

## **Esther Discusses "Various Bidding Scenarios When You Hold a *Ginormous, 2-Suited* Hand": Anything Can (and Does) Happen in Bridge!**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:  
<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

**Esther:** Today, we are honored to have with us *moi*, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will discuss "**Various Bidding Scenarios When You Hold a *Ginormous, 2-Suited* Hand.**"

**Bruce:** 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, very sorry about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, why don't you first talk a bit about your thesis that "*anything can (and does) happen in bridge*", and that you must be prepared for anything when *anything* can (and does) happen?

**Esther:** Well, of course, my *Malodorous Misanthrope*. Let's consider an illustrative, highly unusual, but possible event: You are dealt a hand with **13 cards all in a single suit**, such as 13 Clubs!!!

**Bruce:** Oh, my goodness, Est... I mean, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Can that *really, really* happen???

**Esther:** Well, certainly it can happen, my *Simpering Simpleton*! Statistically, if you play twice a week in competitions involving 26 Boards each session, you

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<sup>1</sup> Esther is actually a fictitious, not real person. This "Esther Bridge Lesson" was actually written by Bruce Thompson.

will be dealt a one-suited hand on average once every **60,000 years!**<sup>2</sup> But because this event in "on the average", you could be dealt this hand tomorrow!!! Or even twice in one week!!! Or, instead in 120,000 years!!!

**Bruce:** Well, OK. If I was dealt this one-suited hand, I guess I should (1) just immediately boom out a bid of **7C**, and (2) I would make it, and earn a Top Board!!

**Esther:** Well, my *Bodacious Bupkus*, (1) **WRONG!**, and (2) **WRONG!** Now it is true that you will make your contract for a Grand Slam in Clubs. But you may not get a Top Board score. It will depend on whether your Opponents Double you, and on whether you Re-Double!!! If you want a Top Board score, and you boom out an opening bid of **7C**, the Opponents may think, "Gosh, Bruce must hold a hand with 13 Clubs, or a boatload of Clubs together with all 4 Aces." And then they won't Double, and then you also can not Re-Double. So maybe you should start by opening **1C**! If you hold 13 Clubs, you hold  $4+3+2+1 = 10$  HCPs, so an Opponent and/or Partner are likely to bid. Then, once this happens, you can then boom out your **7C** bid, and perhaps get Doubled!

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, to play bridge effectively, you must be able to think from the perspectives of *both* Partner and the Opponents! That is very difficult!

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, that is true. Bridge is very difficult. You have to **think**!!! But this is also what makes bridge both challenging and fun!!!

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, I just vomited all over myself! But let's turn our attention now to different, albeit also unlikely hand, a hand that is (1) *ginormous* and (2) *2-suited*. Let's say you hold:

**S:** --     **H:** T 3     **D:** A K Q 8 5     **C:** A K J T 7 2  
This hand holds **17 HCPs**, but obviously will play quite well in a suit contract in a Minor! Plus the Hand

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<sup>2</sup> See "Relevant Probabilities for Bridge Players":

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/taverham/Probabilities.pdf>

holds first and second Round "control" in 3 of the 4 Suits! Let's now talk through various scenarios for bidding this hand.

### Opponents Open with a 1-Level Bid in a Major

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Let's say you hold this Hand, and *either* your RHO opens at the 1 Level in a Major, or your LHO opens 1 of a Major, the next 2 Players both Pass, and you are in the "balancing" position. What would you bid with this Hand?

**Esther:** Well, this is a natural situation in which you can bid "Unusual 2NT!"<sup>3</sup>, which is an "artificial" bid that DEMANDS that Partner bid Partner's "longest and strongest" Minor, unless there is interference. The "Unusual 2NT!" bid shows that you are 2-suited in the Minors with good Suit Quality Test ("SQT") Scores<sup>4</sup> for both your Minors.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, wouldn't this "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall be especially appealing if the Opponents opened 1S, since with your void in Spades Opponents holding Spades turns into a *plus* for you?

**Esther:** Well, yes. But this will be somewhat less important if the contract ends up being set in Partner's hand, and the Opponent who opened 1S ends up in the lead, because what that Opponent will lead is less predictable. If the Opponent sitting opposite to the other Opponent who bid 1S, then you know that a Spade lead is very, very likely. But if the Opponent who bid 1S is on lead, that Opponent still might try to take an Ace Spade winner early, while he can. But that Opponent also might reflect on the player showing a Hand 2-suited in the Minors, and might instead lead a Heart.

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<sup>3</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "**Convention #8: The 'Unusual 2NT!' Overcall Bid**". The *exclamation point* ("!") by the bid means that this bid is "artificial," and must be Alerted.

<sup>4</sup> Ron Klinger's **SQT Score** equals the number of cards you hold in the Suit, plus the number of Honors (including the Ten) that you hold in the Suit. Klinger suggests that as a General Rule you can safely bid up to a level equal to the **SQT Score** minus 6.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, if Partner had good suit quality and long Hearts and Spades, couldn't Partner either simply Pass your "Unusual 2**NT**!" bid, or bid 3**NT** rather than Partner's "longest and strongest" Minor suit?

**Esther:** Well, yes. But doing so is extremely dangerous!!! Partner certainly had better have multiple "stoppers" in the Opponent's bid Major! And one advantage to bidding the "longest and strongest" Minor even with few cards and maybe few points in response to Partner's 2**NT**! is that if the Minor contract crashes and burns you can always blame Partner, whereas if you Pass or bid 3**NT**, it's ALL on you, whatever the outcome!

**Bruce:** Well, are there any special considerations in playing the "Unusual 2**NT**!" Overcall Convention?

**Esther:** Well, yes. I do think that you and Partner *must* have a strict agreement that this bid might be made holding 7 of one Minor, and 6 of the other Minor! This means that Partner *must* bid Partner's "longest and strongest" Minor, even if Partner holds *very few* cards in Partner's "longest" Minor!

### **Partner Opens with a 1-Level Bid in a Major**

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Let's move on to the situation where you hold the aforementioned hand, and Partner opens the bidding by bidding at the 1-level in a Major.

**Esther:** Well, whether you are playing Standard American Yellow Card ("SAYC"), which is simple bridge without many bells and whistles, or "2 Over 1",<sup>5</sup> in either case you need to show one of your Minor suit holdings.

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<sup>5</sup> Esther very, very much likes the "2 Over 1" and the "Jacoby 2**NT**!" conventions, which are the very first 2 Conventions in the "Conventions Section" on the "Esther Bridge Lessons" website. Esther thinks that new players should begin playing these conventions *early*, because doing so will overcome one of the greatest challenges that confront newer players: You and Partner both knowing whether you do, or do not, have sufficient holdings to make a 3**NT**, a 4**H**, or a 4**S** contract!

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, when you are Responder once Partner opened either 1**H** or 1**S**, there is no *single* bid that you can make that shows that your Hand is 2-suited. Which of your 2 Minor suits do you think you should first show Partner?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, there are 2 General Principles that apply here:

1. When you hold strength and length in 2 suits, show the "longest and strongest" first.
2. When you hold 2 suits that are roughly equal in SQT Scores, first show the lowest-ranking Suit, and later show the second Suit, if it is then appropriate to do so.

For this hand, because these 2 Minors are roughly equal in suit quality, and you hold more Clubs than Diamonds, and Clubs is the lower-ranking suit, I would respond to Partner's opening bid by bidding 2**C**. I would later jump or jump-shift to show strength.

### **Partner Opens 1NT**

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, let's now say that you held the aforementioned Hand, and Partner opened the bidding by bidding 1**NT**.

**Esther:** Of course. Well, this is a natural situation in which you should execute a transfer-to-a-Minor bid by bidding 2**S!**. This is an "artificial," and thus alert-able, bid that different Partnerships play different ways. First, some Partnerships play this transfer such that when I respond 2**S!** to Partner's 1**NT** opening, opening Partner must then bid 2**C**, and if my long Minor is actually Diamonds, I then "correct" by bidding 2**D**. Second, other Partnerships play a 2**S!** response as a transfer *always* to Clubs, while a 3**C!** bid as *always* a transfer to Diamonds. This latter bidding system has the advantage of *always* setting the contract in the hand with the most HCPs, which the Opponents now will not see revealed in the Dummy, which is always advantageous.

**You are in Position to Yourself Open the Bidding**

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what if instead you held the aforementioned Hand, and you yourself were positioned to open the bidding?

**Esther:** Well, my Malodorous Misanthrope, for the previously discussed reasons, I would open 1**C**. If my Partner and I played "reverses,"<sup>6</sup> I would next "reverse" by bypassing Clubs and bidding 2**D**. Alternatively, I could "jump-shift" by both "shifting" and "jumping" an extra bidding level. These bids would both show my Hand as being 2-suited as well as quite strong!

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<sup>6</sup> Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons," see: "**Convention #15: 3 Ways to Show Extraordinary (More than Opening) Strength**".