

**Esther Discusses "Another Flavor of a  
'Not-For-Penalty DOUBLE':  
The 'Do Something Intelligent ('DSI') Double'"**

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

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

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.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 "Another Flavor of a 'Not-For-Penalty DOUBLE': The 'Do Something Intelligent ('DSI') Double'". 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!

**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?

**Bruce:** Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other. Well, in any case, Esther, before we talk about today's topic, may we first please briefly explain the various flavors and aspects of DOUBLES?

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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**.

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. First, we have "**For-Penalty DOUBLES**". These are DOUBLES in which the person who DOUBLES is saying, "Partner, I would like to play on Defense rather than try to set the Opponents' final contract, because I think this will yield a better Bridge Score for us. Please PASS my DOUBLE."

It is **\*\*ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY\*\* critical** (and also super important) to have a *crystal* clear Partnership Agreement about which DOUBLES are "for penalty" and which DOUBLES have some other meaning and purpose! Some Partners set a boundary such that any DOUBLE on an Opponent's bid above a certain level (e.g., **3S**) are "for penalty".

However, sometimes (again by Partnership Agreement) some low-level DOUBLES can also be "For-Penalty DOUBLES". These special *specific bidding sequences* are a bit more difficult to remember and must be memorized!<sup>2</sup>

**Bruce:** OK, fair enough. And about another flavor or category of DOUBLES?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, second, these are a series of "**Not-for-Penalty DOUBLES**".<sup>3</sup> You may have heard the names of some of these, such as "**Takeout/Demand DOUBLE**", "**Negative DOUBLE**", "**Support DOUBLE**", or "**They-Stole-My-Bid DOUBLE**".

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klink... Errrrr, I mean, Esther. Are we now ready to turn our attention to the third flavor of DOUBLES?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, both "**For-Penalty DOUBLES**" and "**Not-for-Penalty DOUBLES**" have in common that they either *require/request* Partner to make a bid, or *require/request* that Partner **PASSes**. The 3<sup>rd</sup> flavor of DOUBLES involves "**Do Something Intelligent ('DSI') DOUBLES**". "**DSI DOUBLES**" instead ask Partner to make a decision, hopefully an intelligent decision.

**Bruce:** Well, OK. Can you give us an example?

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<sup>2</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "**Lesson #71: 6 Cases in Which Even 'Low-Level' DOUBLES Are 'DOUBLES for Penalty'**":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/low\\_DBL.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/low_DBL.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "**Convention Lesson #14: 6 'Not-for-Penalty' DOUBLES**":

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/double.pdf>

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, one of my favorite “**DSI DOUBLES**” occurs when I DOUBLE my RHO’s 1NT opening bid. My DOUBLE of 1NT says, “Partner, I hold **15-17** HCPs. My Hand meets all the requirements of me if I had been Dealer to open 1NT. Therefore, after I DOUBLE RHO’s 1NT bid both the Stayman and the Jacoby Transfer conventions are ‘on’. However, my DOUBLE is not a ‘demand’ DOUBLE. You know that I hold **15-17** HCPs, and you know the basic distribution shape of my Hand. Because one Opponent holds a ‘big’ Hand, we may not fare well in setting a contract ourselves. If you hold HCPs too, we may obtain a *better* Bridge Score by leaving this DOUBLE ‘in’, especially if the Opponents are Vulnerable. YOU decide!”

**Bruce:** OK. Well, what is the *purpose* of “**DSI DOUBLES**”?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, “**DSI DOUBLES**” in general say, “Partner, I do not think we should let the Opponents play a low-level Suit contract that will almost certainly make, and thus result in a ‘positive’ Bridge Score for them and a ‘negative’ Bridge Score for us. But I do not know what bid to now make. Please ‘do something intelligent’.” In the words of Larry Cohen in his “Double Trouble” web posting:<sup>4</sup>

**“Partner, I have cards, but no clear action. I don’t intend this a penalty, but if you have no better ideas, we might end up defending. I’m not [claiming or] showing a trump stack.”**  
**[emphasis added]**

One of Cohen’s examples presumes you hold:

♠ A x x    ♥ Q x x    ♦ K x x x    ♣ x x x

and the auction proceeds:

LHO	Partner	RHO	YOU
1C	<b>DOUBLE</b>	1NT	PASS
2C	PASS	PASS	<b>DOUBLE</b>

Partner’s “**Takeout/Demand DOUBLE**” shows an opening Hand, **4** Hearts, **4** Spades and likely **4** Diamonds. In Cohen’s words, you hold “cards, but no clear direction. **It’s losing bridge**”

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<sup>4</sup> See: [https://larryco.com/uploaded/pdf/pdfup\\_26.pdf](https://larryco.com/uploaded/pdf/pdfup_26.pdf)

to sell out to 2C,<sup>5</sup> but there's no need [for you] to guess what to bid." [emphasis added] *Let Partner decide.*

**Bruce:** OK. Well, could you discuss one or two full Boards on which a player makes a "Do Something Intelligent ('DSI') DOUBLE"?

**Esther:** Sure, Bruce. How about the following Board:

DLR: **SOUTH**<sup>6</sup>

VUL: **NONE**

NORTH (12)

**S:** A 5

**H:** 8 6

**D:** A J 7 5 3 2

**C:** K 8 6

WEST (11)

**S:** K Q T 9 6

**H:** 5

**D:** K Q 4

**C:** J T 9 3

EAST (5)

**S:** J 4

**H:** K J T 9 7 4 3

**D:** T 8

**C:** 7 4

SOUTH (12)

**S:** 8 7 3 2

**H:** A Q 2

**D:** 9 6

**C:** A Q 5 2

**Bidding**

SOUTH

1C

PASS

???

WEST

1S

PASS

NORTH

2D

DOUBLE

EAST

3H

PASS

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<sup>5</sup> As a general proposition, like Larry Cohen, Esther also hates to let Opponents set makeable 2-level contracts, and especially 2-level contracts in the Majors, as she noted in her Lesson: "When You Are in the 'Balancing' Position, and Opponents Bid a 'Constructive Raise' to Either 2H or 2S, Do NOT Let Opponents Play This Contract!!!":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2H2S\\_bal.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/2H2S_bal.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The ideas here are from August Boehm's excellent article, "Troubles with Doubles—Conclusion", from the October, 2024 ACBL Bridge Bulletin (p. 34). The 2 Boards presented here slightly modified from those presented by Boehm in his article.

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klink... Errrrr, I mean, Esther. Well, the first 3 of these bids are pretty straightforward. But would you comment on EAST's "jump" bid of 3H?

**Esther:** Sure, Bruce. This is a "weak" bid showing "long" Hearts with a good Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**". Here EAST held (1) 7 Hearts + (2) 3 Honors (including the Ten) = 7 + 3 = 10. An "**SQT Score**" of 10 will generally safely support a bid up to the 10 - 6 = 4 level.

**Bruce:** OK, Esther. Well, obviously there are several types or flavors of DOUBLES. *First*, there are "**Penalty DOUBLES**". When NORTH DOUBLES, how does SOUTH know that this is not a "**Penalty DOUBLE**" and thus PASS?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce. The most obvious "**Penalty DOUBLES**" occur above a certain level, such as 3S, by *Partnership Agreement*. Or "**Penalty DOUBLES**" can occur at "low" levels when certain *very specific* bidding sequences occur. Some of these various *specific* bidding scenarios are spelled out in the "Esther Bridge Lesson #71: **6 Cases in Which Even Low-Level DOUBLES Are DOUBLES for Penalty**".<sup>7</sup> For example, if either you or Partner made a strong NT bid during the auction, any subsequent DOUBLE of any bid at any level by you or Partner is *always* a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**". Or, if either you or Partner made a preemptive Suit bid at any level, and later in the auction you or Partner **DOUBLE**, the **DOUBLE** is *always* a "**DOUBLE for Penalty**". But on this Board none of these *specific* bidding scenarios invoking a low-level "**Penalty DOUBLE**" is involved.

**Bruce:** OK, Esther. Well, *second*, there are a variety of "**Not-for-Penalty DOUBLES**". These have names such as "**Takeout/DEMAND DOUBLE**", "**Negative DOUBLE**", and "**They-Stole-My-Bid DOUBLE**" and are covered in "Esther Bridge Convention Lesson #14: **6 'Not-for-Penalty' DOUBLES**".<sup>8</sup>

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, you are correct. But the DOUBLE made by NORTH on this Board is clearly, *first*, not one of the enumerated **Low-Level DOUBLES**. *Second*, NORTH's DOUBLE is also clearly not a "**Not-for-Penalty DOUBLE**". Both Partnerships are showing at least some HCPs and some Suit "length", although EAST has shown a "long" Suit (Hearts)

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<sup>7</sup> See: [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/low\\_DBL.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/low_DBL.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/double.pdf>

but a "weak" Hand. And N/S have shown Clubs and Diamonds while E/W have shown Hearts and Spades. N/S know that they hold the preponderance of the HCPs, and that only a part-score contract is makeable for either Partnership. Also, both Pairs know that neither Pair holds sufficient HCPs to bid and make a 3NT contract. So NORTH's "DSI DOUBLE" is saying to SOUTH, "Partner, I think we need to set a part-score contract in either Clubs or Diamonds, or leave the DOUBLE "in" "for Penalty". YOU DECIDE (hopefully, *intelligently*)!"

**Bruce:** Oh my goodness, Esther. This is all so confusing and difficult! What should SOUTH do in this auction?

**Esther:** Well, in this auction, with SOUTH holding 2 Aces, and 2 of the top 3 Honors in E/W's bid Trump Suit, Hearts, and knowing that SOUTH will be playing "behind" Declarer SOUTH, and that NORTH has some HCPs, SOUTH's correct "DSI DOUBLE" decision is: PASS!

**Bruce:** Oh my goodness, Esther. I think I just fainted! Well, at risk of putting me "over the edge", can you give us another example of a "DSI DOUBLE"?

**Esther:** Well, sure, Bruce. HANG IN THERE!

DLR: **SOUTH**

VUL: **BOTH**

NORTH (11)

**S:** 7 4

**H:** K Q 8 7 3 2

**D:** 5

**C:** A J 9 8

WEST (7)

**S:** Q

**H:** 9

**D:** K Q T 9 7 6 2

**C:** T 7 5 2

EAST (8)

**S:** K T 9 5

**H:** J T 6 4

**D:** A 8 4

**C:** 6 4

SOUTH (14)

**S:** A J 8 6 3 2

**H:** A 5

**D:** 5 3

**C:** K Q 3

**Bidding**

SOUTH

WEST

NORTH

EAST

1**S**

3**D**

3**H**

4**D**

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, SOUTH's opening 1**S** is quite straightforward. WEST's 3**D** Overcall shows (1) 7+ Diamonds and (2) is "weak". WEST shows a Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**" of at least  $6 + 3 = 9$ , and WEST's actual "**SQT Score**" is (1) 7 Diamond cards plus (2) 3 Honors (including the Ten), or  $7 + 3 = 10$ . NORTH shows HCPs and likely 6+ Hearts. EAST shows Diamond support. What should SOUTH do?

**Esther:** Well, SOUTH could *reasonably* bid 4**H**. SOUTH would be more likely to bid 4**H** iff (if and only if) SOUTH held either a Diamond void or singleton. But a DOUBLE by SOUTH should be interpreted by NORTH as a "**DSI DOUBLE**" saying "Partner, YOU decide!", mainly because doubling E/W into a Game contract at the 4 level is very dangerous and says, "Partner, we will *definitely* set an E/W 4**D** contract. I am not sure that we will *definitely* make 4**H**. YOU decide" (because I hold 2 Diamond "losers" and possibly Spade and Club "losers" as well).

**Bruce:** Oh, my goodness, Esther. Well, are there any *other* reasons why SOUTH might prefer to make a "**DSI DOUBLE**" rather bid 4**H**?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, yes indeed. Once SOUTH tells E/W "we are going to set your Diamond contract at the 4 level, so we

will certainly both (1) DOUBLE you and (2) set you at the 5 level!" This makes an E/W Overcall of 5D less likely, and so should protect a N/S 4H contract.

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, why in the world would NORTH expect from SOUTH's DOUBLE of 4D that SOUTH holds the 2 Heart cards including Heart Ace?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, because NORTH holds a Diamond singleton, SOUTH likely holds more than 1 Diamond "loser". But because E/W have shown so many Diamond cards SOUTH simply can't be making a DOUBLE based on holding a "Trump stack"! Thus it seems very likely that SOUTH holds the Heart Ace if he nevertheless is sure that N/S will take 4+ Tricks and set an E/W 4D contract. It should appear to NORTH that SOUTH's DOUBLE is indeed a "DSI DOUBLE" and SOUTH is prepared for N/S in the words of August Boehm to either "declare or defend", but SOUTH is simply uncertain that NORTH holds a Diamond singleton or how well a 4H contract will play.

**Bruce:** Oh, my goodness, Esther. Well, what should NORTH "decide"?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, NORTH knows that a N/S Bridge Score of +100 or +300, or +300 or +500 if DOUBLED, from setting E/W by 1 or 2 Tricks, respectively, is not as great as a N/S Bridge Score of +620 from exactly making 4H Vulnerable! As they say in bridge, *Quod erat demonstrandum!*

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, any additional thoughts about this?

**Esther:** Well, yes, Bruce, two things:

1. As with any new convention you are playing, you and Partner must expect a few errors along the way! It's *inevitable* as you learn and practice new things!
2. Also, you and Partner should not play new conventions unless you *both* feel you understand and are comfortable with them. As they say about wine, "Serve no convention before its time!"