

"When During the Auction 1 Opponent Shows a 'Big' and '2-Suited' Hand, Does That Opponent's Hand Structure Suggest You Execute an '*Elimination*' or a '*Squeeze*' Endplay Targeting the Partner of the Opposing Bidder?"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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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 **"When During the Auction 1 Opponent Shows a 'Big' and '2-Suited' Hand, Does That Opponent's Hand Structure Suggest You Execute an '*Elimination*' or a '*Squeeze*' Endplay Targeting the Partner of the Bidder?"** 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 start would you tell us what are the various ways that you know 1 Opponent holds a 2-Suited Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. There are **2** indications that you are facing an Opponent who holds a 2-Suited Hand.

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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.

First, you know that an Opponent who Overcalls with an "Unusual 2NT!"² bid holds at 2-Suited Hand. Some Partners by Partnership Agreement only bid an "Unusual 2NT!" Overcall **only** when a Partner is 2-Suited **only** in both Minors. However, such Overcalls are fairly rare because 2-Suited Hands with both Suits having good "Suit Quality" are rare. About **3.2%** of randomly-dealt bridge Hands involve a 5-5-2-1 distribution (any Suit order) and **0.9%** of Hands involve a 5-5-3-0 distribution (any Suit order) so **4.1%** of randomly-dealt Hands involve **2** 5-card Suits. There are **6** 2-Suit combinations: S,H, S,D, S,C, H,D, H,C, D,C. So, $4.1\% / 6 = 0.7\%$ of randomly-dealt Hands are 2 Suited 5-5 in the Minors. Furthermore, some of the very rare x-x-5-5 distributions you hold may have insufficient Honors to make an 'Unusual 2NT!' Overcall bid rational. Of course, *other* Partners by Partnership Agreement play an 'Unusual 2NT!' Overcall bid instead as showing a Hand that is 2-Suited in the 2 "lowest" unbid Suits.

Second, you always know that an Opponent who Overcalls and eventually does so in **2** Suits holds a Hand that is *both* (1) 2-Suited and (2) "big".

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, could you talk us through an example?

Esther: Well, Bruce, sure. On my "Esther Bridge Lessons" website I have previously recommended the "BBO Bridge Master" website:

<https://www.bridgebase.com/v3/anon/bridgemaster>

The "BBO Bridge Master" website allows you to declare your skill level, then shows a series of Hands and announces the final contract, each of which you then play as Declarer. At the end of play you can then request a solution in which the optimal "Line of Play" is discussed step by step. Here as an illustration I will use the *free* "BBO Bridge Master" Level-5 **Lesson B-11** which gives you the opportunity to see and *repeatedly practice* playing a given bridge Board.

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see "Esther Bridge Conventions Lesson #8: "Unusual 2NT! Overcall To Show You Are Holding a Hand 2-Suited in Both Minors": https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/unus_2NT.pdf

BBO Bridge Master Level 5 Lesson B-11

Dealer: **SOUTH**

		NORTH (6)		
		S: 6 5 4 2		
		H: K Q J T		
		D: 4 2		
		C: 4 3 2		
	WEST (14)		EAST (0)	
S:	A K Q J T 9		S: 8 7	
H:	--		H: 9 8 7 6	
D:	K J T 9 7		D: 8 6 5	
C:	7 5		C: T 9 8 6	
		SOUTH (20)		
		S: 3		
		H: A 5 4 3 2		
		D: A Q 3		
		C: A K Q J		

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 H	1 S	2 H	PASS
3 C	4 D	4 H	PASS
6 H	PASS	PASS	PASS

On Trick #1 WEST leads his Spade Ace thus "promising" "touching" Honors. All other players "follow". On Trick #2 WEST leads the Spade King and NORTH and EAST "follow". Declarer SOUTH on Trick #2 ruffs the led Spade.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, from the auction Declarer SOUTH knows that WEST holds a Hand that is (1) 2-Suited in Spades and Diamonds and (2) "big" or otherwise WEST would not have continued bidding up to the 4 level! What then does Declarer SOUTH know about his RHO's, EAST's, Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. SOUTH knows that WEST initially held 5+ Spades and 5+ Diamonds. And WEST kept Overcalling the N/S Heart bids. So, WEST is likely void or at least very "short" in Hearts and EAST thus likely holds (1) a Heart "Trump Stack" and (2) few if any HCPs. And WEST almost certainly holds the Diamond King sitting "after" Declarer SOUTH's Diamond A,Q,x, which is unfavorable for SOUTH.

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Well, what should Declarer SOUTH lead from his own "closed" (hidden) Hand in Trick #3?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. On Trick #3 SOUTH should lead the Trump Heart 3 from his "closed" Hand. As expected WEST discards a "low" Diamond and the initial E/W Trump Heart 4-0 "split" is confirmed.

Bruce: Ok, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what "line of Play" should Declarer SOUTH now follow?

Esther: Well, Bruce, there are 2 dimensions to SOUTH's best "Line of Play". *First*, SOUTH should not spend 2 Trump Hearts for every 1 Trump Heart that EAST plays. As Richard Pavlicek emphasizes in his "Trump Endings" article posted on his "For Bridge Players" website:

<http://www.rpbridge.net/6f00.htm>

"If the enemy trumps are stacked against you, stop leading [T]rumps and go after ruffs" [emphasis added].

Second, WEST's Hand being "big" and 2-Suited should suggest to Declarer SOUTH the bridge strategy called a bridge "Squeeze Endplay".³ Basically, Declarer SOUTH should "cash" a lot of "winners" thus forcing WEST to make improvident discard decisions from his "long" Spades and Diamonds.

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Well, what cards should Declarer SOUTH play on the next few Tricks?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH knows that (1) WEST holds no Trump Hearts and (2) EAST holds 3 more Trump Hearts but also "long" Clubs since WEST was 2-Suited in Spades and Diamonds. So, SOUTH knows that on Tricks #4-#7 SOUTH can safely "cash" his 4 Club "winners". On Tricks #4 and #5 WEST "follows". On Trick #6 WEST discards a "low" Diamond. On Trick #7 when SOUTH leads his Club Jack WEST discards his Spade Ten and Declarer SOUTH discards the Diamond 2 "loser".

After Trick #7 N/S have "won" 6 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. The 6 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

³ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see "Esther Dialogue Lesson #67: How as Declarer to Execute an Endplay 'Squeeze'": <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/squeeze.pdf>

		NORTH (6)	
		S: 6 5	
		H: K Q J	
		D: 4	
		C:	
WEST (14)			EAST (0)
S: Q J			S:
H: --			H: 9 8 7
D: K J T 9			D: 8 6 5
C:			C:
		SOUTH (20)	
		S:	
		H: A 5 4	
		D: A Q 3	
		C:	

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, now what should Declarer SOUTH do?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH should play a "low" Heart from his "closed" Hand to a NORTH Dummy Heart Honor. On Trick #9 SOUTH should lead a "low" Spade from the NORTH Dummy and SOUTH "wins" with his Trump Heart Ace if EAST ruffs, or otherwise "win" with his own "low" Trump Heart. In reality EAST *must* ruff or otherwise SOUTH will "cash" his Diamond Ace and then begin a vicious cross-ruff process.

On Tricks #10 SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy Trump Heart Queen. After Trick #10 N/S have "won" 9 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. The 3 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

		NORTH (6)	
		S: 6	
		H: K	
		D: 4	
		C:	
WEST (14)			EAST (0)
S: Q			S:
H: --			H:
D: K J			D: 8 6 5
C:			C:
		SOUTH (20)	
		S:	
		H:	
		D: A Q 3	
		C:	

On Trick #11 Declarer SOUTH will "cash" the NORTH Dummy's Trump Heart King in order to "squeeze" WEST. If on Trick #11 WEST discards his Spade Queen then on Trick #12 SOUTH will "cash" the "promoted" NORTH Dummy Spade 6 "winner" and on Trick #13 lead the Dummy's Diamond 4 to his own "Diamond Ace "winner". Alternatively, if on Trick #11 WEST discards his Diamond Jack then on Trick #12 SOUTH will lead the Dummy's Diamond 4 to his own Diamond Ace and then on Trick #13 "cash" his now "promoted" Diamond Queen "winner". By "squeezing" WEST Declarer SOUTH will exactly "make" his 6H contract.



Esther says...

“Why not proceed *immediately* to ‘**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**’ Level-5 Lesson #**B-11** to practice playing a “**Squeeze Endplay**” on this Board? Search ‘BBO’, then Click ‘Bridge Master’, then Click ‘Play’, then Click ‘Level 5’, then Click ‘B-11’. You can play this Board *repeatedly* in Bridge Master for *free!*”

Esther also says...

“I have now prepared a ‘Map’ of all the ‘**Esther Bridge ‘Pop’ Quizzes**’ that use ‘BBO Bridge Master’ lessons to teach the ‘*Squeeze Play*’, the ‘*Elimination Endplay*’, the ‘*Loser-on-Loser Play*’, the ‘*Unblocking Play*’, the ‘*Distribution Safety Play*’, and the ‘*Dummy Reversal Play*’”:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/MAP.pdf>