

## Esther Discusses the "Inverted Minors Convention"

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

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**Esther:** Today, we are honored to have with us *moi*, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will discuss the "Inverted Minors Convention".

**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. As I understand it, the basic idea of the "Inverted Minors Convention" is that the usual meaning of 1-level versus 2-level "jump" bids are "inverted" in the "Inverted Minors Convention". Normally, for example, if Opener Responder bids 1**C**, and Responder bids 2**C**, the response bid supports Opener's Clubs, but is "weak", while a sequence over a 1-level minor opening such as 1**D**, Responder bids 3**D**, supports Opener's Diamonds, and is "strong". However, when Partners are playing "Inverted Minors", if Opener Responder bids 1**C**, and Responder bids 2**C**, the response bid supports Opener's Clubs, but is instead "strong", while a sequence over a 1-level minor opening such as 1**D**, Responder bids 3**D** supports Opener's Diamonds and

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<sup>1</sup> Esther is actually a fictitious, not real person. This "Esther Bridge Lesson" was actually written by Bruce Thompson.

is "weak". Why in the world would Partners want to play in this "inverted" way when bidding the Minors?

**Esther:** Well, my *Malodorous Misanthrope*, one idea underlying the "**Inverted Minors Convention**" is that contracts in Minor bids are not terribly interesting, because they yield low Bridge Scores below the Game-contract level, except that Minor part-score contracts can be useful in denying Opponents makeable part-score contracts in a Major. And, of course, bidding Minors does either push Opponents out of the auction, or possibly push Opponents to set unmakeable contracts.

**Bruce:** Oh, my goodness, Est... I mean, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Are there any additional Bridge Principles underlying the "**Inverted Minors Convention**"?

**Esther:** Well, yes, indeed, Bruce! A **fundamental, CARDINAL, and also important** Bridge Principle is:

Bid more slowly, and talk more to communicate more information, the more that you think you and Partner hold more, and thus have more to talk about to set the optimal contract. On the other hand, when you have less to talk about, and Opponents have more to talk about, then you and Partner talking less, and preempting your Opponents, becomes more sensible.

This is exactly what "**Inverted Minors Convention**" bidding does: (1) Talk more and at lower levels when you and Partner hold more; and (2) Talk less (and *preempt*) when you and Partner hold less!

**Bruce:** That sounds quite sensible, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. So please talk us through the details of this convention!

**Esther:** Well, my *Bodacious Bupkus*, perhaps first I should specify how I like to open Minors at the 1 level:

1. I personally like to play 1C openings as showing both (1) almost always **3+** Clubs, and (2) either

- ~13+ HCPs, or a holding that meets the requirements of Marty Bergen's "Rule of 20"<sup>2</sup>.
2. I also like to play a 1D opening as showing both (1) always 4+ Diamonds, and (2) either ~13+ HCPs, or a holding that meets the requirements of Marty Bergen's "Rule of 20".

### **"Weak" Minor Raise (1C, 3C, or 1D, 3D)**

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, let's talk through you as Responder bidding to support Partner's opening bid of either 1C or 1D, when you hold 0-6 HCPs, but cards in Partner's opened Minor. What specifically are the requirements for you to bid at the "weak" 3 level (3C or 3D) in Partner's opened Minor?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, the way that I play the "Inverted Minors Convention", you **must** hold all of the following to make a 3C or 3D "weak" response:

1. 0-6 HCPs, and
2. No 4-card or 5+ card Major, and
3. 5+ Clubs if Partner opened 1C and you wish to support Clubs, given your Suit Quality, or 4+ Diamonds if Partner opened 1D and you wish to support Diamonds, given your Suit Quality.

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are the Opener's options for **rebids** over a "weak" jump to 3 of a Minor (3C or 3D)?

**Esther:** Well, unless Opener holds a ginormous Hand, Opener will likely PASS. But Responder has "limited" his Hand, Opener is now the "Captain", and Opener must set the final contract, if your Partnership is not outbid by your Opponents. Your Partnership holds modest HCPs (~13+ + ~4 = ~17), but 8+ Trump cards. Hopefully you have achieved *either a makeable 3-level contract in a Minor and denied your Opponents a makeable contract in a Major or forced your Opponents to overbid.*

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<sup>2</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see for example: "Lesson #43: Are the 'Rule of 20' and the 'Law of Total Tricks' Both Broken?":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/count\(s\).pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/count(s).pdf)

## "Strong" Minor Raise (1C, 2C, or 1D, 2D)

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are the requirements for Responder to bid a "strong" 2C or 2D response to Partner's opening 1-level bid of a Minor?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, the way that I play the "Inverted Minors Convention", you **must** hold all of the following to make a 2C or 2D "strong" response:

1. **10+** HCPS, and
2. No 4-card or 5+ card Major, and
3. **5+** Clubs if Partner opened 1C and you wish to support Clubs, given your Suit Quality, or **4+** Diamonds if Partner opened 1D and you wish to support Diamonds, given your Suit Quality. And...
4. You should not hold a "flat" or "rectangular" distribution, such as 3-3-3-4, or with your **10+** HCPS a response of 1NT is probably more thoughtful than a 2C or 2D response.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there any **secret hope** underlying a "strong" 2C or 2D response when bidding the "Inverted Minors Convention"?

**Esther:** Yes, indeed, Bruce! Partners holding length in a Minor as well as HCPS may portend the ultimate pursuit of a Game Minor contract at the 5 level. But making a 5-level Minor Game contract is, in the words of my fellow Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), Tyler Swift, boyfriend of NFL football player Travis Kelcy, "Double Tough". So...

Responders bidding a "strong" 2C or 2D response may hope that Opener's Hand holds "*stoppers*" in the 3 *unbid* Suits, and thus lead to a successful 3NT contract in which the Partners' long Minor with good "Suit Quality" can be "run", because a 3-level contract may be more easily made than a 5-level contract!

## Bidding in Clubs

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are the Opener's options for **rebids** over a "strong" 2C bid by Responder when Opener bids 1C?

**Esther:** Well, Opener's rebids over Partner's "strong" 2C response to a 1C opening are:

1. 2D Forcing<sup>3</sup> 4+ Diamonds, shows an imbalanced Hand because Opener did not bid NT.
2. 2H/2S Forcing Shows 3+ cards, and a "protected" stopper.
3. 2NT N.F. 12-14 HCPs. "Drop dead."
4. 3C N.F. 5+ Clubs.
5. 3D Forcing 4+ Diamonds and good "Suit Quality".
6. 3NT N.F. 18-19 HCPs. "Drop dead."

### Bidding in Diamonds

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are the Opener's options for rebids over a "strong" 2D bid by Responder when Opener bids 1D?

**Esther:** Well, Opener's rebids over Partner's "strong" 2D response to a 1D opening are:

1. 2H/2S Forcing Shows 3+ cards, and a "protected" stopper.
1. 2NT N.F. 12-14 HCPs. "Drop dead."
2. 3C Forcing 4+ Clubs.
3. 3D N.F. 5+ Diamonds and good "Suit Quality".
4. 3NT N.F. 18-19 HCPs. "Drop dead."

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what if Partner opens 1C or 1D, and Opponents Overcall with a 1-level Suit bid?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, if Opponents Overcall Partner's 1C or 1D opening bid, then the "Inverted Minors Convention" is OFF! However, Responder with a "strong" Hand and support for Partner's bid Minor could still instead make a "Support Cuebid"<sup>4</sup> by bidding the Opponents' Overcalled bid Suit.

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<sup>3</sup> The "forcing" bids here are all "forcing for 1 Round", not "Game forcing", and so only "force" Responder to bid 1 additional time. "N.F." = "Not Forcing".

<sup>4</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Convention #20: 'Support Cuebids': [https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/cue\\_supp.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/cue_supp.pdf)