Esther Discusses "The '*Forcing PASS*' Is a Very Important Tool in the Bridge Bidder's Toolbox"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen[1]

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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 **"The '*Forcing PASS*' Is a Very Important Tool in the Bridge Bidder's Toolbox"**. 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 such a "warm and caring" person!

Bruce: Errr, well, in any case, Esther, would you begin today by first explaining from where today's concepts and examples originate?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I will certainly try to help you. Today's concepts and examples originate from Richard Pavlicek's 5/1/88 bridge newspaper column, "Forcing Pass Finds Best Trump Fit":
https://www.rpbridge.net/7c92.htm
This bridge Board was a "Real Deal" played in a Swiss Teams event in 1988 in a Miami ACBL Regional tournament.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther… Are you actually being *nice* to me?

Esther: Well, my *studious salamander*, of course I am being

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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**.

"nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you?

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther… In any case, would you please tell us a little bit about this Richard Pavlicek fellow?

Esther: Well, my *loquacious linkster*, of course!

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, thank you! Would you now share the "Real Deal" bridge Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, *my studly squirrel*, of course. I certainly want to help you!

Dealer: **SOUTH**
Vul: **N/S**

NORTH (**3**)
S: 2
H: 9 8 7
D: K 9 7 2
C: T 8 6 5 2

WEST (**11**)
S: 8 3
H: A Q J T 3
D: J T 8 3
C: K 9

EAST (**6**)
S: J T 7 6 5
H: K 6 5 4 2
D: Q 6
C: 3

SOUTH (**20**)
S: A K Q 9 4
H: --
D: A 5 4
C: A Q J 7 4

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2**C**	2**H**	PASS	

On Trick **#1** WEST leads the Heart Ace as his "top" card in Partner's bid Suit.

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther… Would you now talk us through the meaning of NORTH's **1st** bid of PASS?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course. NORTH was telling Partner SOUTH that "I do not have (1) many HCPs or (2) a Suit with both 'length' and Suit quality".

NORTH (**3**)
S: 2
H: 9 8 7
D: K 9 7 2
C: T 8 6 5 2

WEST (**11**)
S: 8 3
H: A Q J T 3
D: J T 8 3
C: K 9

EAST (**6**)
S: J T 7 6 5
H: K 6 5 4 2
D: Q 6
C: 3

SOUTH (**20**)
S: A K Q 9 4
H: --
D: A 5 4
C: A Q J 7 4

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2**C**	2**H**	PASS	4**H**
PASS			

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther… Does SOUTH's **2nd** bid of PASS mean that SOUTH wants to let E/W play a 4**H** Game contract?

Esther: Well, Bruce, no, **no**, ***NO!*** Instead, this is an example of a "**Forcing PASS**". This PASS says, "Partner, so far you have told me *nothing* about your Hand except that your Hand is 'weak'. We together hold more than half the HCPs in the deck and I, SOUTH, hold **~22-24** HCPs *or* can "win" **8+** Tricks. Please reflect on the auction and your Hand and let's see if we can find a reasonable 'fit' somewhere."

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Is there anywhere I can go to learn more about the "**Forcing PASS**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course! For example, in 2006 Eddie Kantar published the 2nd edition of his book, Forcing PASS. Eddie Kantar (1932 – 2022) was a prolific bridge author and won **2** open world bridge championships and **17** North American Bridge championships. A PDF copy of this book is available on the "Lybrary.com" website:
https://www.lybrary.com/the-forcing-pass-p-375.html
Kantar also published a series of **3** 2005 articles on this topic in "Bridge Today". You can subscribe to past "Bridge Today" articles for $79 at:
https://bridgetoday.com
Kantar's book originated from his "Bridge Today" articles.

NORTH (**3**)
S: 2
H: 9 8 7
D: K 9 7 2
C: T 8 6 5 2

WEST (**11**)
S: 8 3
H: A Q J T 3
D: J T 8 3
C: K 9

EAST (**6**)
S: J T 7 6 5
H: K 6 5 4 2
D: Q 6
C: 3

SOUTH (**20**)
S: A K Q 9 4
H: --
D: A 5 4
C: A Q J 7 4

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2**C**	2**H**	PASS	4**H**
PASS	PASS	**DBL**	

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Well, what does NORTH's bid of **DOUBLE** mean?

Esther: Well, Bruce, the NORTH's bid of **DOUBLE** means that NORTH likely holds something but not a "long" Suit with adequate Suit Quality. This **DOUBLE** asks Partner SOUTH to "show" his "long" Suit.

NORTH (**3**)
S: 2
H: 9 8 7
D: K 9 7 2
C: T 8 6 5 2

WEST (**11**)
S: 8 3
H: A Q J T 3
D: J T 8 3
C: K 9

EAST (**6**)
S: J T 7 6 5
H: K 6 5 4 2
D: Q 6
C: 3

SOUTH (**20**)
S: A K Q 9 4
H: --
D: A 5 4
C: A Q J 7 4

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2**C**	2**H**	PASS	4**H**
PASS	PASS	**DBL**	PASS
4**S**	PASS	5**C**	PASS
6**C**	PASS	PASS	PASS

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Well, what does NORTH's bid of 5**C** mean?

Esther: Well, Bruce, the NORTH's bid of 5**C** says, "Partner, I cannot support your Spades. But I hold **5+** Clubs."

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Well, what should SOUTH bid at his **4th** turn to bid within the auction?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH knows that he is void in E/W's "long" Suit *and* that WEST will certainly lead a Heart on Trick **#1** which he can then ruff. And SOUTH knows that he holds "**1st Round control**" in all **4** Suits. And SOUTH knows that N/S together hold **10+** Trump Clubs. According to the "**Law of Total Tricks**", popularized by Larry Cohen in his 1992 award-winning bridge book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks, says that Suit contracts will usually "make" as long as the contract is set no higher than roughly the number of the Partnership's Trump cards – 6. Furthermore, SOUTH knows that 2-Suited Hands plays very well in Suit contracts. As Marty Bergen noted in his *extraordinary* little 2011 bridge book, Pocket Posh: Tips for Bridge Players:

“Any hand with 5-5 distribution has great potential. This is especially true when you have good suits, and really gets exciting once you find a fit.” (p. 17)

And here SOUTH’s Hand is 5-5. So, here on this “Real Deal” SOUTH set the final contract at 6**C**. As Pavlicek noted,

“South’s final bid of six clubs was slightly speculative — North might have held no points at all — but it proved to be a laydown contract. Two of dummy’s diamonds were discarded on South’s top spades, so only the club king was lost.”