

## Esther Discusses "Who is the 'Enemy', and Where Are the Trump Cards?"

Bruce Thompson

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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 "Who is the 'Enemy', and Where are the Trump Cards?" 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!

**Bruce:** Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, in any case, I thought it might be interesting to discuss NORTH/SOUTH bidding the following Board:

**Knoxville 499er** 10/27/23

**Board #8**

Dealer: **WEST** Vul: **NONE**

NORTH (9/11<sup>1</sup>)

**S:** Q T 9 6

**H:** 7 5 4

**D:** 9 5

**C:** A J Q 5

SOUTH (13/17)

**S:** A 8 5 2

**H:** Q

**D:** A K T 6 4 2

**C:** 3 2

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<sup>1</sup> Marty Bergen, 10 times ACBL American National Bridge Champion, and inventor of the "Rule of 20", "Bergen Limit Raises", and "DONT", has suggested that Aces are *undervalued* when counted as being worth 4 HCPs. Some have suggested that valuing Aces as being worth between 4.5 and 6 HCPs would better honor an Ace's value at play.

## Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2H	PASS	PASS	3D
3H	4D	PASS	PASS

**Bruce:** OK, Esther. First, do you agree with SOUTH Overcalling 3D?

**Esther:** Well, my *gracious giver*, WEST has shown (1) a weak Hand with (2) 6+ Hearts with a good Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test**" ("**SQT**") Score<sup>2</sup>, meaning either 2 of the top 3 Heart Honors, or 3 of the top 5 Heart Honors. I agree with SOUTH Overcalling 3D. First, WEST is "weak". Second, SOUTH holds a Heart singleton, which is WEST's bid Suit, and Hearts are thus likely to be lead initially. Third, WEST is likely to make a 2H contract, and make a "positive" Board Bridge Score, because WEST holds at least 6 Hearts, plus and least 2 Honors, which equals a "**Suit Quality Test**" ("**SQT**") Score of 6+ + 2+ = **8+**, if I as SOUTH do not Overcall. In bridge, we want to *deny* Opponents a "positive" Board Bridge Score, while hopefully ourselves still obtaining a "positive" Board Bridge Score. Fourth, SOUTH holds 13-17 HCPs, depending upon how Aces are valued (4 versus 6), and SOUTH's Diamonds have an "**SQT**" **Score** of 6 + 3 = **9**, and because 9 - 6 = **3**, a 3-level Diamond contract is likely makeable.

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

**Esther:** Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, of course I am being "nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you?

**Bruce:** Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. The bidding continues, and WEST rebids Hearts. What does this bid mean to you?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I would assume that WEST is showing 7 rather than only 6 Hearts.

**Bruce:** OK. Well, the final contract is set at 4D SOUTH. As expected, WEST leads the Heart Ace, and Dummy comes down.

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<sup>2</sup> The Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test**" ("**SQT**") Score equals the sum of (1) the number of cards held in the Suit, plus (2) the number of Honors, including the Ten, held in the Suit. It is generally safe when bidding Suit contracts to bid to a level no higher than the "**SQT**" **Score** minus 6.

WEST hopes that SOUTH's Queen was dropped with SOUTH holding Q,x, with SOUTH playing the Queen rather than small, to try to prompt a Suit shift by WEST. So WEST decides to lead his Heart King on Trick #2, which SOUTH ruffs. Now what "Line of Play" do you think SOUTH should formulate?

**Esther:** Well, my *handsome hombre*, first, SOUTH needs to maintain **transportation** entries back to Dummy. The options are *very few*. SOUTH can go to the Dummy twice via the Clubs. So, SOUTH should not immediately take several Club winners early!

**Bruce:** OK. In formulating your tentative "Line of Play" of play as SOUTH, are there any things that "jump out" at you?

**Esther:** Well, yes. WEST has shown a very long, 7-card Suit: Hearts. This means that EAST is very, very, very likely to hold both the length and the strength in the Trump Diamonds. This means quite simply that **EAST is the Enemy!!!** Whenever there is an Enemy, it is important to know **where the danger lies!**

**Bruce:** OK. So, what is your tentative "Line of Play"?

**Esther:** Well, once Dummy comes down, I can see that 5 Trump Diamonds are out. When there is no compelling reason to do otherwise, **draw Trump at your first opportunity as Declarer**. Otherwise, *nasty* things can happen, especially when one Opponent is known to hold an aberrantly long Suit, thus implying "shortness" in other Suits!

When there are 5 cards out, the probability of a 3-2 split (**67.8%**) is greater than the probability of a 4-1 split (**28.4%**). But that is a *generic* probability. On this Hand WEST has shown unusual length in Hearts, which means that EAST is likely to hold unusual length in Trump Diamonds. Plus EAST is likely to hold the missing Q,J, because WEST's bid was a "weak" bid showing primarily only strength in Hearts!

My plan is to lead a small Club to Dummy's Ace of Clubs. And then lead the 5 of Diamonds off Dummy. I hold "touching" 9,T in Diamonds along with "touching" A,K, missing only the Queen, Jack and 3 other smaller Diamonds. My plan is to take the first Diamond Trick with Declarer's Ace, then lead back to Dummy's King of Clubs, and then lead Dummy's remaining Diamond Trump to Declarer's Hand. I will

play Declarer's King of Trump Diamonds unless EAST "ducks", and otherwise play Declarer's Ten of Diamonds in the expectation that on this Board EAST holds both 4 Diamonds and the Q,J.

I will finish drawing the Trump Diamonds. I hold A,Q and "touching" T,9,8 of Spades. I may play Declarer's 8 in hopes of forcing out the missing Spade King or Jack, and "promoting" my remaining Spades. The Opponents will be "squeezed" to lead toward my Heart void in Declarer's Hand, my remaining Club winner in Dummy, or toward my remaining Spade honors.