

## Esther Comments Once Again About Playing NT as Declarer

Bruce Thompson

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

**Bruce:** Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will (again) talk us through the **play of the hand when you are Declarer on a NT contract**. Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, 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 call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Instead, call me Esther! I am a very *warm, caring, friendly* person, and prefer to be casual and friendly, my malodorous muffinhead!

**Bruce:** Errr, well, sorry again about that, Esther. Here is today's Board, which virtually all tables played in **3NT** NORTH:

**Board #17**

299er 12/9/21

Dealer: NORTH

Vul: NONE

|                   |          |                       |                   |  |
|-------------------|----------|-----------------------|-------------------|--|
|                   |          | NORTH (18)            |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>S:</b> Q 4 2       |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>H:</b> A K 3 2     |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>D:</b> Q 7         |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>C:</b> A K 9 2     |                   |  |
|                   | WEST (9) |                       | EAST (4)          |  |
| <b>S:</b> 9 8 6   |          |                       | <b>S:</b> T 7 3   |  |
| <b>H:</b> Q 9 7 5 |          |                       | <b>H:</b> J T 8   |  |
| <b>D:</b> A 5     |          |                       | <b>D:</b> K T 9   |  |
| <b>C:</b> Q J 8 6 |          |                       | <b>C:</b> T 7 5 3 |  |
|                   |          | SOUTH (9)             |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>S:</b> A K J 5     |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>H:</b> 6 4         |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>D:</b> J 8 6 4 3 2 |                   |  |
|                   |          | <b>C:</b> 4           |                   |  |

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, once EAST leads, and the Board comes down, you as Declarer have to formulate your initial plan for your "line of play." Please talk us through that.

**Esther:** OK. Well, because we are playing on-line bridge, I usually play in my pajamas, and I keep my stockpile of prescription meds nearby. On this Board, once the Dummy came down I was so **ecstatic** that I had to take a little something to calm myself down.

**Bruce:** OK, why are you so excited?

**Esther:** Well, the first thing I do as Declarer in a **NT** contract is count the number of cards held in each suit. Here, we hold 7 Spades (with the top 4 cards), 6 Hearts (with the top 2 cards), 5 Clubs (with the top 2 cards). Of course, that is not the primary source of my excitement!

**Bruce:** OK, I'll bite. What, then, is the source of your excitement?

**Esther:** Diamonds, *my malodorous muffinhead*. Dummy's Diamonds. And, also, Diamonds. And I have not 1, not 2, but 3 full rounds of guaranteed entries to the Board using Spades. And we have **8 Diamonds!**

**Bruce:** So?

**Esther:** As I told you (though you may not have listened) in an October lesson:

Well, as Marti Ronemus emphasizes, in her excellent bridge modules and bundles on the "**bridgebee.app**" and "**vubridge.com**" websites, especially in **NT**, **never ignore** a long suit as a potential source for promoting tricks. So, I always look for long suits, in case I can promote winners there.

By the way, "never" means (you guessed it), **NEVER**.

**Bruce:** Well, OK, then what's your plan?

**Esther:** I am going to make 4 Spades, 2 Hearts, and 2 Clubs. And I believe I will take 4 Diamonds, but 5 is (very remotely) possible, if I lead the Queen of Diamonds from my hand, EAST plays the King, and WEST holds an Ace singleton. The

most likely Diamond split is 3-2, and because the number of missing cards is an "odd" number, a 3-2 split is much more likely than a 4-1 split. So, every, single time I get the lead, I am going to lead a Diamond, until I promote Dummy's 2, 3, 4, and probably 6 into winners.

**Bruce:** Amazing. If you played the Board in this way, you probably would get top Board and top Match Points!

**Esther:** Actually, no, not really. Not only did almost all the N/S pairs play **3NT**, but virtually all of them played the Board in exactly this (correct) way. So, all these pairs indeed did get a top Board, but so therefore the result also did not advance their competition rankings very much, because quite a few N/S pairs obtained the exact same result. But that's not the reason to play the Board in the correct way.

**Bruce:** OK, so why should you play the Board this (correct) way?

**Esther:** Because, *my malodorous muffinhead*, you want to **avoid** getting a low or Bottom Board. The N/S pairs who did not "attack" the Diamonds in order to "**promote**" low Dummy's Diamonds into winners *all got bottom Boards!*