

Esther Discusses Transfer to a Minor & Play of 3NT Thereafter

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 discuss bidding and play on a Board involving a 3NT bid after a 2S transfer to a Minor. 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 wanted you to discuss.

Board

Dealer: NORTH

Vul: E/W

	NORTH (17)	
	S: A 9 4	
	H: K Q T 5	
	D: 6 4 2	
	C: A K J	
WEST (8)		EAST (9)
S: Q 7 5 2		S: K J T
H: A J 6 3		H: 8 4 2
D: J		D: K T 8
C: T 9 7 4		C: Q 6 3 2
	SOUTH (6)	
	S: 8 6 3	
	H: 9 7	
	D: A Q 9 7 5 3	
	C: 8 5	

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Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1NT	PASS	2S	PASS
3C	PASS	3D	PASS
3NT	PASS	PASS	PASS

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, as might be expected, Dealer NORTH, holding a "flat" or "square" 3-4-3-3 hand with 17 HCPs, opened 1NT. EAST holding 9 HCPs PASSED. SOUTH, holding 2 of the top 3 Diamond honors, with 6 Diamonds, bid a transfer to a Minor, 2S, demanding that NORTH bid 3C, which SOUTH then "corrected" to 3D. My first question is, "Do you agree with SOUTH's transfer bid?"

Esther: Well, my Bobble-headed Bupkus, SOUTH showing SOUTH's length and honors in Diamonds does allow NORTH to bid 3NT, especially if NORTH holds that missing King of Diamonds, in which case 6 Diamond tricks are in the offing! Of course, with the N/S Partnership holding 23 HCPs N/S is likely to make 1NT. And NORTH must hold at least 2 Diamonds to bid 1NT, so SOUTH knows the Partnership must hold at least 8 Diamond cards. The "Law of Total Tricks" says that N/S can make at least a 2 Diamond contract. So, I think this transfer bid is reasonable, but a bit dicey. Making 1 or 2 in a 1NT contract will yield a Bridge Score of 90 or 120, while making a 3D contract will yield a Bridge Score of 110.

Bruce: Err, ok. Well, in this case, NORTH did bid 3NT, knowing that N/S actually held 9 of the 13 Diamonds, and that NORTH holds 3 Diamonds for repeated access to Dummy's Diamonds. Of course, NORTH would certainly have bid 3NT, if NORTH had held the King of Diamonds. Now let's talk about "lines of play," starting with WEST's lead. WEST's "longest and strongest" suit is Hearts, with WEST holding 4 Hearts to the Ace. However, given the bidding during the auction, NORTH is likely to hold the King and/or Queen of Hearts, so because WEST is sitting in front of the NORTH Dummy, WEST will be unable to "kill" NORTH's likely Heart King. But maybe EAST holds the King or the Queen of

Hearts! In any case, what about WEST leading the singleton Jack of Diamonds?

Esther: Well, my Simpering Simpleton, I think WEST leading the 2 of Spades might be WEST's best choice. But leading the Jack of Diamonds also might be reasonable. WEST knows that N/S holds the top Diamonds, so that Jack ain't gonna be taking any Trick. But leading the Jack of Diamonds might knock out one of the top Diamonds in SOUTH's hand. WEST's hope is that NORTH holds only 2 long Diamonds, and possibly the SOUTH Dummy also holds no side entries, so if E/W can take out SOUTH's top Diamonds, later NORTH can be denied transportation to further run those long Diamonds!

Bruce: Well, it looks like NORTH is going to lose 2 Spades, 1 Heart, 1 Diamond, and at least 1 Club, so the contract will go down -1. Does this mean that N/S bid incorrectly?

Esther: No, Bruce! Do not be a "Results Player"!!! A "Results Player" erroneously generalizes the results for 1 Board to all possible future somewhat similar Boards. The fact that this contract went down does not mean that the contract was bid incorrectly. N/S knew their bid was a bit dicey. They elected to take a reasonable but somewhat risky shot.

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there *anything else* that NORTH should have considered when setting the final contract at 3NT?

Esther: Well, yes!!! Whenever you are bidding, you must remember that you are not playing against cards, or against chairs! You are instead playing against the *specific* people sitting N/S in the actual room where you are playing. You must "play the room!" What do you think the N/S Pairs sitting in the room will bid on *this* Board? If these *specific* people are aggressive, they will bid this Board in the same way. And if you indeed do go down, so will the other aggressive N/S Pairs! Remember: It's called "duplicate" for a reason!

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, I actually have some examples of Top Boards I achieved when Partner *massively screwed up* various conventions. First, on one occasion Partner and I were playing the Bergen Limit Raises convention. Partner opened 1 of a Major. I responded 3**C**, which says, "Partner, I have 4 of your Major, and exactly 7 to 10 HCPs," and says absolutely nothing about my Club holdings!!! And my Partner PASSED my *entirely artificial* 3**C** response@\$!!\$? And we got a Top Board on this bid!!!! A "Results Player" would generalize from this that Passing Partner's *totally artificial* bids is a *good idea*??? Second, on another occasion Partner and I were playing the Jacoby 2**NT** convention. I opened 1**H**, and Partner responded 2**NT**, which in this convention says, "Partner, I have 4 cards in your Major, and an opening hand." I ended up bidding 6**H**! And Partner, in fact, held only 2 Heart cards!!! And I ended up making 6**H**, even though my RHO also held a Heart trump stack! We got a Top Board, because no other Pair sitting in our direction was stupid enough to bid 6**H** with so few Heart cards!!! Does this result mean that lying to your Partner about your trump card count is *really* the best way to play???? That's what a "Results Player" would take away from the results on these 2 Top Boards!