

Esther Discusses "Responding to Partner's Opening Preempt 'Weak 2' 2S Bid"

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 discuss "**Responding to Partner's Opening Preempt 'Weak 2' 2S Bid**"² 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, well, very sorry about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Well, perhaps before we discuss "**Responding to Preempt Bids**" we should first *briefly* review your preferences for the conditions that have to be met in order to make a preempt "weak" 2 opening bid.

Esther: Well, my *Boneheaded Bozo*, of course I will try to help you! Of course, as usual, the conditions that have to be met to preempt are a matter of "Partnership Agreement." **First, all** Partnerships agree that Opener must hold **6+**

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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**.

² Many of the ideas presented here are drawn from Mike Lawrence's excellent article, "**Responding to a Weak 2 ♠ With an Interesting Hand**" (p. 54), in the November, 2024 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. The example Hands herein are also based on similar Hands presented in that article.

cards in the bid "weak" Suit. *Sometimes* Partners will open at the 2 level holding **7** cards if the cards are *pretty weak*, such as:

♥ K T 9 8 6 3 2 (3).

Second, all Partnerships also have some agreement about *how many honors* the Opener must hold. For example, some Partners will open a preempt bid holding *only* an Ace and 5 small cards such as

♦ A T 8 7 5 3 (4).

I personally, Esther, the holder of *20 Million+* ACBL MasterPoints and a Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master, do not like to play such that when opening **2S** I may hold Suits as diverse as:

♠ A 9 8 5 4 2 (4) or ♠ A K J T 8 5 (8).

I prefer to play conventions in which my bids "**limit**" my Hand as *precisely* as possible, so that I give my Partner *as much information as possible!* I want my Partner to "see" *both* my HCPs and my distribution! Therefore, I personally will *only* make a preempt bid when I hold (1) a "weak" Hand and (2) either (a) **2** of the "top" **3** Honors in the Suit, or (b) **3** of the "top" **5** Honors in the Suit.³ This way when I preempt Partner has a **reasonable** opportunity to decide in an *informed* way whether to take the contract to Game in either my bid Suit or **3NT!**

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, please now turn your attention to today's topic, "**Responding to Partner's Opening Preempt 'Weak 2' 2S Bid**". Would you now talk us through some examples?

Esther: Well, my *Simpering Simpleton*, sure. In the following discussion let's assume that in each case:

1. Both Pairs are Vulnerable,
2. The Dealer is NORTH, and
3. SOUTH, the Responder, in each case holds:

SOUTH (14)

S 3

H A Q 7 4

D 5

C A K J T 8 3 2

³ I still might *occasionally* open a preempt bid holding something like: ♥ A J T 9 8 4.

Bruce: OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, please now briefly discuss the following auction:

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2S	PASS	3C	PASS
???			

Was SOUTH's 3C bid as Responder correct? And what should NORTH next bid?

Esther: Well, my *Beaudacious Bupkus*, first, SOUTH holding a singleton Spade 3 simply cannot PASS and let NORTH play a 2S contract holding only $6 + 1 = 7$ Spades. The "**Law of Total Tricks**"⁴ says this story will not have a happy ending, because $7 - 6 = \text{only } 1!$

Second, SOUTH's Clubs have a Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**" of (1) 7 cards plus (2) 4 Honors (including the Ten) or $7 + 4 + 11$. A "**SQT Score**" of 11 will support a Suit bid up to $11 - 6 = 5$ level!

Third, SOUTH should not "jump" to a 4C bid to show extraordinary length and Suit Quality in Clubs! Doing so will *shut out* the opportunity to set a 3NT contract! So SOUTH's 3C bid is perfectly appropriate!

Bruce: Wow, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, that's very clear. Well, what should NORTH then bid? NORTH holds:

NORTH (10)
S K Q T 9 4 2
H 6 3
D Q J 7
C Q 9

Esther: Well, Bruce, a 3C contract, given NORTH's Club Q,9 and the Partnership's "long" Clubs, will surely make. But a part score in a Minor is not very attractive. NORTH holds a Heart doubleton, but no voids or singletons. Pursuing a 5C contract holding a "weak" Hand seems *dicey*! Sitting NORTH because I have shown a "weak" preempt Hand and given that SOUTH boomed out a 3C bid I have to assume that SOUTH holds some HCPs in addition to "long" Clubs. E/W are PASSing at each turn. Opponents PASSing at each turn speaks "loudly"

⁴ Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "**Esther Bridge Lesson: 'Lagniappe: Esther Discusses '(1) Does the 'Law of Total Tricks' ('LOTT') Really Work, and (2) Is the 'LOTT' Magic?'**":

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

given that Partner has published his "weak" Hand! Those points have to be somewhere! I think would take a shot at a **3NT** contract on these holdings.

Bruce: OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks so much! Would you now talk us through a *second* example?

Esther: Well, my *Malodous Misanthrope*, thank you for the compliment. Sure I will give you a second example. Let's now assume that this time NORTH holds:

NORTH (7)
S A K 9 7 6 3
H 8
D 9 8 3
C 9 6 4

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, let's assume that the auction proceeded:

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2 S	PASS	3 C	PASS
???	PASS	???	

What should NORTH bid at his 2nd turn? What should SOUTH bid if NORTH "supports" Clubs and bids 4**C**?

Esther: Well, Bruce, sitting NORTH I would assume that SOUTH held (1) HCPs and (2) good Club "Suit Quality" and (3) at least 6 Clubs. Holding a singleton Heart 8 will play well in a Club Suit contract, but potentially be disastrous in a **3NT** contract. So I would be inclined to bid 4**C** which SOUTH can either PASS out, or take to 5**C**.

And sitting SOUTH holding 7 Clubs, including 4 of the "top" 5 Clubs, and (2) 2 (yes, 2) singletons, if NORTH bid 4**C** sitting SOUTH I would be inclined then to bid 5**C**.

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you now give us a *third* example?

Esther: Well, my *Dandruff-ridden Dufus*, sure. Let's now assume that this time NORTH holds:

NORTH (7)
S K J T 7 6 4
H K 8 5
D 4 3
C 5 4

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2 S	PASS	3 C	PASS
???			

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what should NORTH bid at his 2nd turn?

Esther: Well, Bruce, NORTH sees that N/S may only hold 8 Club Trump cards. NORTH sees potentially **2** Diamond losers, **2** Heart losers, and not many Spade "winners" in a Suit that Partner SOUTH did not "support". It seems unlikely that a 5**C** contract is makeable. And 3**NT** seems challenging since N/S probably do not have either first- or second-Round "control" in Diamonds, and only 2nd-Round "control" in both Hearts and Spades. It appears that a bid of PASS would not go askance.