

Esther Discusses "During the Auction You Preempt and Then Nevertheless Bid Again With a Touch of 'Lightner Lead-Directing / Penalty DOUBLE'"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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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 "During the Auction You Preempt and Then Nevertheless Bid Again with a Touch of 'Lightner Lead-Directing 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, 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 Mike Lawrence's excellent article, "A Special Double", which was published in the July, 2026 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin (p. 52). Esther may have altered some of the cards in the example.

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

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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**.

Esther: Well, my *studious salamander*, of course I am being “nice” to you! Why wouldn’t I be “nice” to you?

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Hmmm... Well, I, in any case, would you first tell us a little bit about this **Mike Lawrence** Fellow?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you.

About Mike Lawrence

Michael S. Lawrence (1940-) is an American bridge player, teacher and prolific writer. In 1968 Mike joined the “Dallas Aces” bridge team that won the bridge “Bermuda Bowl” in 1970, 1971, and 1987. You can read more about the “Dallas Aces” bridge team if you consult Esther’s “**Brief History of Duplicate Bridge**”:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/br_hist.pdf

Mike has won **16** North American Bridge Championships. He also was “Runner Up” in **2** more Bermuda bowls and in **14** North American Bridge Championships. He has published more than **30** bridge books several of which have won bridge book-of-the-year awards.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Would you now begin to talk us through the example Board?

Esther: Well, my *loquacious linkster*, of course! In our example both Pairs are Vulnerable and you are sitting EAST. You hold:

EAST (3)

S: 8 6 2

H: Q J T 9 8 5 3 2

D: --

C: T 4

Your LHO, NORTH, is the Dealer and opens 1**D**.

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... Surely EAST should not Overcall when EAST holds only **3** HCPs! Is that correct, Esther?

Esther: Well, Bruce, no, *NO*, **NO!!!** How many times must I repeatedly tell you, Suit contracts are not primarily about HCPs!!! This recognition was bolstered with the 1992 publication of Larry Cohen’s award-winning bridge book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The Law of Total Tricks, and by the

publication of Marty Bergen's award-winning 1996 bridge book, Points Schmoints! What counts when you are bidding Suit contracts are your Partnerships *Trump card count* and your *distributions*!

This is why ACBL bridge LifeMaster James Bond, 007, was able in the ACBL bridge documentary film "Moonraker" to make a **7C DOUBLED REDOUBLED** contract even when his Partnership together held only **8** HCPs!

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

This is why a bridge Board exists on which (1) all 4 players hold exactly **10** HCPs, (2) all 4 players can make a **3NT** contract, (3) North and South can *both* make both a **5D** or a **5S** contract, and (4) East and West can *both* make both a **5C** or a **5H** contract:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/Mirror_H.pdf

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... So, if EAST is going to Overcall, what bid should EAST then make?

Esther: Well, Bruce, EAST holds **8** Heart cards! A **4H** bid might be reasonable. But a better bid might be **3H** to both (1) "show" **7+** Hearts and (2) see if WEST can provide any "support". It is even possible that WEST may hold a big Hand that might even make a slam possible!

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... In this auction after EAST bid **3H** SOUTH PASSEd and WEST then bid **4H**. However, NORTH then during his **2nd** turn to bid in the auction **DOUBLED**. What in the world does NORTH's **DOUBLE** "show"?

Esther: Well, Bruce... NORTH's initial **1D** bid "showed" (1) **4+** Diamonds and (2) **~13** HCPs. NORTH's **DOUBLE** now "shows" **4** Spades and an interest in setting a **4S** contract. Indeed, after EAST next PASSEd SOUTH then did bid **4S**. Both WEST and NORTH then PASSEd.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... OK. Well, both WEST and NORTH then PASSEd. Now it was EAST's turn to bid a **3rd** time. But surely EAST **must** PASS! You have *relentlessly* emphasized to us in **numerous** "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" that once a bridge bidder "**limits**" his Hand that bidder **must** not ever bid again. A bid that "**limits**" a bidder's Hand provides Partner very *specific* information about the bidder's (1) HCPs and (2) card counts or distribution, such as opening **1NT** or, as here, Overcalling **3H**. Surely EAST **must** not bid again at his **3rd** turn within this auction????

Esther: Well, my *studly salamander*, everything you have said is true as a matter of General Bridge Principles, of course. But in this auction EAST actually bid **DOUBLE**!

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Oh, my, goodness, Esther. What in the world does EAST's **DOUBLE** mean???

Esther: Well, my *studious salmon*, as Mike Lawrence pointed out:
"East's double can't be saying that he has some spade winners. It's just not possible. What's likely is that East is asking for a specific lead. ...[T]he meaning is usually that the doubler wants the lead of a specific [**otherwise unobvious**] suit." (p. 52)

In the present example EAST's **DOUBLE** is a "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE**" asking Partner SOUTH to lead Diamonds.

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

Without this **DOUBLE** WEST is unlikely to lead Diamonds on Trick #1 because NORTH as Dealer opened the bidding by bidding 1**D**!

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Oh, my, oh, my, Esther! What in the world is a "**Lead Directing DOUBLE**"?

Esther: Well, my *supine starfish*, "**Lead Directing DOUBLES**" are fairly common especially versus "artificial" bids such as "2**C** Stayman", "2**D** Transfer", and "2**H** Transfer" after the Opener bid 1**NT**. For example, a **DOUBLE** of a "2**C** Stayman" bid says, "Partner, at your 1st opportunity please lead a Club to me." For more information about "**Lead Directing DOUBLES**" see the "**Esther Bridge Lesson**" "**7 Not-for-Penalty DOUBLES**":
<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/double.pdf>

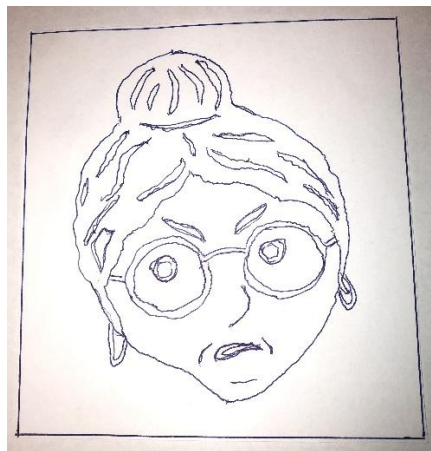
Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Oh, my, goodness, Esther! What in the world did the actual bridge Board in this competition look like?

Esther: Well, my *studly squid*, the actual Board was:

	NORTH (19)	
	S: A K 7	
	H: A	
	D: A J 9 5 2	
	C: Q J 5 3	
WEST (12)		EAST (3)
S: Q T		S: 8 6 2
H: K 7 4		H: Q J T 9 8 5 3 2
D: T 7 6 4 3		D: --
C: A K 6		C: T 4
	SOUTH (13)	
	S: J 9 5 4 3	
	H: 6	
	D: K Q 8	
	C: 9 8 7 2	

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Oh my! What was the result of this "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE**" bidding at this table?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here WEST knew that EAST wanted WEST on Trick #1 to lead Diamonds! The result was that E/W earned a Bridge Score of **+500** while at other tables EAST did not make a "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE**" and E/W earned a Bridge Score of **-620**!



Esther says:

You see Bruce, the "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE**" is *indeed* a "**Lead-Directing DOUBLE**". But the "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE**" is *also* a "**Penalty DOUBLE**". In other words, good bridge players *only* make a "**Lightner Lead-Directing DOUBLE / Penalty DOUBLE**" when they *both* (1) need an *unobvious* lead from Partner and (2) the Partner who makes this **DOUBLE** knows

that the result of the “correct” “directed” lead by Partner will be to “set” the Opponents’ **DOUBLED** contract!