Whist hands commentary

Dealer follows the usual rotation starting with North. The opening lead is always on Dealer's Left.

The primary emphasis is on the mechanics of the play – e.g. following suit, collecting up tricks, and counting tricks made above 6.

The secondary teaching points are tactical and are basic building blocks for the future:-

These include:-

whist and bridge are both partnership games;
second player plays low (as a general rule);
the opening lead – particularly 'top of a sequence' in no trumps, and setting up tricks rather than leading out aces;
simple attitude signals by the partner of the player onlead to encourage or discourage partner's suit;
returning partner's lead.

The first 8 hands are to be played in no trumps - you might choose to play just the first 4 or so of them before moving on to boards 9 onwards with a trump suit.

Start by collecting up tricks as in rubber bridge or friendly whist for the first 2 or 3 hands.

Hand 1
North dealt - East is on lead.
East should lead ♠K and West should discourage with the 2
Top of a three-card honours sequence or broken sequence in a 4-card or longer suit is usually correct against no trumps. The emphasis is on setting up 'long tricks'. In general it is better to 'set up' tricks before taking your aces, thereby keeping your aces as entries.
Note that the lead of the ♣A would be disastrous (you might like to try it both ways);
when North takes the ♣A he might continue with any suit – there is nothing to choose between them.
when South gets in he will lead ♣K which North should encourage as far as possible with the 6.
Whenever West gets in he must choose between setting up a suit with ♦Q or returning a spade to partner.
Count tricks above 6. On this deal EW should make 8 tricks in no trumps for a score of 2.

Hand 2
East dealt – South is on lead
South should lead ♥Q – top of an honours sequence on which North will play the 4 (not encouraging).
When East gets in he has a difficult choice, but ♠A seems likely.
Emphasise that it is a partnership game - you don't both have to win a trick. 'Second player plays low - third player plays high' is a good maxim.
In theory NS can make 9 tricks for a score of 3, but it is far from straightforward.

Hand 3
South dealt - West is on lead.
West should choose between ♠K (solid sequence but only 3-card suit) and ♥Q (top of interior sequence).
♠K is the more effective on this deal, and is the safer option. East must encourage with at least the ♠6
EW can make 10 or 11 tricks for a score of 4 or 5.

Hand 4
If you haven't done so already start pointing the cards after each trick as in duplicate bridge. (This enables other tables to play the same hands, and the possibility of looking at the cards for a post-mortem.)
West dealt - North is on lead.
North should choose between ♥K (top of a broken sequence) and ♦5. (4th highest from a 4-card suit hardly ever sets up a trick - 4th highest from a 5-card or longer suit is another matter.)
On the lead of the ♥K South must encourage with the ♥7.
On the lead of the ♦5 he will play to win the trick with the ♦Q.
In either case he will return that suit when he gets in.

Hand 5
North dealt – East is on lead.
Both ♦K and ♣Q are reasonable leads. ♣Q is particularly effective on this deal but my choice ♦K
On the Club lead West must encourage strongly with the 9.

Hand 6
East dealt - South is on lead.
South should lead ♦K - top of a broken sequence - it sets up a potential 5 tricks for the defence.
North can read the ♦K lead as top of a broken sequence and might well encourage with the J.
But having said that, NS can then cash 11 tricks.
As it happens a heart lead takes 6 immediate tricks for the defence, but to be fair this deal would never be played in no trumps in real life.

Hand 7
South dealt - West is on lead.
West should lead the ♠A.
East should encourage with ♠6.
If EW get it right they can take 9 tricks before NS get started.

Hand 8
West deals – North is on lead.
North should lead ♥Q - top of a broken honours sequence – and South should encourage with the 7.

Hands 9 to 12 are played with a specified trump suit.

Hand 9
Hearts are trumps
North dealt - East is on lead.
I lead the ♦A against a trump contract (♦Q in no trumps), but the singleton ♣8 would not be wrong.

Hand 10
Clubs are trumps
East dealt South is on lead.
North should lead either the ♥K or ♣A.
Either set up the heart suit, or get the opponents' trumps out of the way first,

Hand 11
Diamonds are trumps
South dealt - West is on lead.
West should lead either ♥A or ♣5.

Note that a singleton lead can be good in a trump contract – it might set up a ruffing trick – but not when the singleton is in the trump suit.

Hand 12
Spades are trumps
West dealt – North is on lead.
North should lead the ♥Q.
With no singleton he should set about trying to set up a heart trick or two.

Still time in the session?
Either continue as above with random deals, specifying the trump suit but keeping no trumps in the rotation, or start on topic 2.