

Esther Discusses "Showing Partner Specific Aces via 'Cue Bidding' Aces 'Up the Line', and Asking Partner for 'Key Cards'"

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 talk us through "Showing Partner Specific Aces via 'Cue Bidding' Aces 'Up the Line', and Asking Partner for 'Key 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:

Dealer: NORTH

NORTH (12)

S: J T 9 4

H: A 5

D: Q T 4

C: A J T 9

SOUTH (19)

S: A K Q 7 6 3

H: K 6

D: A K 5

C: 8 4

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1C	PASS	1S	PASS
2S	PASS	3S	PASS
4C	PASS	4D	PASS
4H	PASS	4NT	PASS
5H	PASS	6S	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Bruce: OK, Esther. First, do you agree with NORTH opening 1C?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I certainly do agree with NORTH opening 1C. North holds 12 HCPs, and meets the requirements of the Marthy Bergen's important "**Rule of 20**", since the sum of (1) NORTH's 12 HCPs, *plus* (2) the number of cards in his longest 2 suits, 8, equals 20!¹

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Obviously, you agree with SOUTH as Responder bidding 1S as showing 4+ Spades. By the way, am I temporarily insane, or are you actually being nice to me???

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, of course I am being "nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you? And, yes, I prefer to play "jump-shift" bids as Responder as Weak. So, if Partners are playing the way I prefer, I think SOUTH's 1S bid is correct. SOUTH can show points later.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. So, I assume that you agree that NORTH should then support SOUTH's Spades by showing a holding of exactly 4 Spades by bidding 2S. At his next bid, SOUTH then bid 3S. Do you agree with this bid, or do you think SOUTH should have "jumped" to set the final contract at a 4S Game contract?

Esther: Well, Bruce, pardon my French, but HECK NO SOUTH should not jump to Game. SOUTH, unlike NORTH, knows that the Partnership holds ~13 + 19 = 32 HCPs. SOUTH's 3S bid is actually **stronger** than SOUTH bidding 4S! A 4S bid by SOUTH in this sequence says, "Partner, we will make 4S, but I

¹ Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "**Lesson #43: Are the 'Rule of 20' and the 'Law of Total Tricks' Broken?**", and "**Lesson #25: 40 or So Bidding/Play 'Rules of Bridge'**".

doubt we can make any more than that. Please 'drop dead'?"
Alternatively, a 3S bid says, "Partner, I think a Slam contract may be possible. Let's **definitely talk more!**"

Bruce: OK. Now, next, in this bidding sequence, NORTH then bid 4C. What the #?!\$## does that 4C bid show?

Esther: Well, no, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, N/S now both know that (1) they together hold at least 8 Spades, and (2) enough points to make a 4S bid. The fact that N/S both know that they are going to bid at least 4S, and that neither Partner will stop bidding until at least a Game contract is set, means that N/S now have the latitude to wisely use the *remaining bidding space* below 4S to exchange further important information.

After SOUTH's 3S bid, NORTH should "**cue bid**" "*Aces Up the Line*". NORTH will tell SOUTH which specific Aces NORTH holds, and in turn SOUTH will do the same for NORTH. If NORTH now bids 4D, that says, "Partner, I do not hold the Ace of Clubs. But I do hold the Ace of Diamonds." In other words, bidding a Suit below the Game contract levels, **denies** holding Aces in **all** lower-ranked Suits! Here, NORTH will now bid 4C.

Here is a Major piece of Bridge Wisdom:

Sometimes it is better to know the specific Aces that Partner holds as against the total number of Aces that Partner holds!

Bruce: OK. Of course, in his next bid, SOUTH then bids 4D, to show holding the Ace of Diamonds. And NORTH in turns bid 4H to show his holding the Ace of Hearts. So, now both NORTH and SOUTH know that they hold Aces in **all** 3 Side Suits! Next, SOUTH bids 4NT. What does this bid mean?

Esther: Well, apparently N/S were playing the convention called "**Roman Key Csrđ ('RKC') 1430**"². This convention asks Partner to show his count as regards holding as "key cards" any of the 4 Aces, and the King of Trump, and additionally, in some circumstances, the Queen of Trump.

² Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "**Convention #3: Roman Key Card ('RKC') 1430 (or 'RKC' 3014)**".

Bruce: OK. Here NORTH responded with an "artificial" bid of 5H. How many "key cards" is NORTH showing SOUTH?

Esther: Well, SOUTH's bid says, "Partner, among the 5 'key cards', the 4 Aces plus the 1 King of Trump, I hold 2 of the 5 'key cards', but not the Queen of Spades". Based on this bid, and his own holdings, SOUTH knows that (1) NORTH holds the 2 remaining Aces that SOUTH does not himself hold, and (2) SOUTH does not hold either the King or the Queen of Trumps, but of course SOUTH holds these himself anyway. Expecting that the Partnership holds roughly 32 HCPs, SOUTH then settles for a 6S bid.

Bruce: Esther, what do you think SOUTH believes will be the MatchPoints result on this Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH doubts that *any* N/S Pair will bid and make a 7S contract. And SOUTH expects that probably all N/S Pairs will bid and make at least 6S. If all N/S Pairs bid and make exactly 6S, all N/S Pairs (and all E/W Pairs) will obtain a 50% result on this Board. SOUTH as Declarer can do better than this *only* if (1) some N/S Pairs bid 7S and get set, or (2) SOUTH can somehow snatch an Overtrick that other N/S Pairs fail to get.

Bruce: Esther, when you are bidding, do you really think about what *other specific Pairs* sitting in the *same direction* as you are bidding? Really? Really???

Esther: Well, Bruce, you are not playing against chairs. You are instead playing against the *particular* Human People sitting in the same direction as you on given Boards! Human People *who you know sitting in the same direction*. Of course, then you **MUST** think quite *specifically* and *consciously* about what your *particular* Opponent friends will do on bidding every given Board!!!³

³ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "**Lesson #16: Don't Be a 'Results Player', and the Importance of 'Playing the Room'**". To go to this *important* "Esther Bridge Lesson", click https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/Bds_11_12.pdf.