

Esther Discusses an Interesting Board Involving a *Possible Preempt Open* and *Whether to Open with a Game Bid*

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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 about an Interesting Board involving ***a possible preempt open and whether to open with a game bid.*** Esther, 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, ever** call me Esther! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen!

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, in any case, thank you for talking to us today. Here is the Board that I would like to ask you about today:

Board #9

Knoxville 299er 9/23/22

Dealer: NORTH

Vul: **E/W**

NORTH (6)

S: K T 7 6 4 3 2

H: 8 4

D: Q 9

C: J 6

WEST (9)

S: A J 9 8

H: 6

D: T 8 6 2

C: A T 9 5

EAST (9)

S: 5

H: A

D: K 7 5 4 3

C: Q 8 7 4 3 2

SOUTH (16)

S: Q

H: K Q J T 9 7 5 3 2

D: A J

C: K

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, why don't we begin by talking about NORTH's opening bid? NORTH holds (1) a weak hand, and (2) 7 Spades with 1 Honor. Do you think that NORTH should open by bidding **2S** or **3S**?

Esther: Well, my dandruff-ridden dufus, this is indeed a somewhat challenging bidding decision! NORTH holds 7 Spades, but not strong Spades. Sometimes when I hold 7 cards in a Major, but not many top honors, I will open 2 rather than 3. But **definitely not** on this hand! This hand would be more suitable for a preempt bid if NORTH had a void or singleton to go along with holding 7 Spades. More importantly, when we bid, we always want to be able to "limit" our hand to the *greatest extent possible*, so that Partner receives as much as is possible the *most specific, precise information* regarding both card count/distribution, and points, as possible. Whenever I make a preempt bid, I want Partner to **always** be assured that I hold either (1) 2 of the top 3, or (2) 3 of the top 5 honors in my bid suit. This way, when Partner has a strong hand, and some additional trump cards, Partner then can make a more informed judgment about whether a **3NT** or other

game contract is makeable. This is **absolutely essential** in my view! Do not make a preempt bid just because you hold 6 cards with an Ace!!! Doing so might help you on defense by screwing up Opponents' bidding, but it will kill you on offense!

Bruce: OK. So let's pretend that NORTH opened 2S. Sitting EAST, what would you bid?

Esther: Well, my simpering simpleton, EAST has only 9 HCPs. But East holds not 1, but 2, singletons, 1 of which is an Ace (!), and is 6-5 in the Minors! (I would love my hand even more if my singleton Ace was in Opponent's bid suit, Spades, especially since I can count on SOUTH leading toward my Ace a Spade at SOUTH's first opportunity.) So, I would consider bidding "Unusual 2NT" to show Partner that I am 2-suited in the Minors, and absent a Pass by SOUTH "demand" that WEST bid a Minor. I only have 9 HCPs, but remember that Yoda teaches, "Points are for No Trump!", and Marty Bergen teaches, through the titles of his books, Points Schmoints! and More Points Schmoints!

Bruce: OK. Well, let's assume instead that, as in the actual auction, both NORTH and EAST Passed. What would you open as SOUTH?

Esther: Well, let me say *first* that being dealt a 9-carded suit (not to mention 16 HCPs) is indeed *quite rare*, as made clear by "Relevant Percentages for Bridge Players," posted on the "<https://www.bridgewebs.com/taverham/>" website. If you play twice a week, and play 24 Boards in each game, you will be dealt, **on average:**

1. 6 cards in 1 suit 4 times a day,
2. 7 cards in 1 suit once a game, and
3. 8 cards in 1 suit once a month.

You will also be dealt a hand with 13 cards all in the same suit, on average, once every 60,000 years! But it could actually be tomorrow, or in 120,000 years. Nevertheless, be aware that weird things can happen in bridge. Indeed, *weird things happen in bridge quite regularly!* And you have to be ready when weird things happen.

Bruce: OK. The question remains: With this hand, what would you open as SOUTH?

Esther: Well, NORTH is a Passed hand. So, I am afraid that if a bid Hearts at a low level, NORTH might Pass, especially if WEST bids. And I can see 8 Heart winners, 1 Diamond winner, and maybe 1 Club winner, just in my hand alone. I don't want to miss what I feel is a sure game contract, and a contract that I am quite sure will eventually be found by all N/S pairs. Indeed, on this Board, all 18 N/S Pairs did bid 4H! I play that an Opener can open a game-level bid in a Major when one can count 8 sure tricks. So, my malodorous misanthrope, on this hand, I would open, 4H! BTW, this also has the advantage that E/W will be unable to communicate further information, such as a suggested lead, during the remainder of the auction.