

Esther Discusses, "All Your Numerous Tasks When You Are Playing as Declarer in a Suit Contract"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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Esther: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will discuss "All Your Numerous Tasks When You Are Playing as Declarer".

Bruce: Well, Esther, thank you for talking to us today.

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Esther! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen!

Bruce: Errr, very sorry about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Why don't we talk a bit about "Play as Declarer" on the following Board?

NORTH (14)		
S:	A J 9 5 3 2	
H:	J	
D:	A 6	
C:	A T 7 4	
WEST (8)		EAST (11)
S:	T 6	S: Q 7
H:	Q T 8	H: A 9 6 4 2
D:	K T 8 4 2	D: Q 7 3
C:	K 9 2	C: Q J 3
SOUTH (7)		
S:	K 8 4	
H:	K 7 5 3	
D:	J 9 5	
C:	8 6 5	

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¹ 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, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by **Bruce Thompson**.

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1S	2H	2S	3H
4S	PASS	PASS	PASS

Knoxville **499er** 08/19/24 Board **#1**
Dealer: **NORTH**
Vul: **NONE**

On this Board EAST, perhaps suspecting that Declarer NORTH held "short" Hearts and that because WEST responded 3H rather than 4H did not hold the Heart King, on Trick #1 decided to lead the Diamond 3 as the "bottom of something". The SOUTH Dummy comes down. Esther, errrr, I mean, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you first talk us through your analysis as you formulate your *initial* "Line of Play" as Declarer?

Esther: Well, my *Simpering Simpleton*, of course, I would be happy to do so.

1. Once Dummy is down I can count Spade Trump cards. As expected, SOUTH holds 3 Spades, including the Spade Trump King. We have a total of $6 + 3 = 9$ Spade Trump cards. This means that 4 Spades are "out". When there are an even number of cards "out", the odds of an equal "split" are **lower** than the odds of an unequal "split". In this case with 4 cards out the probability of a 2-2 "split" is **40.7%**, while the probability of a 3-1 "split" is **49.7%**. If instead 5 cards had been "out", the probability of a 3-2 "split" would be **67.8%** while the probability of a 4-1 "split" would be *much* lower, only **28.3%**.²
2. Declarer NORTH's next task is to **identify and count his "losers"**. A **Cardinal Principle of Bridge** is that:
The Declarer playing a Suit contract has as his *primary, main, critical, essential* job "getting rid of losers", by either (1) ruffing or (2) sluffing them .
If the Spades "split" 2-2, N/S will lose 0 Trump Spades, 1 Heart, 1 Diamond, and possibly 2 Clubs. Declarer NORTH's job is to try to "dump" 1 of his Club "losers". A **Cardinal Principle of Bridge** is:

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see the "Some Very Important Probabilities" Section.

Do not just think about “High” side-Suit cards being “winners”, but *also* think about “High” side-Suit “winning” cards at the same time as being an important place to “*dump losers*”!

3. In evaluating the Dummy, the Declarer NORTH must reflect on (1) Dummy's potential to provide a “parking place” for “losers”, and (2) also must formulate a plan for *maintaining* “*transportation*” to the Dummy so that Dummy “winners” can be “cashed”. NORTH sees that Dummy SOUTH is pretty “weak” as regards both (1) taking winners and (2) providing entries to the Dummy. On this Board, Declarer NORTH must play *very carefully*! That Heart King is likely to be critical! There is some hope that EAST holds the Heart Ace “in front of” SOUTH, because EAST opened the Heart bid during the auction.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. On this Board on Trick **#1**, after taking the Diamond Ace “winner” in his Hand, Declarer NORTH on Trick **#2** played his Spade Trump 2 toward the SOUTH Dummy Spade King. On Trick **#3** Declarer led the SOUTH Dummy 8 toward the Declarer NORTH's Spade Ace, thus “dropping” all **4** missing Trump Spades. On Trick **#4** Declarer NORTH lead his Heart singleton Jack, which EAST won with his Heart Ace. On Trick **#5** EAST led his Diamond Queen, the Dummy's Diamond 5 was played, and WEST played his Diamond 2. Here are the cards held by each player after 5 Tricks have been played, N/S taking **3** Tricks, and E/W taking **2** Tricks.

	NORTH (14)	
	S: J 9 5 3	
	H:	
	D:	
	C: A T 7 4	
WEST (8)		EAST (11)
S:		S:
H: Q T		H: 9 6 4 2
D: K 8 4		D: 7
C: K 9 2		C: Q J 3
	SOUTH (7)	
	S: 4	
	H: K 7 5	
	D: J	
	C: 8 6 5	

On Trick #6 EAST led his Diamond 7, Declarer played the SOUTH Dummy's last Diamond, the Diamond Jack, and WEST "covered" with his Diamond King. Obviously, Declarer NORTH then ruffed with his Trump Spade 3.

Esther: Well, my *Beaudacious Bupkus*, **OMG!!! NO! NO! NO!** That is an *unbelievable* "rookie" error! Of course, many of us are susceptible to occasional "senior moments," or careless distracted mistakes. Declarer NORTH simply *must* ruff using his Spade 5, and **NOT** his Trump Spade 3!!! **BOOM!!!**

Declarer NORTH's Spade 3 is NORTH's *only, sole, only* entry to get back to the SOUTH Dummy by playing the SOUTH Dummy's last Spade, his Spade 4, to then play the SOUTH Dummy Heart King "winner". And that SOUTH Dummy Heart King "winner" is not only important for being a "winner"!!! That SOUTH Dummy "winner" is *also* important as a place where Declarer NORTH can "dump" one of his Club "losers"!