

Esther Discusses *Opening or Jumping to Game in a Major*

Bruce Thompson

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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 **opening or jumping to a game contract in a Major**. Esther, thanks for taking 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 Esther! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen!

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, in any case, thank you for talking to us today. Here is the Board that I wanted you to discuss.

Board #12

Thursday 3/18/22 299er Knoxville Game

Dealer: WEST

Vul: N/S

NORTH (16)

S: A

H: A K Q 9 6 5 3

D: 4

C: K T 7 2

WEST (11)

S: K 9 3 2

H: J 8 7 2

D: A K 8 7 2

C:

EAST (7)

S: Q J 6 5 4

H: 4

D: T 6

C: A 9 6 4 3

SOUTH (6)

S: T 8 7

H: T

D: Q J 9 5 3

C: Q J 8 5

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, today out of numerous E/W pairs, WEST as Dealer *consistently* opened 1**D**. WEST opens with only 11 HCPs in part given holding 2 4-card Majors. WEST's Diamond open shows 4+ Diamonds, and with A,K is certainly reasonable. Of course, the primary reason that WEST opens is Marty Bergin's "**Rule of 20**," which says that you *should* open in any position if the sum of (1) your HCPs and (2) the number of cards in your longest 2 suits equals 20 or more.

Esther: Bingo, my Bobble-headed Bupkus!

Bruce: Err, ok. Well, err, of course different pairs bid this differently. Let's talk through some of these choices. At one Table the bidding went WEST: 1**D**, NORTH: 1**H**, and EAST: DOUBLE. Do you agree with the bids of NORTH and EAST?

Esther: Well, my Simpering Simpleton, let me *reserve comment* on NORTH's 1**H** overcall. EAST's bid of DOUBLE is reasonable. I take the DOUBLE to show both Spades and Clubs. Always remember, **bridge does not involve one bid in a given situation being absolutely correct, while all other bids for that situation are intrinsically evil**. EAST's DOUBLE does convey a lot of information. However, I think the DOUBLE implies holding only 4 Spades, or 5 weak Spades. So, I would have been more inclined as EAST to bid instead 1**S**. And showing the Major is arguably more important than showing the Clubs, especially because NORTH's showing Hearts may increase the probability of Partner WEST holding 4 Spades.

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, at this Table the bidding continued, (Round **#1**) WEST: 1**D**, NORTH: 1**H**, and EAST: DOUBLE, SOUTH: PASS; (Round **#2**) WEST: 1**S**, NORTH: 3**H**, and EAST: 3**S**, SOUTH: PASS; (Round **#3**) WEST: PASS, NORTH: 4**H**, and EAST: PASS, SOUTH: PASS; (Round **#4**) WEST: DOUBLE, NORTH: PASS, EAST: PASS, SOUTH: PASS. Sadly, although WEST held a Trump Stack, and 11 HCPs, this DOUBLE proved to be improvident.

Esther: OK. So how did another Table bid this Board?

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, at another Table, the bidding went: (Round #1) WEST: 1**D**, NORTH: 1**H**, and EAST: 1**S**, SOUTH: PASS; (Round #2) WEST: 2**S**, NORTH: 3**H**, and EAST: 3**S**, SOUTH: PASS; (Round #3) WEST: PASS, NORTH: 4**H**, and EAST: PASS, SOUTH: PASS; (Round #4) WEST: DOUBLE, NORTH: PASS, EAST: PASS, SOUTH: PASS. Again, this DOUBLE proved to be improvident.

Esther: Well, I think the E/W pair at this Table correctly realized that 4**S** was not makeable for them, and they shouldn't bid it, even though E/W was not Vulnerable, and N/S was. (However, E/W pairs actually did better going down in a 4**S** contract, than by letting N/S make 4**H** Doubled.)

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, I suspect you now want to take us back to what you think NORTH should have bid instead.

Esther: Well, my malodorous misanthrope, you are (randomly) correct. Here is how I think I would have bid as NORTH: (Round #1) WEST: 1**D**, NORTH: 1**H**, and EAST: 1**S**, SOUTH: PASS; (Round #2) WEST: 2**S**, NORTH: 4**H**.

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what is the logic of your evaluation of your Hand?

Esther: Well, I suspect that EAST will lead a Spade, which will work out well for me. I believe that I likely have 8 or 9 winners in my hand: 1 Spade, 7 Hearts, and a Club. Here is a Principle of Bridge: **You can bid a Game contract in a Major if you count holding 8 winners!** The E/W Spade strength translates into a strength for me as NORTH holding a singleton Spade Ace. I don't want E/W to take a 4 Spade contract, so it seems best to jump to try to *shut out the E/W bidding*. Indeed, as NORTH I *might* make my first bid a 4**H** Overcall! Given WEST's opening of 1**S**, I think that a Slam contract by my Partnership is very unlikely. So, I am not trying to conserve bidding space, and keep the conversation with Partner open.

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, let's say that you were sitting as NORTH and Dealer on this Board. Would you open the bidding on the Board by booming out a 4**H** bid?

Esther: No. "Could" **does not always equal** "should"!!! If I was Dealer, I would not have the benefit of knowing WEST's 1**D** opening bid, and I would think that slam was a possibility, so I would not want prematurely to close the conversation down!