

Esther Discusses the "Cappelletti Convention to Interfere with Opponents' 1NT Opening Bid"

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 "Cappelletti Convention to Interfere with Opponents' 1NT Opening Bid". 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, at the outset, before you explain the Cappelletti Convention used to make Overcall bids over Opponents' 1NT opening bids, would you mind reviewing the basic ideas of conventions that "interfere" with 1NT opening bids by Opponents?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, as we say in Spanish, "No problemo!" Although it is commonly said in duplicate bridge circles that "1NT is the hardest contract to make," in reality many more experienced players do not like to let Opponents play a 1NT contract, and try to find alternative suit contracts that can be made based on *long trump card holdings*, notwithstanding at least one Opponent holding quite a few HCPs and thus having opened 1NT, based on the all-important "Law of Total Tricks!"¹

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¹ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Lesson #6: Bidding the 'Law of Total Tricks' versus HCPs", and "Lesson 11: Esther Discusses another Board involving the 'Law of Total Tricks'".

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... First, I am not sure I believe this, but are you again *actually being nice to me*? And second, can you provide some examples of some conventions that players use to "interfere" with Opponents' 1NT bids?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hero*, certainly. The **first** such system is Bridge Wizard Marty Bergen's "Disturbing Opponents' No Trump", or "DONT", or "DON'T".² A **second** such convention is the convention called by many people "Cappelletti", which is the subject of our lesson here today. Armand Michael "Mike" Cappelletti was an American lawyer widely known in both bridge and poker circles, in addition to legal circles. The convention is also sometimes attributed to Fred Hamilton or John Pottage.³

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. Do you personally prefer one or the other of these two conventions?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I personally prefer Cappelletti, mainly because I do not like the use of the "artificial" DOUBLE within DONT/DON'T to show a 6+ Club card holding, and I love Cappelletti *instead* using the DOUBLE as instead showing both (1) a 1NT distribution and (2) HCPs. This DOUBLE is an *extremely* useful "artificial" bid that Responder at Responder's discretion can either leave "on" for Penalty, or instead use to then respond with "Demand" artificial bids including Stayman or Jacoby Transfers, so that the contract can be stolen at a 2-level usually in a Major.⁴

Bruce: OK, Esther, but could Partners play *both* DON'T and Cappelletti within a given single competition?

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Convention #17. Marty Bergen's 'Disturbing Opponents' No Trump".

³ A variation on Cappelletti is "Multi-Landy". See <https://www.pattayabridge.com/conventions/Cappelletti-or-MultiLandy.htm>, or "Multi-Landy (Woolsey)" on the bridgebum.com website. "Multi-Landy" is also sometimes called "Reverse Cappelletti", because the only difference between Cappelletti and "Multi-Landy" is that in "Multi-Landy" the meanings of the 2C and the 2D Overcall interfering bids are reversed in "Multi-Landy" versus Cappelletti.

⁴ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons", see: "Convention #14: 6 'Not-for-Penalty' Doubles".

Esther: Well, my *fortuitous friend*, yes, of course you could. For example, you might play one convention when you are Vulnerable, and the other system when you are not Vulnerable. But, more commonly Cappelletti might be favored when playing against Opponents who play "weak" 12-14 HCP **NT** openings, and DON'T when playing against Opponents who play "strong" 15-17/18 **NT** openings. But most *Advancing* players will simply prefer within a given competition to play only DON'T, or only Cappelletti.

Bruce: OK. Well, Esther, does anyone in *addition to you* like Cappelletti?

Esther: Well, of course, Bruce! There is a very popular, *excellent* bridge book titled, 25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know - 2nd Edition, Revised and Updated,⁵ by Barbara Seagram and Marc Smith, with additional material by David Bird. This book has sold more than 200,000 copies in English alone! But there is indeed a subsequent book, 25 More Bridge Conventions You Should Know,⁶ by Barbara Seagram and David Bird. Barbara ran one of the largest bridge schools in North America, and David Bird has written more than 125 bridge books, and has won the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year Award a record nine times. *And Chapter 1 in this later book is "Cappelletti Defense to 1NT"*. So there!

Bruce: OK, Esther. Is there any special terminology that we need to know in order to understand Cappelletti?

Esther: Yes. We need to know that Partner Overcalling Opponents' 1NT opening is called the "**Interferer**" (or "Intervenor"). The Interferer can sit either in the Direct position, and bids immediately after the Opponent who opens 1NT, or in the "balancing" position, sitting third following 2 Passes after the Opponents' 1NT opening bid. We also need to know

⁵ See: <https://www.baronbarclay.com/25-bridge-conventions-you-should-know-second-edition-revised-and-updated/>

⁶ See: <https://www.baronbarclay.com/25-more-conventions/>

that the Partner of the "Interferer" is called the "Advancer".

Bruce: OK, Esther. Now, we are finally ready. Please now teach us the Cappelletti Convention.

Esther: Sure! Here are **Interferer** Bids and **Advancer** Responses over Opponents' 1NT opening bid:

Interferer Bids DOUBLE

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I hold 15-17 HCPs, no void, no singleton, and no more than 1 doubleton. ALL NT conventions (i.e., Stayman, and Jacoby Transfers) are 'on', as if I was the opening bidder, and instead had myself bid 1NT."

Advancer is not obligated to remove the DOUBLE by bidding, as this is not strictly a "Take-Out"/**Demand** DOUBLE. Particularly if Opponents are Vulnerable, Advancer may feel that Interferer and Advancer will score better by setting "the most difficult bid in bridge", since they will score 200, 500, or 800 for setting Vulnerable Opponents, respectively, 1, 2, or 3 Tricks. Advancer knows Interferer's point count and general distribution, as well as knowing Advancer's own HCPs, and so Advancer is well-positioned to make the decision to try to set Opponents versus making a part-score contract.

Interferer Bids 2C!⁷

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I hold an unspecified 6-card suit, or an exceptionally strong 5-card suit, with a Ron Klinger 'SQT' Score of at least 8." The SQT Score is computed by adding together (1) the number of cards in the long suit plus (2) the number of honor cards, including the Ten, in the long suit. Typically you will make a contract set at the level of STQ Score minus 6.

Advancer bids 2D to say, "I hold either 6 Diamonds with a good SQT Score, or I hold fewer than 4 or 5 cards in another suit, with some HCPs. Please tell your longest suit by bidding at the lowest 'sufficient' level in that suit."

Alternatively, **Advancer** may bid a Major at the 2-level if **Advancer** holds 6+ cards in the Major along with a favorable SQT Score of at least 8.

⁷ A bid with an exclamation point means that the bid is "artificial," and must be **Alerted** to the Opponents.

Interferer Bids 2D!

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I am 2-suited in the Majors and hold 5-5, 5-4, or 4-5 in the Majors. Both my Majors holdings have decent **SQT** Scores of at least 7. Please bid you longest Major at the lowest 'sufficient' level in that suit."

Interferer Bids 2H!

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I am **2-suited**. I hold 5+ Hearts, with a decent **SQT** Score of at least 7 or 8, and 4+ cards in an undisclosed Minor with a reasonable **SQT** Score. If you can tolerate my bid with at least some support, PASS. If you cannot tolerate my Heart bid, bid **2NT**, demanding that I bid my Minor suit."

Interferer Bids 2S!

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I am **2-suited**. I hold 5 Spades, with a decent **SQT** Score of at least 7 or 8, and 4+ cards in an undisclosed Minor with a reasonable **SQT** Score. If you can tolerate my bid with at least some support, PASS. If you cannot tolerate my Spade bid, bid **2NT**, demanding that I bid my Minor suit."

Interferer Bids 2NT!

Interferer is saying, "Partner, I am **2-suited**. I am 5-5, 5-4, or 4-5 in the **Minors** with **SQT** Scores of at least 7 or 8 in both Minors. I demand that you respond by bidding your 'longest and strongest' Minor."