

Esther Discusses Some "Cardinal Bridge Principles" that can Help You as Declarer

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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 some "**Bridge Principles**" that can help you **as Declarer**. Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking time to be with us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to NEVER call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Instead, call me Esther! I am a very *warm, caring, friendly* person, and prefer to be casual and friendly, my malodorous muffinhead!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Esther. So, please now illucidate some of your important Bridge Principles that can help Declarers.

Esther: Well, of course, my malodorous misanthrope. **First**, knowing patterns of card split probabilities is very, very important. I have elaborated these in previous lessons, all available on the "Esther Bridge Lessons" website. However, I will remind you that split probabilities are quite different when there is an odd-numbered of suit cards out *versus* an even number of suit cards being out. Also, the probabilities of voids and singletons get *progressively smaller* as the number of suit cards out *increases*. So, study these concepts. You do not have to memorize probabilities, such as the probabilities of dropping a missing King,

but you do need to remember the *general patterns* of these probabilities.

Bruce: Well, OK. Anything else?

Esther: Well, **second**, my twittering twit, it is important to always remember that **you do not increase the number of tricks you will take by trumping in your hand as Declarer!** Declarer's hand presumably has as many trump, or hopefully more, than Dummy's hand. Indeed, it is more favorable, for example, when holding 8 cards in Declarer's hand and Dummy, to have an 8-0 split, and often least favorable to hold a 4-4 split (unless both Dummy and Declarer hold voids or singletons in *different* suits). This means that Declarer's long trump are useful for drawing trump. But the only real utility of trumping from Declarer's hand is as a *vehicle for transportation*. **Trumping in Dummy, however, is an entirely different matter.** If it is early in play, when it is less likely that Opponents have created new voids and hold trump, it can be very useful to exploit or create voids in Dummy, and then trump from Dummy, prior to drawing some or all trump. This means that, once you draw trump, you may be spending only 1 trump card to draw 2 of Opponents' trump rather than 2 of your trump for each trick in which you draw trump.

Bruce: Anything else?

Esther: Well, **third**, when there is 1 remaining trump card out, especially when Declarer and Dummy both hold trump, when the remaining trump card held by an Opponent is the highest trump card out, do not draw trump. And, of course, in this case it is especially important to try to keep the lead away from the "Dangerous" Opponent who you think holds the high trump card, based on what trump cards that Opponent played as you initially began drawing trump, because that Opponent will surely (and wisely) draw your trump cards once that Opponent has the lead. The exception is if you hold a long suit you wish to run, in which case you may want to play your trump loser to force

out the last trump, so that you can then run that long suit! Of course, one way to draw Opponent's last high trump is to keep playing the long suit until the Opponent finally uses the high trump card. That way you are killing the missing trump card without spending trump cards from either Dummy or Declarer's hands.

Bruce: OK, more?

Esther: Well, yes. A couple of things about playing **NT** contracts as Declarer. So, **fourth**, when playing **NT** contracts with either Dummy or Declarer holding a long suit, even if the cards in the long suit are quite small, ATTACK that suit early, and often, to "promote" even very small cards into sure winners. Be sure to maintain "transportation" to the hand holding the long suit! And, **fifth**, when Opponents suss out the suit that is your weakness, and lead into it, do not use your one stopper early, unless your failure to do so will result in Opponents absolutely killing you before you can take your numerous winners. Use the "Rule of 7," which says, "Duck for the number of Rounds equaling the number of cards in the suit you hold minus 7." This will actually result in a more favorable outcome for you as Declarer.

Bruce: And?

Esther: Well, **sixth**, when a Line of Play is unlikely to be successful, even if it is a very unlikely Line of Play, if that is the only Line of Play that can result in your making your contract, then that is the Line of Play that you **must** use. For example, if you are missing K,x,x,x of trump, and you can only make your contract by trying to drop the King by leading the Ace, then that is what you must do, no matter how unlikely this Line of Play is to be successful.

Bruce: OK. What next?

Esther: Well, **seventh**, be wary of using a finesse (unless a successful finesse is the only way you can make your contract). The probability of a finesse, assuming

Opponents have only PASSED, is 50-50, which ain't very favorable odds. If an Opponent has bid a suit, then finesse through that Opponent, because that Opponent has shown more points than the other Opponent, and especially finesse through an Opponent bidding a suit if the finesse is in the bid suit! And remember, a finesse is much more attractive when you hold "touching honors." For example, when Dummy holds A,Q,x, and you hold J,x,x,x, even if you finesse towards Dummy's Queen, even if you lose that trick, you have still "promoted" your Jack!

Bruce: OK. Is that it?

Esther: Well, **eighth**, if there are only a few tricks left to play, and you hold a sure loser, do not play your sure loser until the very last trick. Bridge is about giving your Opponents *every opportunity to make mistakes!* For example, let's say you hold the 3 remaining trump, and the Queen of Hearts, and one of the Opponents holds the King of Hearts. Play the 3 last trump, and only then the losing Queen of Hearts, in the hope that the Opponent will slough the King of Hearts winner before the last trick.