

Esther Discusses "Advancer's Responses to Partner's 'Takeout' /Demand Double, and As Declarer Playing a Long Side Suit with Numerous 'Touching Honors' "

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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 "**Advancer's Responses to Partner's 'Takeout' /Demand Double, and As Declarer Playing a Long Side Suit with Numerous 'Touching Honors' "**. Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking the 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 Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Esther!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other. Well, in any case, Esther, let's discuss your thought process as Declarer SOUTH when playing the following Hands:

NORTH (13)

S: A K 9 5

H: J T 9 7

D: J T 9

C: A 7

SOUTH (14)

S: Q J 8 2

H: Q 5 4

D: A Q 3

C: Q J 7

Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1 C	DBL	PASS	2 C!
PASS	2 H	PASS	2 S
PASS	3 S	PASS	3 NT
PASS	4 S	PASS	PASS
PASS			

Bidding

Esther: Well, Bruce, I agree with NORTH's DOUBLE. NORTH holds 13 HCPs, and 4 cards in both Majors. If NORTH held 5 cards in either Major, NORTH should instead bid that Major. NORTH does not hold a void or a singleton in WEST's bid Clubs, but does hold only 2 Clubs and, as required, holds 3+ cards in all unbid Suits. And NORTH holding the Ace of Clubs is a plus, because EAST or WEST will almost certainly lead a Club, and Declarer can take control after the first Trick, and begin to draw Trump, if that appears appropriate.

Bruce: OK. So, after EAST PASSES, do you agree with SOUTH's bid as Responder of 2**C!**? *What the heck does this mean???* SOUTH bid the Opponent's Suit!!!!

Esther: Well, Bruce, NORTH's DOUBLE is a "demand" bid, and SOUTH must bid as long as EAST PASSES, *unless* SOUTH holds a boatload of Clubs, and E/W are Vulnerable, and SOUTH knows that N/S will make a TON of Matchpoints on this Board by setting the Opponents' 1**C** opening bid. But that would be a dangerous PASS, because a 1**C** contract is fairly easy to make, and NORTH will probably be quite angry with SOUTH if N/S do not set the 1**C** Doubled E/W contract!

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. *But what the heck does SOUTH's 2C! bid mean???*

Esther: Well, anytime you or Partner bids an Opponent's bid Suit, this is called a "**Cue Bid**" (or "Cuebid"). A fairly well-known example is "**Michaels Cue Bid**",¹ developed by Michael Michaels. For example, in the bidding sequence, NORTH: 1C, EAST: 2C!, EAST's "Michaels Cue Bid" shows a Hand that is 2-Suited in the Majors. The present "Cue Bid" by SOUTH on this Board is a *different* Cue Bid that takes on a *special* meaning when used in responding to Partner's "Takeout"/Demand Double.

Bruce: And what is that special meaning here, Esther?

Esther: Well, Bruce, let me respond by re-presenting a section from the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" "**Convention #14: 6 Non-for-Penalty Doubles**". Here is the 7th out of the 7 "Advancer" Response Options When Partner Performs a "Takeout"/Demand Double:

7. 15+ HCPs: A "Cue Bid" of the Opponent's bid Suit shows a "giant" Hand. Opener then bids his "longest and strongest" Suit.

Bruce: Well, thank you for that, Esther! It sounds like that "Esther Bridge Lessons" may be very useful?

Esther: Well, Bruce, these lessons are, after all, *named after me*, and I'm sure all of them are important and spectacular! But, I am particularly fond of that lesson!

Bruce: Well, point well taken, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. What do you think of the rest of this bidding sequence?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I agree that:

1. NORTH should show his 4 Hearts and bid "up the line", even though he also holds 4 Spades, and the Spades have a better Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test**" ("**SQT**") **Score**.
2. I agree that SOUTH should then show his 4 Spades.

¹ Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**", see: "**Convention #12: Five (5) Overcall Two-Suited Distribution Cuebid Systems, Along with a Little of 'Support Cuebids'**".

3. I agree that NORTH should then support SOUTH's Spades, even though NORTH doesn't know if SOUTH has 4 or 5 Spades.
4. I agree with SOUTH's bid of **3NT**, saying, "Partner, I only have 4 Spades, and a 'flat' Hand, but we can play either **3NT** or **4S**. You choose."

Whenever you can play either **3NT** versus **4H** or **4S**, play the Suit contract in the Major. You will *almost always* get a higher Bridge Score, more MatchPoints, and a better Percentage, by doing so.

Play of the Hand as Declarer

Bruce: OK. So the contract was set at **4S** in the SOUTH. WEST leads the 9 of Clubs. Now Dummy comes down. Please talk us through how you sitting as Declarer SOUTH would plan your initial "Line of Play", subject of course to revisions as play progresses.

Esther: Well, of course! When playing Suit contracts, once Dummy comes down, Declarer should first **count his losers**. Here SOUTH sees (1) 2 certain Heart *losers*, (2) possibly 1 Club *loser*, and (3) possibly 1 Diamond *loser*. SOUTH knows that there are 2 ways to pursue THE PRIMARY MISSION IN A SUIT CONTRACT: "**DUMPING**" **LOSERS!** SOUTH knows that there are 2 ways to "DUMP" LOSERS: (1) "ruff" on Tricks that you would otherwise lose, and (2) "slough" your losers on other Suits to thus create voids and the new ability to "ruff". SOUTH, seeing N/S holding 4/4 in Trump, with an Odd number² of Trump cards (5) out, knows that a 3-2 "split" is much more likely than a 4-1 "split". However, SOUTH will still have to draw 3 Rounds of Trump, so there will not be many opportunities to "ruff" losers!

Bruce: Well, OK, Esther. What do you think Declarer SOUTH should play from the NORTH Dummy on WEST's 9 of Clubs: the Ace or the 7 of Clubs?

Esther: Well, Bruce, given WEST's lead of the 9 of Clubs, once NORTH's Hand as Dummy comes, SOUTH must decide whether to play the Dummy's Ace of Clubs, and then begin to draw

² See the "**Probabilities Section**" of the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" for a comparison of the probabilities of Trump "splits" when there are an *Odd* number of cards out versus an *Even* number of cards out.

Trump, or because WEST opened 1C, and is probably leading "top of nothing, bottom of something," instead assume that WEST is probably leading away from the Club King. In any case, if WEST does not hold the Club King, N/S are going to lose a Club Trick anyway, and might as well try to win a second Club Trick by "ducking" in the NORTH Dummy, and playing the Queen or Jack of Clubs in Declarer's Hand. In this case, SOUTH won the first Trick with the Jack of Clubs.

Bruce: OK, Esther. What do you think SOUTH as Declarer should do next?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I think I would go ahead and draw Trump. SOUTH knows that he can draw trump in 3 Rounds if the expected 3-2 "split" occurs, or with these holdings in 4 Rounds if the dreaded 4-1 "split" occurs, and simply cannot draw all the Trump cards if the dreaded (but hugely unlikely) 5-0 "split" occurs. I always draw cards "low-to-high", to try to drop intermediate cards, and thus "promote" my intermediate cards, at least until I figure out what the "split" is, unless I hold something like 10 or 11 cards in the Suit I am trying to "draw".

Bruce: Well, on this Board the "split" was 3-2, and Trump were drawn in 3 Rounds. All the Trump were drawn early, because Declarer SOUTH knew he would win all 4 Rounds of drawing Trump, and also wanted to work some Magic in Diamonds.

Esther: Well, Bruce, a good plan. If SOUTH knew he could not win the 4th Round of drawing Trump, the Declarer might then decide not to by losing the Trick draw the last Trump card, *unless* he held a long Suit that he could later "run" after drawing but losing the last Trump card.

Bruce: Well, Esther, as play progressed, N/S hold both the 2 remaining Trump cards, 1 each in Dummy and Declarer's Hand. Dummy still holds the Ace Club "winner". Declarer SOUTH does not want to lead a Heart, which will certainly lead to 2 Heart losing Tricks. So, Declarer wants to instead lead a Diamond. The question is "from where?", and "which Diamond should be led?"

Esther: Well, Bruce, the question is, "Where is the missing King of Diamonds?" The extreme odds are that WEST holds the Diamond King, because WEST opened the bidding. But WEST

opened in Clubs, and not Diamonds. With Declarer and Dummy holding $13 + 14 = 27$ HCPs, and WEST holding ~ 13 HCPs, because $27 + 13 = 40$, I would count EAST holding roughly $40 - 27 - 13 = 0$ HCPs. So, it is *extremely* unlikely that EAST holds the Diamond King, unless WEST opened using the "**Rule of 20**" and his 2 long Suits were very long indeed!

Bruce: Well, Esther, then how would you play the Diamonds?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I would go to the NORTH Dummy. I would then lead the Dummy 9 of Diamonds in Dummy from within the *combined* N/S holdings of the "touching" Q,J,T,9 sequence. This might (or might not) encourage EAST to "duck" if EAST held the King of Diamonds. If WEST does not win this Diamond Trick with the King, then I know that EAST via a virtual miracle holds the Diamond King, and I would lead a Diamond from Dummy again. If EAST plays the King, I will take the Trick from Declarer's Hand with the Ace. If EAST "ducks" again, I will play Declarer's Queen, and then Lead my Declarer Ace of Diamonds. I will then play my Queen of Clubs from my Declarer's SOUTH Hand, and if WEST who holds all the HCPs and must hold the missing King of Clubs, "ducks" my Queen, I will then lead my Jack of Clubs toward Dummy's Ace. Finally, if WEST has "ducked" twice, I will take my Ace of Clubs winner by leading my 7 of Clubs to Dummy's Ace of Clubs. If things work out well I may take 11 rather than 10 Tricks, and in duplicate bridge, that can make a huge difference in the Matchpoints for N/S!

Bruce: Well, Esther, what will happen in The Real World?

Esther: Well, Bruce, WEST will win his King of Diamonds, and then take his 2 Heart winners. But the 4S contract will make exactly, just like the board will be bid and make 4S at virtually every Table! Only WEST with all the E/W HCPs could reasonably Double 4S, and even holding the "protected" Diamond King, and the Ace and King of Hearts, is unlikely to do so, unless he also holds 5 Spades! Ummm... Err... Hrmphhh...

Bruce: Well, Esther, is there something else you wish to say?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes. On this Board Dummy held 3 "touching Honors" in Diamonds. I have been thinking about a similar situation, but when instead Declarer holds a sequence of "touching Honors" in a Suit, and Opponents play the top

card Winner in that Suit. Here is a Cardinal Principle for play as Declarer:³

When you as Declarer hold a sequence of “touching Honors” on a Trick that you will inevitably lose, and you must slough one of your “touching Honors”, do not slough your *lowest* “touching Honor”! Instead, slough your highest “touching Honor” on a Trick you will inevitably lose! It may confuse your Opponents, and make them lose or forget card count. It *cannot* hurt you to do this, but it *may* help you! *Do everything you can to confuse your Opponents!*

³ The same principle applies when you are playing on Defense and either the Declarer or the Dummy have the lead. However, if you are playing on Defense and you are on lead, it is probably best to play high from a sequence, so as not to confuse Partner!