

## "On Defense Do You Know How to Execute a 'Trump Uppercut Play'?"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>

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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 "On Defense Do You Know How to Execute a 'Trump Uppercut Play'?" 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, very sorry about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Well, would you begin by explaining what you mean when you say, "Trump Uppercut Play"?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. In boxing an "uppercut" is a punch upward to the chin of the Opponent. A boxing "uppercut" is usually used to reposition the Opponent's head to facilitate a later more damaging blow. However...

"In contract bridge, an uppercut is a defensive play that involves one of the defenders ruffing high in the knowledge that an overruff by the declarer will result in the promotion of a trump card in their partner's hand into a winner. Thus,

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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! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

the technique presents a type of trump promotion."<sup>2</sup>

As Jeff Tang explains on his "BridgeBum" website article, "Uppercut",<sup>3</sup>

"An uppercut is a type of trump promotion for the defense. It occurs when a [D]efender ruffs a trick and forces [D]eclarer (or dummy) to overruff. Partner's trump holding is then elevated as an extra winner."

The example Boards presented here are based on Boards presented by Jeff Tang. However, Esther has altered some cards in some Hands. The bidding is by Esther.

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. I am very much looking forward to the first concrete example of a "**Trump Uppercut Play**".

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Let's discuss the following Board.

	NORTH (9)	
	<b>S:</b> 9 8 6 3	
	<b>H:</b> Q 4 3 2	
	<b>D:</b> T 9	
	<b>C:</b> A Q J	
WEST (9)		EAST (7)
<b>S:</b> Q 7		<b>S:</b> J 2
<b>H:</b> A K 9 8 5		<b>H:</b> 7 6
<b>D:</b> 7 5 2		<b>D:</b> Q J 6 4 3
<b>C:</b> T 9 7		<b>C:</b> K 5 4 3
	SOUTH (15)	
	<b>S:</b> A K T 6 4	
	<b>H:</b> J T	
	<b>D:</b> A K 8	
	<b>C:</b> 8 6 2	

### Bidding

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

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<sup>2</sup> See the Wikipedia entry, "Uppercut":

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppercut\\_\(bridge\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uppercut_(bridge))

<sup>3</sup> See: <https://www.bridgebum.com/uppercute.php>

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Esther, ...err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Certainly, WEST will lead his Heart Ace "promising" the Heart King and asking Partner, "Partner can you win Trick #3 either with the Heart Queen (assuming the NORTH Dummy does not show a Heart void, singleton, or doubleton) either (1) with the Heart Queen or (2) by ruffing? Please play 'low' to say 'yes', or play "high" to say 'no'."

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, yes. On Trick #1 EAST played the Heart 6. On Trick #2 WEST leads the Heart King and EAST plays his Heart 7, which is the "echo" card confirming that EAST can ruff Heart Trick #3 because EAST played "low" then "high" to say, "Yes, I can take Trick #3 by ruffing given that the Heart Queen that lies visible in the NORTH Dummy.

**Bruce:** So, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, that's "cool"! I guess EAST should ruff "low" by playing his Trump Spade 2. Is that "correct", Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, that is actually *completely* "wrong"! EAST sees that the NORTH Dummy holds 4 Trump Spades with the 9,8 "high". EAST held the Jack. From the auction EAST suspects that Declarer SOUTH holds the Trump Spade A,K. But it seems likely that WEST may hold the Trump Spade Queen. This may or may not be that but that is the way that EAST must "place" the cards. If, in the other hand, Declarer SOUTH holds the Trump Spade A,K,Q then there is not much E/W can do.

EAST must ruff Trick #3 with his Trump Spade Jack thus delivering a "vicious" bridge "**Trump Uppercut Play**" to Declarer SOUTH. Declarer SOUTH **must** play his Trump Spade Ace or King on Trick #3 thus "promoting" Partner WEST's Trump Spade Queen in his "protected" Q,7 doubleton into a "winner". E/W will later "cash" EAST's Club King that sits behind the NORTH Dummy's Club A,Q,J. The N/S 4S contract will be "set" by EAST's vicious bridge "punch" in the form of an "uppercut"!

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, that is simply amazing! Can you give us a second example of a "**Trump Uppercut Play**"?

**Esther:** Yes, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is a second Board on which a "**Trump Uppercut Play**" may be deadly.



**Esther:** Well, Bruce, if WEST on Trick #4 leads a Club, a Spade, or a Trump Heart Declarer SOUTH will "win" and "draw" the remaining Trump Hearts and "make his contract!"

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, WEST is unlikely to lead a Club, a Spade, or a Trump Heart. WEST will "cash" his Diamond Queen "winner" on Trick #4. Both N/S and E/W have now "won" 2 Tricks each. What should WEST do on Trick #5?

**Esther:** Well, WEST initially held 6 Diamonds and once the NORTH Dummy was "down" WEST saw 3 additional Diamonds there. All 4 players "followed" Suit on Trick #1. All 4 players "followed" Suit on Trick #4. WEST now holds 4 Diamonds and the NORTH Dummy holds 1 Diamond. WEST now knows that both EAST and Declarer SOUTH can ruff a Diamond led on Trick #5. So on Trick #5 WEST leads his Diamond Jack.

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. EAST can sluff a "loser" on WEST's Diamond lead and let Declarer SOUTH ruff with a "low" Trump Heart, On the other hand if EAST plays his remaining Heart card, the Heart Queen, this is a "**Trump Uppercut Play**". Declarer SOUTH must cover with the Trump Heart King in his "closed" Hand. N/S have now "won" 3 Tricks and E/W have "won" 2 Tricks. Here are the 8 cards that remain in each of the 4 Hands:

	NORTH (9)	
	S: 9 8 7 3	
	H: 4 3	
	D:	
	C: K Q	
WEST (14)		EAST (3)
S: A T		S: 6 5 4 2
H: 9 7		H:
D: 4 3 2		D:
C: T		C: J 7 6 4
	SOUTH (14)	
	S: K Q J	
	H: J 6 5	
	D:	
	C: 8 5	

WEST will eventually "win" a 3<sup>rd</sup> Trick with his Trump Heart 9 and a "setting" 4<sup>th</sup> Trick with his Spade Ace.