

## **Esther Discusses 2 Boards from the 7/14/20 49er Game: Do, NOT, Ever, Be a "Results Player", and The Importance of "Playing the Room"**

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### **Esther's Preliminary Comments**

I found 2 of the Boards from yesterday's 49er game very interesting, and thought I would share some thoughts about how I might have bid them. But, first, two preliminary comments.

1. "Right Bid." Often less experienced players will ask, "Did I make the 'right bid?'" But I don't think about bidding that way. I don't think in terms of the single right bid. Instead, I try to think "better or best" or "*the most reasonable bid among several reasonable choices*" bid.

If you play 24 duplicate Boards twice a week, on average once every 60,000 years you will be dealt 13 cards all of which are in a single Suit. For this Board, there is indeed a "correct" bid, and only one "correct" bid. Open by bidding 7 of the Suit in which you are holding 13 trump!

2. Being a "Results Player" (Bad!). Sometimes less experienced players look at a Board, and try to determine what the best bids or plays were on that Board. "**Results Players**" look at what happened on a given Board, and if they got favorable results, even if they bid or played in violation of sound Bridge Principles, assume that they played the Board *well*, and so therefore should continue to play in violation of sound Bridge Principles. Similarly, "**Results Players**" will look at a Board on which they scored *poorly*, and assume that therefore even though they played in accord with sound Bridge Principles, they therefore should stop playing in accord with sound Bridge Principles!

"**Results Players**" *overgeneralize* from one Board played in violation of Bridge Principles, but that scored "*well*",

and from one Board played according to Bridge Principles, but scored *poorly*, and therefore favor future **bad play** in violation of recognized sound Bridge Principles. But *one cannot reasonably generalize from one Board to all Boards. Every Board is unique*. For example, if a Board has a 4-2 trump split against you, and you generalize from that Board to all Boards where you are holding your given cards, you will be trapped in an *eternally shifting* set of bidding principles as Boards holding your cards but other combinations of cards in the other hands eternally shift, and that will lead to *ongoing unfavorable* results.

*Instead*, think about the cards you have, and at each stage of the bidding what your Partner and your Opponents most likely hold in terms of both distributions and points. Think about the current Board, and not previous Boards, and focus on bidding and playing in accord with sound Bridge Principles, and not in accord with one-off serendipitous favorable or unfavorable results when you violate sound Bridge Principles! Do not overgeneralize from single results, and do not ever be a "**Results Player**".

Thomas Rush<sup>1</sup> of the Bridge Club of Houston wisely put being a "Results Player" into proper perspective:

I'm a student of the game. I am not a {R}esults [P]layer: you can make a good bid and get a bad board, and you should be complimented. You can also make a bad bid or play and score well; in that case, you [still] have to look at the board and find the mistake [and not continue to play in violation of sound Bridge Principles, which may not work every single time, but that over time will inevitably lead to your most favorable bridge results over time and across all Boards, and not just an aberrant Board]. It's the job of a good bridge teacher to help you understand and learn the right percentage choices, regardless of whether they worked on this hand or not -- because they put the odds on your side.

I believe in teaching principles, not rules; judgement not conventions; consistency not brilliance. [Underlining added.]

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<sup>1</sup> See the "Teachers" Section of the Bridge Club of Houston website:  
[https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwoq/bw.cgi?club=bcoh&pid=display\\_page11](https://www.bridgewebs.com/cgi-bin/bwoq/bw.cgi?club=bcoh&pid=display_page11)

Principles will help you decide what to do in new situations. Judgement makes you more successful in competitive situations, and getting to games that make (as well as staying out of games that don't make!). Perhaps most of all is consistency: Letting your partner know what is in your hand, and not trying to be brilliant. If brilliance were the right thing to do, it would be in all the books, it would be the 'normal' thing, because it worked! [Emphasis added.]

### 49er Game Board #11

Vul: NONE

Dealer: SOUTH

North (12)

S: AJ  
 H: 854  
 D: 964  
 C: AK873

West (10)

S: K8732  
 H: 6  
 D: AQJ853  
 C: 2

East (11)

S: QT9  
 H: AKQT972  
 D: 72  
 C: 6

One Super Shark I consulted said he would most likely bid this:

S: P W: 1D N: 2C E: 4H  
 All Pass

South (7)

S: 654  
 H: J3  
 D: KT  
 C: QJT954

### Final Contract

Team #1 E/W: 3S West, Making 5 (Middle Board for E/W)  
 Team #2 E/W: 4S West, Making 5 (Top Board for E/W)  
 Team #3 E/W: 3H East, Making 4 (Bottom Board for E/W)

### Table #1

W	N	E	S
			P
1S	2C	2H	3C
3D	P	3S	P
P	P		

### Table #2

W	N	E	S
			P
2D	P	2H	P
2S	P	3S	P
4S	P	P	P

### Table #3

W	N	E	S
			P
1D	P	2H	P
2S	P	3H	P
P	P		

### Esther's Comments

1. Sitting SOUTH, with 7 HCPs, obviously, I would PASS.
2. Sitting WEST, with 10 HCP's, I would definitely bid, because 2-suited hands can be nice. Marty Bergen's "**Rule of 20**" says you can open even sitting first seat if your HCPs plus the number of cards in your longest 2 Suits is 20 or more. But would I bid 2D, 1D or 1S? I would not bid 2D as a "weak 2," because my 2-suited hand with 2 singletons is too strong for my taste. If I bid 1D, Partner will probably think that I have at least 4 Diamonds, and possibly one or two 4-card Majors. And if I bid 1D, and later Spades, Partner will count me as holding only 4 Spades, until I rebid Spades. It is important to **not lie to or confuse Partner!** That argues for opening 1S. But my Spade Suit holds only 5 cards, and only 1 honor, while my Diamond Suit holds 3 honors and 6 cards. So, either a 1D or a 1S opening bid seems reasonable. I would bid 1S, and bid the Diamonds later to show the side Suit, if the opportunity arises. Of course, this is not the only reasonable bid, or the "right bid." But Spades is the "king" Suit, and I try to show my Major, and especially Spades, at the first opportunity, whenever I have them.

A too clever (for his own good) player might **overthink** this, and wait to show Spades, because the Diamonds are stronger, and the Opener only holds 5 Spades with only one honor. But bridge is **not** (especially in the initial bids) about being clever, or cute. *Bridge is about communicating clearly and accurately with your Partner!*

3. Sitting NORTH, with 12 HCPs (and TWO Aces!), it is tempting to overcall 2C, as lead-directing, especially if WEST has bid 1D, because it is then likely that the contract will be set in the EAST, and my Partner SOUTH will be on lead.
4. Sitting EAST, holding 11 HCPs and 7 Hearts, if Partner WEST opened 1D, I would bid 1H. Most pairs play jump responses as weak (this is a Partnership agreement matter, and can be played either way), and my hand is too strong for a weak jump response. With Partner opening, I also count what I think may be winning tricks. **Don't just count points, also try to count your winners.** In a Heart contract, I think we will just from my hand make 8 tricks (7 Hearts and 1 Spade). A bid of 4H would not be unreasonable, since I think I can count only in my hand all the needed tricks short 2. If WEST opened 1S, I would immediately support my Partner's bid Major, and show my Hearts later, probably by later jumping.
5. SOUTH passes again.
6. Sitting WEST, if I opened 1D, I will bid my Spades (but Partner will think I only have 4, which may not be too bad, since I have 5, but only the King, and the other 4 Spades are not "beef", which also is important to think about). If I opened 1S (which I probably would), I would now bid 3D if Partner EAST bid 2S, to show that my hand is two-suited. Also, introducing a new Suit when the Partnership has found a fit in a Major is "forcing for one round."
7. NORTH passes.
8. In response to Opener's last bid of 3D, if I was WEST, I would now bid 4H. This forces to game, and tells EAST, I demand a game bid: YOU decide which one. I think to myself, "I have a singleton (Club), and since WEST has a 2-suited hand, this shows extreme shortness by necessity in both Clubs and Hearts. I think we can make 4H, but you may prefer Spades. WEST will know that I have strong Hearts with numerous Hearts, which is not too surprising to WEST, because WEST only has a singleton Heart, and WEST knows those Hearts have to be somewhere."

**Board #12**

Vul: N/S

Dealer: WEST

North (13)

S: KQT4  
H: KQJ84  
D: Q7  
C: 75

West (11)

S: 72  
H:  
D: AKJ86432  
C: K96

East (10)

S: 8653  
H: A7532  
D:  
C: AQ43

One Super Shark I consulted said he would bid this:

W: 1D N: Dbl\* E: 2C S: P  
W: 2D All Pass

South (6)

S: AJ9  
H: T96  
D: T95  
C: JT82

\*This Dbl in a single bid shows at least 4 cards in both Majors.

**Final Contract**

Team #1: 2D West, Making 5 (Bottom Board for E/W)  
Team #2: 3D West, Making 6 (Middle Board for E/W)  
Team #3: 3H North, Down 2 (Top Board for E/W)

**Team #1**

W	N	E	S
1D	1H	Dbl	P
2D	P	P	P

**Team #2**

W	N	E	S
3D	P	P	P

**Team #3**

W	N	E	S
3D	3H	P	P
P			

**Esther's Comments**

1. Sitting WEST, I hold 11 HCPs and 8 Diamonds. Given that there are only 5 Diamonds in the other 3 hands, it is likely that either Partner EAST holds the Queen, or that the Queen will drop on my A,K. So, I probably can count 9

winner in my hand in a Diamond contract. I could argue that my hand is too strong to bid 3D as a preempt bid. I could then if I wished bid 1D. But a 3D bid also is reasonable, and very descriptive. I would probably bid 1D, and show length by jumping later if doing so then seemed reasonable. But a 3D bid is descriptive, and does jam the Opponents (and Partner).

2. Sitting NORTH, I hold 13 HCPs and 5 Hearts. Partner has not bid yet, and so may have points. Only one Opponent has bid, showing an opening hand. With ~13 points in WEST, and 13 points in my hand, there are roughly 14 points left to be in EAST and SOUTH. If WEST bids 1D, I would bid 1H, showing 5 Hearts and 10+ points; maybe more points, because we are vulnerable. Or, I could also Double, which in a single bid shows I am 2-suited in the Majors (but only guarantees 4 rather than 5 Hearts). If WEST bids 3D, it is hard for me to bid 3H, and I would probably Pass, because unless SOUTH holds 3+ Hearts, and also most of the missing 14 points, we will be in trouble while driving vulnerable.
3. Sitting EAST, if WEST bid 1D, and NORTH passed, I will of course bid 1H. If WEST bids 1D, and NORTH bid 1H, I would probably shut up. If EAST bid 3D, I would count (in all my Partnerships) on EAST holding either 2 of the top 3, or 3 of the top 5. And I would be inclined to count WEST holding 7 Diamonds and more than likely 2 of the top 3. I might think we can make 3NT.

***“Playing the Room.” One of the most important principles of bridge is that when you are bidding, you have to think about how the specific other players in the room will play the Board, and “play the room.” Remember: You are not playing against cards; instead, you are playing against other specific pairs sitting your direction on the Board, and you are playing for a better or best Board (i.e., the highest positive score, or the lowest negative score, sitting in your direction). Shark people are much more aggressive than Novice people. I suspect that a number of Sharks would bid 3NT sitting EAST. They will think that a number of other Shark E/W pairs will also bid 3NT in a try for game. If the other Sharks bid and make 3NT, they will get top Boards, and our pair will get***

*a low Board if we don't bid and make this bid. On the other hand, if the other E/W pairs bid and do not make the 3NT bid, we will still get a decent Board, because the other pairs sitting our direction will also go down.*

4. SOUTH passes.
5. Sitting WEST, if EAST bid 3**NT**, I would of course Pass. If I opened 1**D**, and NORTH bid 1**H**, and EAST and SOUTH passed, I would jump to 3**D**. If I opened 1**D**, and NORTH passed, and EAST bid 1**H**, I would jump to 3**D**, and we would end up in either 3**D**, or 3**NT**.