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**Bruce<sup>1</sup> (Not Esther) Discusses "The Drury and the Reverse Drury Bridge Conventions: As a PASSED Hand Showing Partner (1) Your Exact Trump Card Count in His Bid Major and (2) Your 10-12 HCPs"**

**Bruce Thompson**

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**Today's Interlocutors**



**Donkey,  
from the movie "Shrek"**



**Bruce Thompson**

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<sup>1</sup> 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](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf), Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! But Esther insisted on travelling for the holidays, so Bruce had to step in and *temporarily* assume her instruction burdens.

**Donkey:** Today, we are honored to have with us Dr. Bruce Thompson, a favorite bridge student of Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through "**The Drury and the Reverse Drury Bridge Conventions**". Dr. Thompson, thanks so much for taking the time to be with us today while Esther is on well-deserved holidays!

**Bruce:** D\*\*n it, Donkey! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Dr. Thompson! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Bruce, because I am a "*warm and caring*" person!

**Donkey:** Errr, well, sorry about that, Dr., ...err, I mean Bruce.

**Bruce:** Well, my *gracious giver*, don't worry too much about it! As you know, I am a very patient bridge teacher in addition to being "*warm and caring*"!

**Donkey:** Errr, well, Bruce... Ummm... Err... What conditions must be met for either of these 2 bridge conventions to be invoked?

**Bruce:** Well, my *handsome hero*, certainly I will try to help you. Here are some key points regarding *Drury* and *Reverse Drury*:

1. Both *Drury* and *Reverse Drury* are only bid when 1 Partner sitting **3<sup>rd</sup>** or **4<sup>th</sup>** within the auction opens either **1H** or **1S** and Partner sitting **1<sup>st</sup>** or **2<sup>nd</sup>** PASSEd,
2. The Opponent sitting LHO to the Opener must PASS,
3. The Responder must hold **10-12** HCPs (but of course holds *fewer than 13* HCPs), and
4. The Responder must hold **3+** cards in the Opener's bid Major.<sup>2</sup>

**Donkey:** Errr, well, Bruce... Ummm... Err... Would you talk us through the ideas underlying the *Drury* and the *Reverse Drury* bridge conventions?

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<sup>2</sup> An *excellent* treatment of the various flavors of Drury is David Lindop's article, "What's Standard?", from the Jan/Feb, 2005 issue of Better Bridge:  
<https://www.betterbridge.com/misc/StandardArticles/Standard200501.pdf>

**Bruce:** Well, Donkey, the original Drury convention was invented by Douglas Drury (1914 – 1967). Drury invented his convention to help deal with his long-time Partner, Eric Murray, and Murray's tendency to open very "light" sitting in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Seat following PASSes by all previous bidders in the auction. For many decades it has been standard bridge practice that Partner sitting 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> following PASSes can open respectively with only 11 or 10 HCPs. Doing so creates 2 problems:

- “1. a simple change of [S]uit [by the PASSed Responder sitting 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>] is no longer a forcing [for 1 Round] bid,
2. [R]esponding [P]artner, already a passed [H]and, is unsure if opening [P]artner [sitting 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>] has a normal or [a] light opening, and any jump could get the [P]artnership too high.

The traditional way to show good support for [O]pener's [1-level Major] [S]uit is [for Responder] to jump to the three-level (e.g., 1♥ - 3♥). But if [P]artner has opened light, this may result in an overly ambitious contract, despite the good support.”<sup>3</sup>

**Donkey:** Errr, well, Dr. Thompson, err, I mean Bruce. How does the PASSed player now as Responder to the Partner opening 1H or 1S describe his Hand?

**Bruce:** Well, Donkey, the “original” Drury Convention was described by Eric Murray in a January, 1957 article, “The Drury Two Clubs (Another Convention)” in The Bridge World. In the “original” Drury convention the PASSed Responder **always** bids 2C!<sup>4</sup> to show 3+ cards in Partner's bid Major and (2) 10–12 HCPs.

But in recent decades bridge players place a heavy emphasis on Trump card counts when setting *Suit contracts*, and not so much on HCPs.<sup>5</sup> This has particularly been the

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<sup>3</sup> From the Wikipedia article, “Drury Convention”:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drury\\_convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drury_convention)

<sup>4</sup> “!” means “Alert!, this is an ‘artificial’ bid not showing the Suit I actually bid.”

<sup>5</sup> According to the “Law of Total Tricks” a contract can *usually* be made if the contract is set no higher than the number of Trump cards the Partnership holds – 6. See “Lagniappe: Esther

case ever since Larry Cohen published his award-winning 1992 book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks, and Marty Bergen published his award-winning 1996 book, Points Schmoints!.<sup>6</sup> So communicating exact card counts has become very important! Thus, in “modern” Drury most players by Partnership Agreement play a 2**C!** bid by Responder in Drury says, “Partner, I hold (1) **10-12** HCPs and (2) exactly **3** cards in your bid Major.” And a 2**D!** bid by Responder in Drury says, “Partner, I hold (1) **10-12** HCPs and (2) exactly **4** cards in your bid Major.”

**Donkey:** Errr, well, Bruce... Could you show us a Board in which the *advantages* of playing Drury are highlighted? If I sitting 1<sup>st</sup> as a PASSEd Hand, the Opponents are both silent at each turn in the auction, and I hold **3+** Hearts and Partner sitting 3<sup>rd</sup> opens **1H**, why can't I simply bid **2H** if I hold (1) **3+** Hearts and (2) **10-12** HCPs or **3H** if I hold (1) **4+** Hearts and (2) I am at the “top” of my bid (e.g., **12** HCPs)?

**Bruce:** Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I would be happy to help you! The following Board<sup>7</sup> is from Mike Lawrence's excellent article, “A Drury Hand”, in the January, 2025 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin (p. 54):

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**Discusses (1) Does the ‘Law of Total Tricks’ (‘LOTT’) Really Work, and (2) Is the ‘LOTT’ Magic?:**

[https://www.esther-bridge.com/pdf/LOTT\\_bad.pdf](https://www.esther-bridge.com/pdf/LOTT_bad.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Both Cohen's and Bergen's books advocated on behalf of the “**Law of Total Tricks**” when bidding Suit contracts, and *both* books won the yearly “Best Bridge Book Award” of the American Bridge Teacher's Association.

<sup>7</sup> The ideas in this article are drawn from Mike Lawrence's article, but Esther has modified some of the cards in the Hands.

NORTH (11)

**S:** Q T 8 4

**H:** A Q T

**D:** K 7 3

**C:** T 6 4

SOUTH (11)

**S:** A K J 9

**H:** K 9

**D:** 9 8 2

**C:** 7 5 3 2

Bidding

NORTH  
PASS

EAST  
PASS

SOUTH  
???

WEST

**Donkey:** Well, Bruce, what should SOUTH bid sitting 3<sup>rd</sup> in the auction after 2 PASSes?

**Bruce:** Well, my *fortuitous friend*, SOUTH holds **11** HCPs, which means he can open even though he also does **not** meet the requirements of the Bergen's "**Rule of 20**". SOUTH should open **1S**. SOUTH has insufficient length to open any other Suit, and SOUTH certainly has too few HCPs to open **1NT**.

Some readers may object that SOUTH is lying because he is falsely showing **5+** Spade cards. But his Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**" is (1) **4** cards + **3** Honors (including the Ten if SOUTH had held the Ten) = 4 + 3 = **7**. A "**SQT Score**" of **7** will support a bid up to the 7 - 6 = **1** level.

And SOUTH holds **3** of the top **4** Spade Honors. As Marty Bergen wrote in his January, 2025 ACBL Bulletin article, "Improve Your Bidding Judgment—Part 44",

**"As I have *repeatedly* written and stated, 'Any [S]uit headed by four [H]onors should be treated as if it had an additional card...'"** (p. 59) [Italics added]

A,K,J,9 *ain't* A,K,Q,J, but it's pretty close!

SOUTH opening **1S** is by far the most accurate and descriptive bid available on this Hand. Any other bid would be *unreasonable*. And SOUTH's **1S** opening bid also has the advantages of (1) being "*lead-directing*" if the final contract is set by E/W, and (2) forces Opponents higher if they decide they wish to enter the auction.

**Donkey:** Well, Bruce, on this Hand NORTH of course bid **2D!** Drury. This bid is "artificial", not showing Diamonds, instead shows (1) **4** Spades and (2) **10-12** HCPs, and so **must** be Alerted (!). What should SOUTH then bid at his **2nd** turn within the auction?

**Bruce:** Well, my *sentimental sensei*, once NORTH bids **2D!** Drury on this Hand what the SOUTH Opener now knows that NORTH holds (1) **10-12** HCPs and (2) exactly **4** Spades, Because sitting **3<sup>rd</sup>** SOUTH opened with only **11** HCPs (and holding only **4** Spade cards) SOUTH should then respond **2S** as "drop dead" or "signoff". As Lawrence put it, "If you were North and bid Drury with your [H]and, you should respect [P]artner's **2♠** signoff. Partner knows you have 10 or more points, but he has said he isn't interested in going higher."

**Donkey:** Well, Bruce, is there ever any situation in which Responder who initially bid Drury **2D!** should reject the "signoff" and bid on to **3S**?

**Bruce:** Well, Donkey, let's say that Responder NORTH held:

NORTH (**10**)  
**S:** Q T 8 7 4  
**H:** 7 6  
**D:** A K J 7  
**C:** T 6

On this Hand after SOUTH bids **2S** "drop dead" NORTH can then show (1) an "extra" Spade and (2) a (Diamond) "side features" and a *favorable distribution* by then bidding **3S**.

**Donkey:** Well, Bruce, what is "**Reverse Drury**"?

**Bruce:** Well, Donkey, in the *original* versions of Drury the Responder always bid **2C!** to show (1) **10-12** HCPs and (2) **3+** cards in the bid Major, and if the Opener opened "light" Opener then showed this by bidding **2D!** at his **2<sup>nd</sup>** turn in the auction. But in "modern" versions of Drury some Partnerships play such that if Responder bids **2C!** showing exactly **3** cards in the bid Major:

1. Opener holding nothing "extra" then rebids his originally Major as "signoff" or "drop dead",
2. Opener at his **2<sup>nd</sup>** turn in the auction if the Responder bid **2C!** then bids **2D!** to show that he did not open

“light”, but holds nothing “extra” (e.g., no “side Suit features” or a void or singleton),<sup>8</sup>

3. Opener at his **2<sup>nd</sup>** turn bids a new Suit or **NT** to show an interest in Game or Slam, or
4. Opener at his **2<sup>nd</sup>** turn bids Game if he has enough for Game but no interest in Slam.

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<sup>8</sup> This **2D!** bid showing “strength” and not a “light” opening is the unique component of *Reverse Drury* as against conventional *Drury*.