

Esther Discusses "Are 'Drop Dead' Bids Really Always 'Drop Dead'?"

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 "**Are 'Drop Dead' Bids Really Always 'Drop Dead'?**" 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.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other. Well, in any case, Esther, may we please discuss the bidding on the following Board, and whether you think that NORTH and SOUTH bid in the appropriate manner?

499er 2/29/24

Dealer: **WEST**

Vul: **N/S**

2. SOUTH could bid **2S**, but a **2S** bid as a Responder says, "Partner, I think we can make a **2S** contract, but no more!"
3. SOUTH could bid **3S**. This would be a "strong" response showing a "boatload" of Spades and numerous HCPs, is invitational to a Spade Game contract, and *may* show an interest in "slam". This would probably be what I would have bid if I was sitting SOUTH.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. On this Board SOUTH *actually* responded **4S**. What does this **4S** bid say to you, NORTH?

Esther: Well, Bruce, this **4S** "response" bid says to me:

1. "Partner, we are going to make a **4S** contract. I have a ton of Spades, enough to probably 'make' **4S**, maybe even if you do not have *any*."
2. I am not afraid of the Opponents' Hearts, even knowing Hearts will probably be lead at the start of play. I probably have a Heart void or singleton!
3. I also can take Tricks in the Minors!"

Bruce: OK. Well, if you were sitting NORTH in this auction, would you consider SOUTH's **4S** "response" bid a so-called "**drop dead**" bid?

Esther: Well, Bruce, in an auction such as:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	1NT	PASS	3NT

I would consider SOUTH's **3NT** "response" a "drop dead" bid, **because by opening 1NT NORTH has "limited" his Hand.**

NORTH's bid says, with considerable *precision*, "Partner, I hold (1) 15-18 HCPs, (2) no void, (3) no singleton, and (4) no more than 1 doubleton, but I may hold a 5-card Major."

However, in the auction we are discussing, NORTH has not "limited" his Hand. In this auction SOUTH knows that NORTH holds "opening" HCPs, or at least meets the requirements of Marty Bergen's "**Rule of 20**". But beyond that, SOUTH *actually* knows *very little* about NORTH's holdings, and NORTH knows that SOUTH's knowledge is quite incomplete!

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. How then should NORTH interpret SOUTH's **4S** bid?

Esther: Well, Bruce, NORTH should think about both (1) what SOUTH's "response" bid of 4**S** shows, and (2) what SOUTH knows about NORTH's Hand, and what SOUTH does not yet know about NORTH's Hand. SOUTH's response of 4**S** shows "long" Spades, probably either 7 or 8 Spade Trump cards, and probably with "top" Spade Honors, likely including the Spade A,K, or the Spade K,Q. But what NORTH needs to think more about is what NORTH has not yet shown SOUTH: NORTH has not yet "shown" (1) first-Round control in all "side" Suits, (2) **2** of SOUTH's "long" bid Spades, and (3) **17** HCPs!

Bruce: Well, OK, Esther. If in this auction SOUTH's 4**S** "response" bid is not "drop dead", what should NORTH bid after SOUTH bids 4**S**?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I think that NORTH should then bid 4**NT** "asking" SOUTH for "key" cards. It is very important that in this auction NORTH **knows** that SOUTH's response to NORTH's query will be definitively clear, because NORTH (1) does not hold either the Ace or King of Spades, but (2) NORTH holds all 3 "side" Suit Aces. In this case SOUTH will respond definitively showing the Spade A,K holding, NORTH will then appropriately set the final contract at 6**S**!