

**"When You and Partner Hold 8+ Cards in  
Both Majors How Do You Decide  
In Which Major to Set the Final Contract?:  
Yes, Virginia, Sometimes Holding *Fewer* Trump  
Cards Is *Better* than Holding *More* Trump Cards!"**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

To return to the "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quizzes", CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/quiz.html>

**Bruce:** Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through "**When You and Partner Hold 8+ Cards in Both Majors How Do You Decide In Which Major to Set the Final Contract?**" Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking the time to be with us today!

**Esther:** D\*\*n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Esther, because I am so "warm and caring"!

**Bruce:** Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

**Esther:** Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

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<sup>1</sup> As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA\\_1\\_24.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf), Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by **Bruce Thompson**.

**Bruce:** Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! Well, Esther, is it really, really possible that Partners can together hold 8+ cards in BOTH Majors?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. As noted in the "Esther Bridge Lesson", "**A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8\\_probs.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf)

**"Holding a 2-suited Hand dramatically improves the probability of your Partnership finding an 8+ card fit!!"**

	Your 2-Suited Hand				
You Hold	4-3	4-4	5-3	5-4	5-5
Probability of an 8+ Card Fit	48.9%	60.3%	<b>66.1%</b>	<b>74.2%</b>	<b>83.5%</b>

These *strikingly-elevated probabilities of finding a fit when holding a 2-suited hand* underline the importance of Bergen's "Rule of 20". Not only do 2-suited hands play better in a suit contract, because you can trump or slough losers on the side suit, but also because holding a 2-suited hand so dramatically raises the probabilities of finding an 8+ card fit!<sup>2</sup>

**Bruce:** Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, can you give us a "Real Deal" example Board on which Partners held 8+ card Suits in both Majors?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. I will use an example discussed by Richard Pavlicek in one of his bridge columns from the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel.

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, would you tell us a little something about the Richard Pavlicek fellow?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is some information about Richard:

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<sup>2</sup> These probabilities for 2-suited hands also highlight why *artificial Overcall bids*, such as the "Unusual 2NT" and "Michael Michaels Cue Bid", showing 2-suited holdings, are so appealing, because the probabilities of finding fits with such 2-suited hands are so high! For more information, on the "Esther Bridge Lessons" website, see respectively: "**Convention #8: Unusual 2NT**", and "**Convention #12: Overcall Two-Suited Distribution Cuebid Systems**".

### About **Richard Pavlicek**

**Richard Pavlicek** (1945- ) has won **11** North American Bridge Championships, including a record-setting **3** straight wins in the Reisinger Board-a-Match Teams, 1982-84, and again in 1990. He won the 1973 inaugural Grand National Teams tournament and repeated a win there in 1997. He has written or co-authored several bridge books, including with co-author William S. Root their 1981 book, Modern Bridge Conventions. From 1984 until 1990 Pavlicek was the Bridge Columnist for the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel.

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, from which one of Richard Pavlicek's bridge columns does the present bridge Board come?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Richard posts his previously published bridge columns on his web page at:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/rpco.htm>

The present Board is from a 9/13/81 newspaper article written by Pavlicek:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/7e20.htm>

The article described a Board on which Julian and Gracie Gabbai of Fort Lauderdale played N/S in a Flight A Swiss Teams competition in which they won an undefeated victory:

Dealer: **NORTH**

Vul: **BOTH**

	NORTH (12)		
	<b>S:</b> A 8 6 5		
	<b>H:</b> K J T 5 4		
	<b>D:</b> 5 2		
	<b>C:</b> A 3		
WEST (8)		EAST (2)	
<b>S:</b> J 4 3		<b>S:</b> 9 2	
<b>H:</b> 8 2		<b>H:</b> 6 3	
<b>D:</b> K Q J		<b>D:</b> 9 8 7 6 4 3	
<b>C:</b> J 9 6 5 4		<b>C:</b> Q T 7	
	SOUTH (18)		
	<b>S:</b> K Q T 7		
	<b>H:</b> A Q 9 7		
	<b>D:</b> A T		
	<b>C:</b> K 8 2		

### Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2 <b>D</b> *	PASS	2 <b>NT</b> **	PASS
3 <b>H</b> ***	PASS	4 <b>NT</b>	PASS
5 <b>H</b> ****	PASS	5 <b>NT</b>	PASS
6 <b>D</b> *****	PASS	7 <b>S</b>	PASS

\*N/S are playing the "Flannery"<sup>3</sup> convention which shows NORTH as holding 5+ Hearts and 4 Spades with both Suits having good "Suit Quality".

\*\*SOUTH's 2NT bid as Responder is forcing.

\*\*\*N/S are playing a variation of Flannery that some Partners play and shows that NORTH is 2-2 in the Minors.

\*\*\*\*"I hold 2 Aces."

\*\*\*\*\*"I hold 1 King."

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, now I am indeed very, very *confused*.

Because NORTH opened with a Flannery bid and because SOUTH knows what cards he himself holds SOUTH then knows that N/S together hold 4 + 4 = 8 Spades and 5 + 4 = 9 Hearts. Why in the world did SOUTH set the final contract in Spades where N/S hold only 8 cards rather than in Hearts where N/S hold 9 cards???

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<sup>3</sup> Within the "Esther Convention Lessons" see "Esther Bridge Conventions Lesson #6: Flannery": <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/flannery.pdf>

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, there is a subtle but important bridge Cardinal Principle here. When you are Declarer playing a Suit contract, your quintessentially primary task is "dumping" your "losers"! Esther covered this bridge Cardinal Principle in several of her "**Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quizzes**":

[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0353\\_q.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0353_q.pdf)

[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0347\\_q.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0347_q.pdf)

[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0336\\_q.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0336_q.pdf)

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, exactly how does this bear upon SOUTH's decision to set the final contract in this "Real Deal" at 7S rather than in 7H?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, assuming that your 8 Spades are sufficient to "draw" all the Opponents' Trump cards, then you want a "long" "Side Suit" on which you can "dump" "losers"! This is a subtle but very, very *important* point! As Pavlicek expressed it in his early 1980s bridge newspaper column:

"This deal illustrates an important principle. When the bidding reveals a choice of adequate trump suits [here Spades and Hearts], it is usually better to select the more *evenly* divided suit as trumps. For instance, a 4-4 [trump] fit is superior to a 5-3 [trump] fit because the 5-3 ['side suit'] fit [suit] will provide discards [of 'losers'] if the 4-4 fit [suit] is trumps." [italics in original]

**Bruce:** WOW, Esther, sometimes you completely blow me away!!!