

**Esther Discusses "1 of David Bird's 52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play:
'Eight Ever, Nine Never', Maybe Not Always"**

Bruce Thompson

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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 "**1 of David Bird's 52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play**". 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, before we discuss some of these tips about playing bridge as Declarer, would you tell us a bit about the author of this 2005 bridge tips book, David Bird?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you! David Bird is a very highly regarded British bridge writer. He has authored more than 140 bridge books and has claimed that he is the most prolific bridge author of all time. **52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play** is one of these 140+ books. He also is the bridge correspondent for both the Mail on Sunday and the London Evening Standard newspapers. He also over 30+ years has authored in Bridge Magazine a series of humorous bridge stories about fictional bridge-playing monks in the fictional St. Titus Monastery.

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: Ummm. Hmmmmmm. Well, Esther, in any case is there anything else you need to tell our readers before you begin discussing some of Bird's bridge tips for playing bridge as Declarer?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hombre*, yes, indeed. First, I want to make clear that the ideas presented here are dominantly those of David Bird, and are not primarily my ideas. Second, I have altered some of the cards in the bridge Hands discussed here, unless the Hands are actual Hands from an actual prior competition.

Bruce: OK, Esther. What is the Bird's bridge tip for Declarer play that you wish to discuss?

**Finesse the Opponent Overcaller's Partner
for the Missing Queen: When to Ignore
"Eight Ever, Nine Never" When Holding 9
Trump Cards [Tip #24]**

Esther: Well, Bruce, have you ever heard the bridge maxim, "**Eight Ever, Nine Never**"?

Bruce: Yes, Esther. This bridge maxim says, "*When you are playing as Declarer and your Partnership holds A,K but is missing the Queen, your decision about playing for the Queen 'drop' by leading first the Ace and then the King versus finessing for the missing Queen should be determined by whether your Partnership holds 8 versus 9 cards in the Suit. If you hold 9 cards, it is usually advisable to play for the 'drop', while if you hold 8 cards your results will generally be more favorable if you instead play a finesse.*" The finesse always has a **50-50** probability of success, while when holding **9** cards the probability of a drop, **53%**, is slightly higher.

Esther: Exactly, my *studly salamander*! Of course, if one Opponent bid during the auction while the other Opponent remained silent throughout, the Opponent bidding holds more HCPs than his Partner, and thus is seemingly more likely to hold the missing Queen, and thus may be the Opponent whom you may want to run your finesse through, unless of course during play additional information suggests otherwise. However, if the Opponent Overcaller bid a Suit, that

Opponent's HCPs are likely concentrated in *his* bid Suit, and are less likely to be in *your* Trump Suit if you and Partner bid Suit(s).

Bruce: Well, Esther, can you give us an example?

Esther: Sure! Let's talk through the following Board with NORTH sitting as Dealer.

	NORTH (18)	
	S: A 9 8 2	
	H: A K	
	D: 8 7 2	
	C: A Q J 7	
WEST (7)		EAST (5)
S: 4		S: Q 7 5
H: Q J T 5		H: 9 8 7 6 3
D: A T 6 4		D: Q J 3
C: 8 6 5 2		C: 9 4
	SOUTH (10)	
	S: K J T 6 3	
	H: 4 2	
	D: K 9 5	
	C: K T 3	

Bidding

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

On lead WEST plays his Heart Queen, thus "promising" either the Heart Jack or the Heart Q,x, and Declarer SOUTH wins Trick #1 in the NORTH Dummy.

Bruce: OK, Esther. Should SOUTH draw 1 Round of Trump and then play for the Queen "drop", or finesse for the Queen in the 2nd Round of leading Trump?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on this Board N/S hold 5 + 4 = 9 Trump Spades. In this situation playing 2 Rounds of Trump by playing toward the Declarer SOUTH's King and then again "low to high" back toward the NORTH Dummy Ace has a 52% probability of "dropping" the Queen, while finessing for the missing Queen in the 2nd Round of drawing Trump Spades has a 48% probability of success.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. On this Board playing for the Queen "drop" will not work.

Esther: Well, Bruce, that is correct. What is most likely to happen is not what always happens! As ACBL LifeMaster Walt Disney frequently taught, "In the world of *bridge miracles* happen every single day!"

Bruce: OK, Esther, now let's change the situation. What if on a *different* Board one of the Opponents Overcalled either Partner or you? How does that change the situation?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hombre*, consider what my close personal friend David Bird had to say about this situation:

"You hear some players saying: 'West had bid, so he was more likely to hold the missing [Q]ueen [and I should finesse through WEST]'... Of *more importance* is the fact that an [O]vercaller suggests considerable length in the [S]uit he has bid [especially if the Overcall was higher than the 1 level]. He therefore has *less space in his [H]and* for length in your [T]rump [S]uit. When [your Partnership holds 9 Trump cards and] you are missing four [T]rumps to the [Q]ueen, the [O]vercaller is more likely than normal to hold a singleton [T]rump. It is [therefore] **usually right [then] to finesse the [P]artner of the [O]vercaller for the [missing] [T]rump [Q]ueen.**" (p. 76, emphases added)

Bruce: My goodness, Esther! Can you give us another example Board?

Esther: Well, my *beaudacious beau*, certainly I will try to help you! Here is a Board played in the 1997 Macallan Invitation Pairs competition. On this Board the world-famous actor and bridge player **Omar Sharif** was sitting SOUTH.

NORTH (6)

S: Q 2
H: K J T 5 2
D: 6 2
C: 5 4 3 2

WEST (7)

S: A T 8 6
H: Q 8 7 6 3
D: J 8 4
C: 9

EAST (9)

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

SOUTH (18)

S: K J 5
H: A 9
D: Q 9 3
C: A K J T 7

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1C	1H	PASS	PASS
1NT	PASS	3NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Bruce: OK, Esther. On Trick #1 WEST led his Heart 6 and Declarer SOUTH won with his Heart Ace. On Trick #2 Declarer SOUTH cashed his Club Ace and both EAST and WEST followed low. On Trick #3 Sharif, sitting SOUTH as Declarer, led his Spade 5 toward the NORTH Dummy Queen. WEST "ducked". On Trick #4 Sharif, initially holding 5 + 4 = 9 Clubs, led the NORTH Dummy Club 3. In 1997 Sharif following Bird's 2005 Tip #24 then assumed that EAST held the missing Club Queen, and won Trick #4 with his Club Jack, thereby assuring that Declarer SOUTH would "win" 5 Club Tricks.

Esther: Correct, my *rambunctious rascal*. Here is what my close personal friend David Bird had to say about Omar Sharif's "line of play":

"So, be prepared to flout the 'nine never' rule when an [O]pponent has made an [O]vercall. The odds will be in your favour!" (p. 78)

The present "**Esther Bridge Lesson**" is about the "*Eight Ever, Nine Never*" rule for Declarer play. There also is an "*Eight Never, Nine Ever*" rule for bidding. "Esther

Bridge Lesson #111: ‘8 Never, 9 Ever’: A ‘Rule’ to Guide Suit Bidding in Competitive Part-Score Auctions” discusses the “rule” for bidding:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_Never.pdf