

**"What Is the Best Defense Against the Opponents'
4H Contract When the Opponents Appear to
Hold a 'Moysian (4-3) Fit' in Trump?"**

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 **"What Is the Best Defense Against the Opponents' 4H Contract When the Opponents Appear to Hold a 'Moysian (4-3) Fit' in Trump?"** 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 so "warm and caring"!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! Well, Esther, at the outset, would you briefly remind us of what a **"Moysian Fit"** is?

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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, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. I have previously taught about playing a "**Moysian Fit**" in my "**Esther Bridge Lesson**": "**Esther Discusses Playing a '**Moysian Fit**' as Declarer in a Major Suit Game Contract**": <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/moysian.pdf>

A "**Moysian Fit**" simply involves playing a 4**H** or 4**S** contract when your Partnership holds a 4-3 "fit" in Trump. As Pam LaShelle, in an article posted on the Austin Bridge website, "The Moysian Fit",² noted:

"Alphonse Moyse (1897-1973), genius bridge columnist, fabulous bridge player was a strong advocate of opening 4 card majors and even went so far as to advocate playing in a 4-3 fit. He wrote for over 20 years and wrote under the names of Josephine and Eli Culbertson in newspapers and bridge magazines. He thought that many times you could make a game contract in a 4-3 fit when no other game would make. Time has proved that he was right!"

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, are there any special considerations when you are playing a 4**H** or 4**S** contract when your Partnership holds a 4-3 Trump "fit"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. Yes, indeed! The primary challenge confronting a Declarer playing a "**Moysian Fit**" is that the Declarer usually should not "draw" very many Rounds of Trump because the Partnership clearly has no Trump cards to spare!

Bruce: Well, Esther, to make this discussion more concrete could you talk us through a "Real Deal" actual bridge Board on which the Declarer is playing a "**Moysian Fit**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course! The present example is drawn from one of Richard Pavlicek's newspaper bridge columns.

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

² <https://austinbridge.org/sbruce/lecture/Intermediate-Advanced%202203%20Moysian2.pdf>

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. Esther particularly likes the Bridge Simulation Studies presented on his bridge website:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/rpsi.htm>

and his re-posts of his newspaper bridge columns:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/rpco.htm>

The present example is from the 1/17/88 Pavlicek newspaper bridge column, "Moysian Fit Is Only Hope for Game" and was played in a 1980s Central Florida Flight A Swiss Teams competition.

Dealer: **NORTH**

Vul: **BOTH**

	NORTH (12)		
	S: K Q 7 2		
	H: A 9 5		
	D: 4 3		
	C: K T 7 4		
WEST (6)		EAST (12)	
S: 9 6 5		S: J T 4	
H: Q T 4		H: J 7 3	
D: K J 9 7 2		D: A Q T 8 6	
C: 6 3		C: A 2	
	SOUTH (10)		
	S: A 8 3		
	H: K 8 6 2		
	D: 5		
	C: Q J 9 8 5		

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1 C	1 D	1 H	2 D
2 H	PASS	4 H	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Bruce: Oh, my goodness, Esther. Are there any conditions that Declarer SOUTH must hope for when playing a Game contract when holding a "Moysian Fit"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, obviously when Declarer's Partnership holds $4 + 3 = 7$ Trump cards the Opponents then hold $13 - 7 = 6$

Trump cards. It will be very helpful for a Declarer playing a "**Moysian Fit**" contract if the Opponents' 6 Trump cards "split" 3-3.

Bruce: Oh, my goodness, Esther. When the Opponents hold 6 Trump cards how likely is a 3-3 "split"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, as the "BBO Bridge Master" **Level 2 Lesson B-03** notes, "Bridge players should have a *good* working knowledge of probabilities of [1] suit breaks and [2] honour [sic] distributions. Many bridge books contain tables of *important* bridge odds. Memorizing a handful of numbers can help solve most problems like this one" (emphases added).

When the number of "missing" cards is "even", such as 6, the most-likely "split" is not the equal 3-3 "split". Specifically, when the number of "missing" cards is 6, the probability of a 4-2 "split" is **48.4%**, the probability of a 3-3 "split" is **35.5%**, the probability of a 5-1 "split" is **14.5%**, and the probability of a 6-0 "split" is **1.5%**.³ Of course, 48.4% > 35.5%, but also 35.5% ≠ 0%!

Bruce: Well, Esther, is a successful N/S 4**H** contract even possible on this bridge Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Here is a "**Double Dummy Analysis**" of this Board that shows every possible "makeable" contract by every player:

	C	D	H	S	NT
N	4	-	3	4	1
S	4	-	3	4	1
E	-	1	-	-	-
W	-	1	-	-	-

This "**Double Dummy Analysis**" was performed using the online "**Bridge Solver Double Dummy Analysis**" website:
https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload_from_chrome.htm

Bruce: Well, Esther, would you talk us through the actual play of this "Real Deal" bridge Board?

Esther: Well, of course.

³ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see "**A Comprehensive List of 8 Different Categories of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**":
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf

Dealer: **NORTH**

Vul: **BOTH**

		NORTH (12)		
		S: K Q 7 2		
		H: A 9 5		
		D: 4 3		
		C: K T 7 4		
WEST (6)			EAST (12)	
S: 9 6 5			S: J T 4	
H: Q T 4			H: J 7 3	
D: K J 9 7 2			D: A Q T 8 6	
C: 6 3			C: A 2	
		SOUTH (10)		
		S: A 8 3		
		H: K 8 6 2		
		D: 5		
		C: Q J 9 8 5		

On Trick **#1** WEST led his Diamond 7 as **4th** from the "top" of EAST's bid Diamond Suit. EAST won Trick **#1** with his Diamond Ace and on Trick **#2** returned a "low" Diamond which Declarer SOUTH ruffed from his own Hand. On Trick **#3** Declarer SOUTH led a "low" Club to the NORTH Dummy Club King and EAST "won" with his Club Ace. On Trick **#4** EAST returned a "low" Club which SOUTH "won" with his own Club Queen.

Bruce: Well, Esther, on Tricks **#5-#7** should Declarer SOUTH then "draw" **3** Rounds of Trump Spades?

Esther: Well, Bruce, no! If Declarer plays **3** Rounds of Trump Spades E/W will then "win" Trick **#7** and be "on lead" to continue "attacking" Diamonds. Instead, on Trick **#5** Declarer SOUTH should "concede" **1** Heart Trick to E/W. After Trick **#5** Declarer SOUTH will "win" any return and will "win" all the rest of the Tricks and thus "make" his **4H** contract.

Bruce: Well, Esther, is there any way that E/W can defeat this N/S **4H** contract?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes! After EAST "wins" Trick **#3** with his Club Ace EAST should play a **3rd** Round of Diamonds. N/S **must** ruff EAST's Diamond lead either in his own Hand or from the NORTH Dummy. Now N/S cannot afford to concede a Trump Heart Trick because then E/W will then "attack" Diamonds a **4th** time thus forcing yet another N/S ruff with the precious N/S Trump Hearts. Then, according to Pavlicek, "Declarer is 'ruff-sluffed' to death." Of course, this Defensive "Line of Play" is hard for E/W to see because they do not know

that SOUTH initially held only **3** Trump Heart cards!
However, there is a hint of the N/S dilemma from the fact
that Declarer SOUTH does not start "drawing" Trump Hearts
and also did not early on start ruffing from either the
Dummy or his own Hand.