥A K and, once they hold, no one can prevent


us from scoring the ♠K Q in hand (unless we find a way to revoke, of course!)



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Using a Take-Out Double to compete. SA version. Updated winter 2015/6

Y2 VBlue #3 Take-Out Doubles SA	Contract: 3N
Date: 17/02/2016	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 12
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 53	
	♥ AQJ2	
	♦ KJT9	
	♣ Q93	
West		East
♠ AQ8742		♠ T6
♥ 85		♥ 7643
♦ 2		♦ Q864
♣ AJ42		♣ T76
	South	
	♠ KJ9	
	♥ KT9	
	♦ A753	
	♣ K85	

You have two problems to untangle on this deal – firstly what you respond to partner's take-out Double and secondly, how to play the dummy.

This isn't straightforward – you may need to don your thinking-cap...

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

Lead: ♠ 7

Bidding.

Sitting South, we hold a flat 14 points and hear partner Double 1♠. We might think of bidding Diamonds on this hand, but to what level?

2♦ would be an absurd call (a bid that could be made with nothing). Even a jump to 3♦ would still be an underbid and efforts such as 4♦ or 5♦ would be guesses that could land us in difficulty (the more so as partner's support for the suit may be only three cards).

The solution is to bid what we think we can make – and that is 3NT. We have the Spades securely stopped and we know that the partnership has sufficient values for this venture.

Play.

West leads his fourth-highest Spade against 3NT and we can count six top tricks (four Hearts and two Diamonds) plus a Spade after the lead. It appears that taking the Diamond finesse successfully will be sufficient (four Hearts, four Diamonds and a Spade) but there is a way of all but guaranteeing the contract.

Although West is strong favorite to hold the ♦Q – by virtue of his opening bid – the best play is to take the Diamond finesse *through* East. (Play the ♦K and run the ♦J). This will always guarantee three Diamond tricks even if West turns up with the ♦Q. (As it happens, though, we make four Diamonds and our contract easily).

But if West were to win the ♦Q he could do nothing to damage 3NT. He couldn't lead another Spade without giving us a second Spade trick and anything else gives us time to set up the ninth trick in Clubs. It's another one of those heads-I-win-tails-you-lose plays and goes by the pleasing name of a *safety finesse*.

Note that West's opening bid makes it a near certainty that he holds the ♣A, by the way...