

## **Esther Discusses "3 Bidding Conundrums in Suit Contract Bidding Auctions Involving Unusual Distributions"**

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

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:  
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**Esther:** Today, we are honored to have with us *moi*, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will discuss **"3 Bidding Conundrums in Suit Contract Bidding Auctions Involving Unusual Distributions"**!

**Bruce:** 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, very sorry about that, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, why don't you first talk a bit about the fact that unlikely, or even extremely unlikely, things can happen at the bridge table?

**Esther:** Well, of course, my *Malodorous Misanthrope*. On this point, I very much like to quote my fellow Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), Walt Disney, who was always very fond of saying with respect to bridge:

**"Miracles happen every day!"**

**Bruce:** Oh, my goodness, Est... I mean, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen. Can you give us an example?

**Esther:** Well, certainly bridge miracles can happen, my *Simpering Simpleton*! For example, statistically, if

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<sup>1</sup> Esther is actually a fictitious, not real person. This "Esther Bridge Lesson" was actually written by Bruce Thompson.

you play twice a week in competitions involving 26 Boards each session, you will be dealt a one-suited hand on average once every **60,000 years!**<sup>2</sup> But because this event is "on the average", you could be dealt this hand tomorrow!!! Or even twice in one week!!! Or, instead in 120,000 years!!!

**Bruce:** Well, OK. Any examples of bridge miracles from the bridge world that *actually happened* recently?

**Esther:** Well, my *Bodacious Bupkus*, how about the following Hand held by EAST in a recent game?

**Board #4** Knoxville BBO

499er Game 07/31/24

DLR: **WEST**

VUL: **BOTH**

	NORTH (10)	
	<b>S:</b> A 9 8 4	
	<b>H:</b> K 9 7 5	
	<b>D:</b> 8 7 6	
	<b>C:</b> Q J	
WEST (10)		EAST (11)
<b>S:</b> K 7 6 3		<b>S:</b> --
<b>H:</b> 6 4		<b>H:</b> A Q J T 8 3 2
<b>D:</b> K T		<b>D:</b> A 9 3 2
<b>C:</b> A 8 7 6 2		<b>C:</b> 4 3
	SOUTH (9)	
	<b>S:</b> Q J T 5 2	
	<b>H:</b> --	
	<b>D:</b> Q J 5 4	
	<b>C:</b> K T 9 5	

**Bidding**

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	PASS	<b>1H</b>	<b>1S</b>
PASS	<b>2S</b>	<b>3H</b>	<b>3S</b>
<b>DBL</b>	PASS	PASS	PASS

**Bruce:** Well, OK. Would you comment initially on EAST's reasonable options with respect to his first bid, and what you think EAST's best bid might be?

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<sup>2</sup> See "Relevant Probabilities for Bridge Players":

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/taverham/Probabilities.pdf>

**Esther:** Well, obviously EAST's Hand is quite extraordinary, even though EAST holds only **11** HCPs!

1. EAST holds **7** Hearts including "touching" Honors involving **4** of the "top" **5** Hearts, the Diamond Ace, and a Spade void!
2. EAST's Hearts have a Ron Klinger "**Suit Quality Test ('SQT') Score**" of  $7 + 4 = \mathbf{11}$ , which alone may justify a bid up to the  $11 - 6 = \mathbf{5}$  level!
3. In a Heart contract EAST holds "first-Round" control in **3** of the 4 Suits!
4. EAST can count **8** likely "Quick Tricks", which may justify opening with a **4H** bid.

EAST's Hand is too strong to open **2H**, especially because EAST holds **7** rather than 3 Hearts, not to mention the Spade void. I would open this Hand with a **1H** bid, fully expecting either Partner or Opponents to toss out a Spade bid.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, as expected, SOUTH overcalls **1S**, even though SOUTH only holds **9** HCPs, but holds a void in EAST's Hearts along with **3** "touching" Honors. WEST then PASSES. Do you agree with WEST's PASS?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, no, I do not agree with WEST's PASS with **10** HCPs, **1** Ace, and **2** "protected" Kings, especially because WEST holds **2** Hearts, and EAST may later show **6** Hearts, such that E/W may hold the magic **6-2** Trump split. I believe that WEST should bid **2D**.

**Bruce:** OK, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, after NORTH bids **2S**, do you agree with EAST's **3H** bid? And, if you were sitting WEST, how would you interpret EAST's **3H** 2<sup>nd</sup> bid?

**Esther:** Well, yes, I do agree with EAST's 2<sup>nd</sup> bid of **3H**. The "jump" shows (1) "long" Hearts and (2) zero fear of Spades. Because SOUTH has shown **5** Spades, and NORTH has shown **3+** Spades, and WEST holds **4** Spades, WEST should realize that EAST is either void in Spades or holds a Spade singleton!

EAST's **3H** "jump" bid is "invitational" to a game contract in a Major. Holding **1** side-Suit Ace, **2** side-Suit Kings, and **2** Hearts, WEST should take EAST up on the invitation, and bid **4H**. If N/S overcall **4S**, E/W

are likely to take **1** Spade Trick, **1** Diamond Trick, **1** Club Trick, and possibly **1** Heart Trick. WEST knows that E/W are confronting an unfavorable **4-0** Spade "split", and N/S are Vulnerable. In a worst-case scenario N/S may make a **4S** contract. So will other N/S Pairs on this Board, if **4S** is indeed makeable.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what do you think of WEST's DOUBLE?

**Esther:** Well, WEST thinks he sees 3 winners with his Club Ace and 2 "protected" Kings, but basically I think this bid is "inopportune."<sup>3</sup>

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, now let us turn our attention to another Board:

**Board #11** Knoxville BBO  
499er Game 07/31/24  
DLR: **SOUTH**  
VUL: **NONE**

	NORTH (10)	
	<b>S:</b> K	
	<b>H:</b> T 3	
	<b>D:</b> A 9 8 7 5	
	<b>C:</b> Q J T 4 2	
WEST (10)		EAST (7)
<b>S:</b> A Q 9 7 4 3 2		<b>S:</b> J 6 5
<b>H:</b> K 8 5 4		<b>H:</b> 9 2
<b>D:</b> J 4		<b>D:</b> K T 6 2
<b>C:</b> --		<b>C:</b> K 9 5 3
	SOUTH (13)	
	<b>S:</b> T 8	
	<b>H:</b> A Q J 7 6	
	<b>D:</b> Q 3	
	<b>C:</b> A 8 7 6	

**Bidding**

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
<b>1H</b>	<b>3S</b>	PASS	PASS
PASS			

Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, do you agree with WEST's overcall bid of **3S**?

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<sup>3</sup> In the secret language of bridge, this means "crazy."

**Esther:** Well, WEST's 3S bid is not crazy. This bid shows 7 Spades. WEST can see 2 likely Diamond "losers" and a probably a couple of Heart losers, not to mention the missing Spade King. Another possibility is for WEST to lie a bit, and bid 2S, since it is early in the auction, and to try to better get the lay of the land.

**Bruce:** Well, what would you sitting EAST bid in response to WEST's 3S overcall bid?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, EAST knows that E/W holds 7 + 3 = 10 Spades Trump cards. According to the "Law of Total Tricks", a bid at the 10 - 6 = 4 level may be reasonable. However, EAST holds only 7 HCPs, but also 2 Heart "losers". If EAST held a Heart singleton or void, and somewhat greater HCP strength, I *might* have considered bidding 4S. I think EAST's PASS was EAST's wisest bid.

**Bruce:** Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, let's look at one final Board. Do you agree with WEST's bid as Responder of 2S? And do you agree with EAST's 2<sup>nd</sup> bid of 4S?

**Board #13** Knoxville BBO  
 499er Game 07/31/24  
 DLR: **NORTH**  
 VUL: **BOTH**

NORTH (5)  
**S:** T 5  
**H:** 9 7  
**D:** A J 9 7 5 2  
**C:** 7 5 4

WEST (9)  
**S:** 9 8 7 4  
**H:** K T 3  
**D:** K T 8 6  
**C:** K 2

EAST (15)  
**S:** A K 6 3 2  
**H:** J 8 5 2  
**D:** --  
**C:** A Q J 3

SOUTH (11)  
**S:** Q J  
**H:** A Q 6 4  
**D:** Q 4 3  
**C:** T 9 8 6

**Bidding**

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
PASS	1S	PASS	2S
PASS	4S	PASSED OUT	

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, sitting WEST, holding **3** "protected" Kings, and **4** Spades including the "touching" 9,8,7, I might be tempted to bid **3S** rather than **2S**. With respect to EAST's 2<sup>nd</sup> bid of **4S**, EAST knows that E/W together hold **8+** Spades, and EAST holds first-Round "control" in **3** of the 4 Suits. So, EAST's **4S** bid is a bit risky, but is reasonable.

Remember, this is "duplicate" bridge! Other E/W Pairs are likely to take this same risk! If other E/W Pairs bid **4S** and make their contracts, you will be punished if you do not bid **4S**! If other E/W Pairs make this bid and go down, and you go down as well, you will not be punished disproportionately!