

## Declarer's Focus on a "Line of Play" Plan

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 **Declarer's focus on developing a "Line of Play" plan.** 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. Here is today's interesting Board:

### Board #7

Friday P.M. "Shark" game, 9/11/20

Dealer: SOUTH

Vul: BOTH

		NORTH (8)	
		<b>S:</b> K Q 8 5 2	
		<b>H:</b> J T 9 3	
		<b>D:</b> Q 3 2	
		<b>C:</b> T	
WEST (9)			EAST (13)
<b>S:</b> T 4 3			<b>S:</b> A J 9 6
<b>H:</b> Q 8 6 4			<b>H:</b> A K 5 2
<b>D:</b>			<b>D:</b> J T 7 4
<b>C:</b> A Q J 8 4 3			<b>C:</b> 7
		SOUTH (10)	
		<b>S:</b> 7	
		<b>H:</b> 7	
		<b>D:</b> A K 9 8 6 5	
		<b>C:</b> K 9 6 5 2	

**Note.** Given Marty Bergin's "Rule of 20", SOUTH will almost certainly open 1**D**. The hand is too strong to open a weak 2**D**.

### Bidding

S: 1 <b>D</b>	W: DBL	N: 1 <b>S</b>	E: 2 <b>H</b>
S: 3 <b>C</b>	W: 3 <b>H</b>	N: PASS	E: 4 <b>H</b>
S: PASS	W: PASS	N: PASS	

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, first, obviously you agree with SOUTH's opening bid of 1**D**. Do you agree with SOUTH's second bid of 3**C**?

**Esther:** Yes, indeed, my simpering simpleton! SOUTH by making this bid tells Partner NORTH that SOUTH's hand is 2-suited in the Minors. NORTH can, if NORTH wishes, then support a Diamond bid, or Clubs.

**Bruce:** OK, given this actual bidding sequence, sitting SOUTH, what would you likely lead?

**Esther:** Well, given WEST's "take-out" Double, it is somewhat likely that WEST is void in Diamonds, or has a singleton. Given the bidding sequence, holding a singleton Heart, SOUTH expects (1) the Opponents to be 4-4 in Hearts, and (2) Partner to have 4 Heart trumps. I think then that SOUTH's best lead might be the 7 of Hearts.

**Bruce:** OK, once the Dummy comes down, what is YOUR PLAN for making your Contract? What is the FIRST QUESTION you must always ask yourself when you are planning your line of play?

## Esther's Comments

One of the first thing that players learn is that when playing as Declarer, you must draw your trump as soon as possible, when you are playing a suit contract. But that should not be your primary initial focus when creating your planned line of play as Declarer.

### Primary Focus as Declarer in a NT Contract

When playing as Declarer in a NT contract, once the lead has been made, and the Dummy comes down, first count your

**\*\*sure\*\* WINNERS** (e.g., top honors, honors sequences). Determine if your contract is certain to make. Determine whether the contract is at grave risk to Opponents running a suit if you lose the lead. Next, *count the number of cards you hold in each suit in both your hand and Dummy combined*. If you are not too worried about Opponents running a long suit, very often you want to immediately "attack" the suit in which you hold the most cards, so that you can "promote" winners in the long suit that you believe you can later access either (1) by leading low that suit to the other hand still containing length, and now winners, or (2) by leading to a different suit winner for transportation purposes. Even the lowest cards become "winners" once no other hands hold any more cards in a suit! If you have all suits stopped, it often may be advantageous to take losers early by leading the suit in which your partnership has the most cards. *The focus is on WINNERS.*

### **Primary Focus as Declarer in a Suit Contract**

When playing as Declarer in a Suit contract, first count your **LOSERS**. Your primary focus MUST be on **"dumping" losers**, either (1) by trumping your losers from the other hand (preferably Dummy), or (2) by sloughing losers on winners from the other hand. Trumping from Declarer's hand does not add "new" winners, but may be useful for transportation purposes!

For example, if Dummy hold K,x,x in trump, and Declarer holds A,Q,x,x,x in trump, you are likely going to take 5 tricks in trump. If you draw trump *early*, you will spend 6 trump cards to take 5 trump cards from Opponents. If instead you can trump from Dummy early, you will later be spending fewer trump from Dummy to capture Opponent's trump cards, because Dummy will have fewer trump cards left!

If you can draw trump and then dump your losers later, all to the good. Otherwise, it may be necessary to focus of dumping your losers before you focus on drawing trump, if that is what you must do to make your contract. *The focus is on LOSERS.*

### **Comments on this "Interesting" Board**

1. You could play this Board as Declarer repeatedly by printing several copies of the Board, and "crossing out" cards as you play through various lines of play. Probably a very good learning opportunity.

2. On this Board, it helps you to know that South holds Clubs, so you can run a Club finesse through South. This is called "listen to the auction."
3. Your BIG problem is Diamond losers. You can probably slough one on a high Club led from the Board, and trump others from the Board, if you do so before drawing trump.  
**Focus on dumping losers!**