

Esther Discusses

"As Declarer Playing a Suit Contract for a *Fairly-Common* 3-2 Trump 'Split'"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

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 "**As Declarer Playing a Suit Contract for a *Fairly-Common* 3-2 Trump 'Split'**". 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, because I am such a "warm and caring" person!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, in any case, is there anything you wish to say initially before you delve into the heart of today's Esther bridge lesson?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you! And yes, indeed, there is something I would like to say at the outset. When you are playing a Suit contract as Declarer it will be *fairly common* that you and the Dummy together hold **8** Trump cards. This frequently happens, for example, when you are playing **4H** or **4S** contracts!

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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.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Are you actually being nice to me?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, of course I am being "nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you?

Bruce: Errr, well, in any case, Esther, would you give us an example Board to facilitate this discussion by making the discussion more concrete?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hombre*, I will certainly try to help you. I will draw as an example a Board presented in the "**BBO Bridge Master**" lessons.

Esther on her "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" website has 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 bidding and 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. The present "Esther Bridge Lesson" example is drawn from "**BBO Bridge Master**" Level-2 **Lesson B-11**. Note that across repeated play "**BBO Bridge Master**" may change some Hands in given lessons. Esther may have altered some cards in some Hands in this example.

Bruce: Ummm. Hmmmm. Well, Esther, would you now go ahead and present the example Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is an example Board:

BBO Bridge Master Level 2 Lesson B-11

Dealer: **NORTH**

NORTH (19)

S: A 4 3 2
H: 3 2
D: A K Q 2
C: K Q J

WEST (5)

S: K J 5
H: J T 9 8
D: 3
C: 7 6 5 4 3

EAST (0)

S: 7 6
H: 7 6 5 4
D: 7 6 5 4
C: T 9 8

SOUTH (16)

S: Q T 9 8
H: A K Q
D: J T 9 8
C: A 2

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1 D	PASS	1 S	PASS
4 S	PASS	4 NT	PASS
5 H*	PASS	5 NT	PASS
6 H**	PASS	6 S	PASS
PASS	PASS		

PASS

*NORTH's bid uses the "Roman Key Card ('RKC') 1430" convention² and says, "Partner, among the 5 "key" cards (the 4 Aces and the Trump Spade King) I hold (1) 2 "key" cards and (2) not the Trump Spade Queen."

NORTH's bid uses the "Roman Key Card ('RKC') 1430" convention and says, "Partner, you have now asked me how many Kings I hold. I have already by my first 'RKC 1430' response told you whether I hold the Trump Spade King. My King response now only deals with Kings in the non-Trump Suits where 6C** = 0 outside Kings, 6**D** = 1 outside King, 6**H** = 2 outside Kings, and 6**S** = 3 outside Kings."³

² Within the "Esther Bridge Convention Lessons" see: "Convention Lesson #3: Roman Key Card (RKC) 1430":

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/RKC_1430.pdf

³ See the "Roman Key Card Blackwood (RKCB)" entry on Karen Walker's excellent bridge instruction website "Karen's Bridge Library":

Bruce: Well, Esther, WEST leads the Heart Jack as the "top" of a "touching" Honor sequence. The NORTH Dummy comes down. Esther, what should Declarer SOUTH notice about the N/S holdings once the NORTH Dummy is revealed?

Esther: Well, my *studly salamander*, I will try to help you. Declarer SOUTH should notice **2** *critically* important features of the N/S holdings:

1. N/S will lose exactly *ZERO* Tricks in the 3 "side" non-Trump Suits. The *only* potential "losers" for N/S are *exclusively* in the Trump Spade Suit!
2. As happens *quite often*, N/S together hold $4 + 4 = 8$ Trump Spade cards. The means that E/W together hold $13 - 8 = 5$ Trump Spade cards. Now when there is an "odd" number of cards "out" the most probable "split" is the most *near-equal* "split". With 5 Trump Spades "missing" the "split" probabilities re: (1) 3-2 "split": **67.8%** probability, (2) 4-1 "split": **28.3%** probability, and (3) 5-0 "split": **3.9%** probability.⁴ So, a 3-2 "split" is $67.8\% / 28.3\% = 2.4$ **times** more likely than a 4-1 "split".

Bruce: Well, Esther, how is this relevant to how Declarer SOUTH must play this **6S** contract as Declarer?

Esther: Well, my *curious carnivore*, SOUTH Declarer must play for a 3-2 Trump Spade "split" for **2** reasons:

1. The 3-2 "split" is the *most likely* "split" when **5** cards are "missing"; and
2. Declarer SOUTH's **6S** contract will only possibly make if the Trump Spade "split" indeed is 3-2. And when you can *only* make your contract making certain assumptions that is the way you **must** play, whether or not the "split" you need is or is not the most-likely "split".

Bruce: OMG, Esther, so what should Declarer SOUTH lead after winning Trick **#1** with the Heart Queen played from his "closed" Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, my *bodacious beau*, I will try to help you. Declarer SOUTH on Trick **#2** should lead a Trump Spade from

<https://kwbridge.com/rkc.htm>

⁴ Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf

his Hand to run a finesse through WEST. On these holdings it is not that important which Trump Spade Declarer SOUTH leads on Trick **#2**. WEST is likely to play "second Hand low" and "duck", and Declarer SOUTH should play a "low" Trump Spade from the NORTH Dummy.

Then on Trick **#3** Declarer SOUTH should again lead a Trump Spade from his "closed" Hand. If WEST "ducks" twice on a Trump Spade led by Declarer SOUTH the Declarer will then "drop" WEST's last Trump Spade on the 3rd Round of leading Trump Spades. Declarer SOUTH will eventually "win" **12** Tricks and make his **6S** contract.