

"Wisely Using 'Touching Honors' During Play as Declarer, and While Playing on Defense and Holding Losing 'Touching Honors'"

DONKEY from the Movie with Shr*k & Fi*na¹

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Esther: This is the **61st** Lesson posted to the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" website. I am exhausted from writing all these Lessons! Therefore, I have gone on holidays! My very able, fellow Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), **DONKEY from the Movie with Shr*k & Fi*na**, will instead present the current Lesson!

Some of DONKEY's Most Famous Sayings

"Me! Me! Oh, oh, Pick Me! Oh, I know! I know! Me!"

"In the morning, I'm making waffles!"

"I've got a dragon here, and I'm not afraid to use it!"

"I can't feel my toes! Hey, I don't have any toes!"



DONKEY from the Movie with Shr*k & Fi*na, like Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, James Bond, and Walt Disney, and other celebrities featured in the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", also is an ACBL Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints)! **DONKEY** says, "'Touching Honors' are very powerful, and very important in Bridge!"

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¹ **DONKEY** is actually a not real, fictitious character! This "**Esther Bridge Lesson**" was actually written by Bruce Thompson.

Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us **DONKEY from the Movie with Shr*k & Fi*na**, a Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us

through "**Wisely Using 'Touching Honors' During Play as Declarer, and While Playing on Defense and Holding Losing 'Touching Honors'.**" DONKEY, thanks for taking the time to be with us today!

DONKEY: "Me! Me! Oh, oh, Pick Me! Oh, I know! I know! Me!"

Wisely Using 'Touching Honors' During Play as Declarer

Bruce: Errr, well, OK, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean DONKEY. Well, in any case, first let's talk about wisely using "touching Honors" during play **when you are Declarer**. Let's say the bidding goes:

RHO	YOU	LHO	Partner
1 H	1 S	PASS	3 S
PASS	4 S	PASS	PASS
PASS			

You hold: S: J,T,9,6,2. Dummy holds: S: A,7,4. You as Declarer take the first Trick in Diamonds. You are now "on lead". You would like to begin drawing Trump. *What Trump card should you lead from Declarer's Hand?*

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, let's think initially about what you know. **First**, you know that you are missing 5 Trump Spades. That is an Odd number. This means that a 3-2 "split" is much more likely than a 4-1 "split", and a 5-0 "split" is very unlikely, albeit certainly possible.² **Second**, you know that you are missing the Trump King and Queen. **Third**, you know that your RHO is more likely than your LHO to hold Honors, because your RHO as Dealer opened the bidding with a 1**H** bid. So the missing Trump Spade King, or Queen, or both, are more likely to be to your Right!

² Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see the "**Probabilities Section**". With an **Odd** number of 5 Trump cards out, the "split" probabilities are 3-2: **67.8%**, 4-1: **28.3%**, and 5-0: **3.9%**. But with an **Even** number of Trump cards out, such as 4, the Opponents' Trump "split" is either 2-2, 3-1, or 4-0, with the 2-2 and 3-1 "splits" being about *roughly equally likely* (3-1: **49.7%**; 2-2: **40.7%**; 4-0: **9.5%**).

Bruce: Oh my goodness, DONKEY, what does it all mean? I know that it is a **CARDINAL PRINCIPLE** to lead "Low to High", except when you have both almost all the cards and all the Top Honors. So, you should lead toward Dummy's Trump Ace. But what card???

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, neither the Trump Spade King or Queen is likely to be a singleton held by your RHO. And if your LHO holds their Trump King or Queen, your LHO is likely to "duck" on the first Trump Trick when you lead toward Dummy's Ace. Because I think that RHO holds one or both missing Honors, I might lead the 9 of Spades, and if LHO plays one of the missing Honors, "cover" with the Ace, and otherwise "duck" on the Dummy in the hope that either (1) my RHO does not hold either of the 2 missing Honors, and I can win the Trick with the lowly 9, or (2) at least I will drop a missing Trump Honor, but also "promote" the remaining Trump Honors that I hold. My hope is that if LHO holds a missing Trump Honor, that Opponent will "duck" thinking that (1) he doesn't want to waste a Trump Honor on a lowly 9, and (2) will fear that his Trump Honor will get "killed" by Dummy's Ace. Essentially, I want to drop 2 Trump Spades on Trump Trick #1 to *restrict the remaining options* that Opponents have in playing the remaining Trump cards, such that when I *later* play Dummy's Trump Ace I can then knock out one or both missing Trump Honors!

Wisely Using "Touching Honors" While Playing on Defense and Holding Losing "Touching Honors"

Bruce: OK, DONKEY. Let's change the situation to talk about you playing with "touching Honors" while **playing on Defense**. Both you and Partner PASSEd at every turn within the auction, and Opponents only made **NT** bids, and are now playing a **3NT** contract. J,T,9 of Diamonds. *What should you play on the Declarer's King of Diamonds?*

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, pretty much every newer player will always play his lowest card on a Trick that he will inevitably lose. *But is that really the best way to play???* Your J,T,9 of Diamonds each have exactly equal utility!!! So why don't you **always drop you highest losing "touching Honor" on a Trick you will lose?**

Bruce: But, DONKEY, *why* should I play my highest losing "touching Honor" rather than my lowest losing "touching Honor" on a losing Trick? What difference, if any, does it make???

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, there are a couple of reasons to **always drop you highest "touching Honor" on a Trick you will lose.** First, it simply may confuse the Declarer, and a confused Declarer is always potentially a good thing for the Opponents.³ Second, it is harder for Declarer to remember the lower intermediate cards in a Suit, and playing higher "touching Honors" may empower the Declarer to forget that lower intermediate cards in the Suit may now have been "promoted" into winners! Third, playing your highest "touching Honors" on a Trick you will lose may make Declarer playing a Suit contract fear that you may now be able to Trump that Suit, and so the Declarer might switch Suits, and not take all his winners in the Suit, at least not immediately!

Lagniappe: Voluntarily Playing Your Honors on Losing Tricks that Opponents Will Win

Bruce: OK, DONKEY. I know that "lagniappe" means "a little something extra," and is a commonly-used phrase within New Orleans restaurants. And I know that there are magazines in both New Orleans and Mississippi that are even named Lagniappe! You said you wanted to offer a lagniappe comment. What is your "a little something extra" offering?

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, I wanted to say *a little something extra* about making discards on defense on losing Tricks. Let's say that Opponents are playing a Spade contract, but originally bid Hearts, and Declarer leads the Heart Ace, and you believe also holds the Heart King, or Declarer would not have led the Heart Ace. Or Dummy comes down holding the A,K of Hearts, and Declarer leads a low Heart towards Dummy. Let's say you hold Q,4 of Hearts.

³ Of course, you may *also* confuse your Partner by playing this way, and a confused Partner is not good. But Partner will adjust interpretations of your play if you explain your approach, and you reach a Partnership Agreement on the matter.

Bruce: OK, DONKEY. Shouldn't I always play my lowest card on a Trick I will lose?

DONKEY: Well, Bruce, why not dump your Heart Queen on Opponents' winning Ace? Maybe the Declarer will get spooked and shift to a Suit that is more favorable to you. When you have an opportunity to confuse your Opponents, and the opportunity can be exercised at no cost to you, why not give Opponents the opportunity to make a mistake? Everybody makes mistakes when playing bridge! But you win when you make fewer mistakes than your Opponents. And it can be helpful to create *more* opportunities for your Opponents to make improvident choices!