"More on Playing a 4H or 4S Contract as Declarer When Your Partnership Together Holds Only a 4-3 Trump '*Moysian Fit*'"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen[1]

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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 "**More on Playing a 4H or 4S Contract as Declarer When Your Partnership Together Holds Only a 4-3 Trump ('*Moysian*') 'Fit'**". Well, Esther, thank you for talking to 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, Est… err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, sorry about that. Well, at the outset why don't you tell us a little bit about the history of where the Declarer's 4-3 Trump "fit" being called a "**Moysian Fit**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Contemporary bridge players almost always search for an **8+** Trump card "fit" when setting a 4**H** or 4**S** contract. This has especially been the case since Larry Cohen in 1992 published his *hugely-influential* and *award-winning* bridge book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks!

But 40 or 50 years ago bridge players did not put such an extreme emphasis on setting 4**H** or 4**S** contracts *only* when

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[1] As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

Partners held an **8+** card Trump "fit". One of the prominent advocates for sometimes playing 4**H** or 4**S** contracts even when holding *only* a 4-3 Trump "fit" was **Alphonse "Sonny" Moyse** (1897 – 1973). Moyse was a celebrated bridge champion who for many years was publisher and editor of The Bridge World. Moyse was also the ghostwriter for more than 20 years for 2 of Ely Culbertson's bridge columns.

As Pam LaShelle, in an article posted on the Austin Bridge website, "The Moysian Fit",[2] noted:

> "Alphonse Moyse (1897-1973), genius bridge columnist, fabulous bridge player was a strong advocate of opening 4 card majors and even went so far as to advocate playing in a 4-3 fit. He wrote for over 20 years and wrote under the names of Josephine and Eli Culbertson in newspapers and bridge magazines. He thought that many times you could make a game contract in a 4-3 fit when no other game would make. Time has proved that he was right!"

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm… Well, would you talk about various reasons why you might end up playing a 4**H** or 4**S** contract as Declarer?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will certainly try to help you. How does one end up playing a "Moysian Fit"? Michael Berkowitz, in his September 3, 2019 article on the Larry Cohen Bridge website, "Moysian Fits",[3] humorously suggests, "How do we wind up in Moysian fit? I usually blame [P]artner."

But there are various reasons why one might end up playing a "**Moysian Fit**". For example, Partner holding A,K,Q,J or A,K,Q,T of a Major may have rationally (but somewhat dangerously) decided to open with a 1-level bid in the Major. As Marty Bergen argued in his monthly bridge column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin December, 2024 issue (p. 55):

> "I have always believed that any [S]uit headed by four honors should be treated as if it had an additional card."

Or Opponents may have opened with a "weak-2" bid, thus eating up bidding space and interfering with your Partnership's ability to communicate:

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[2] https://austinbridge.org/sbruce/lecture/Intermediate-Advanced%202203%20Moysian2.pdf

[3] **https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/moysian-fits**

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2**S**	**DOUBLE**	3**S**	4**H**
PASS	PASS	PASS	

Or, your Partnership may (1) have found a "fit" in a Minor, (2) have too few HCPs to "make" a 5-level Minor Game contract, and so the *only* plausible Game contract is in a Major while holding only **7** Trump cards.

But the most common situation in which you may find yourself playing a "**Moysian Fit**" occurs when your Partnership holds the preponderance of HCPs, but Opponents have shown a "long" Suit, thus rendering a 3**NT** bid *implausible*, leaving you absent an 8-card Major holding thus having *only* the option of playing a 4-Level Major contract with a 4-3 fit. But, indeed, **a 4H or 4S can "make" even with your Partnership holding only 7 Trump cards, assuming the Trump "split" turns out to be either 3-3 or 4-2.**

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there any special *advantage* for Partners to set a 4**H** or 4**S** contract when they hold a 4-3 "**Moysian Fit**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes indeed. Let's say you are siting N/S and hold a 4-3 "**Moysian Fit**". If you set a 4**H** or 4**S** contract many *other* of the N/S Pairs against whom you are competing may instead set 3**H** or 3**S** contracts and therefore your Bridge Score with its Game bonus included will certainly result in a *large* MatchPoint advantage versus many of the other N/S Pairs.

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm… Well, would you now talk us through playing an actual bridge Board in order to make this discussion of playing a 4**H** or 4**S** when holding a "**Moysian Fit**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will certainly try to help you. The example I will use here is from a bridge column written by **Richard Pavlicek.**

About **Richard Pavlicek**

Richard Pavlicek (1945-) has won **11** North American Bridge Championships, including a record-setting **3** straight wins in the Reisinger Board-a-Match Teams, 1982-84, and again in 1990. He won the 1973 inaugural Grand National Teams tournament and repeated a win there in 1997. He has written or co-authored several bridge books, including with co-author William S. Root

their 1981 book, Modern Bridge Conventions. From 1984 until 1990 Pavlicek was the Bridge Columnist for the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel. Esther particularly likes the Bridge Simulation Studies presented on his bridge website: **https://www.rpbridge.net/rpsi.htm** and his re-posts of his newspaper bridge columns: **https://www.rpbridge.net/rpco.htm**

The present "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson" is based on the 1/17/88 Pavlicek newspaper bridge column, "Moysian Fit Is Only Hope for Game", an *appropriate* title for a bridge lesson about playing a "**Moysian Fit**". This "Real Deal" was a Board played in the January, 1988 Central Florida Regional bridge tournament in Kissimmee, FL.

Dealer: **NORTH**
Vul: **BOTH**

NORTH (**12**)
S: K Q 7 2
H: A 9 5
D: 4 3
C: K T 7 4

WEST (**6**)
S: 9 6 5
H: Q T 4
D: K J 9 7 2
C: 6 3

EAST (**12**)
S: J T 4
H: J 7 3
D: A Q T 8 6
C: A 2

SOUTH (**10**)
S: A 8 3
H: K 8 6 2
D: 5
C: Q J 9 8 5

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1**C**	1**D**	**1H**	2**D**
2**H**	PASS	4**H**	PASS
PASS	PASS		

NORTH's **2nd** bid of 2**H** when holding only **3** Heart cards perhaps was informed by knowing that (1) E/W held "long" Diamond and himself holding only **2** Diamonds and expecting that SOUTH was likely very "short" in Diamonds and (2) himself holding the Heart Ace. In any case, this was the actual bidding on this "Real Deal". On Trick **#1** WEST led his Diamond 7 and EAST "cashed" his Diamond Ace.

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, OK. Once the NORTH Dummy was exposed what "losers" could Declarer SOUTH see?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I certainly want to help you. Well, as Larry Cohen emphasized in his excellent article, "Trump Suit Contracts—Step 1" (p. 47), published in the January, 2026 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin:

> **"The *key* to making the ['Line of Play'] plan is to calculate ['losers'] only from one side (the long-trump Hand)". (p. 47)** [emphases added]

Declarer SOUTH "lost" **1** Trick on Trick **#1**. SOUTH also sees **1** Spade "loser", **1** Club "loser", and N/S will possibly "lose" **2** Trump Heart Tricks.

So, SOUTH must play very *carefully* as is always the case when a Declarer is playing a "**Moysian Fit**". The challenge is that the Declarer controlling only **7** Trump Heart cards simply *cannot* afford to ruff very often.

Bruce: Errr, well… Err, I mean… Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, oh, my, goodness. Well, On Trick **#2** EAST led his Diamond Queen and Declarer SOUTH ruffed. On Trick **#3** Declarer SOUTH led a "low" Club and played the NORTH Dummy's Club King and EAST "won" with his Club Ace. Once Declarer SOUTH regains the lead should the Declarer then "cash" the Trump Heart A,K and then lead Trump Hearts a **3rd** time and "lose" this Trump Trick but hope that the E/W initial Trump Heart "split" was 3-3 and thus "drop" all of the E/W Trump Heart cards?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. No, Bruce, that "Line of Play" will be *disastrous*! A **3rd** Round of Trump Hearts will leave EAST or WEST on lead and they will then disastrously "cash" their Diamonds and ultimately "set" the SOUTH's 4**H** contract.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what should Declarer SOUTH do *instead* once he regains the lead?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. Once Declarer SOUTH regains the lead rather than "cash" the Trump Heart A,K and then lead a **3rd** Round of Trump Hearts SOUTH should **1st** lead a "low" Heart and then "duck" in other Hand he controls thus *early* conceding **1** Trump Heart Trick to E/W! As Pavlicek notes,

"South made the key play of *ducking* [conceding] a heart, after which he could win the rest of the tricks with any return. Nicely played."

After conceding a Heart Trick on Trick **#3** SOUTH can later upon regaining the lead then "cash" his Trump Heart A,K!

A "**Double Dummy Analysis**" ("**DDA**") using the "Bridge Solver" website:
https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload_from_chrome.htm
shows all the possible "makeable" contracts on this bridge Board for all **4** players:

	C	D	H	S	NT
N	**4**	**-**	**3**	**4**	**1**
S	**4**	**-**	**3**	**4**	**1**
E	**-**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**-**
W	**-**	**1**	**-**	**-**	**-**

Clearly Pavlicek was correct in his assertion that the *only* "makeable" game contract that N/S can play is 4**H** even though they hold *only* a 4-3 Trump "**Moysian Fit**"!



"For *considerably more detail* on Guidelines and Strategies for playing "**Moysian Fit**" contracts see "**Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #70**":
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/moysian.pdf