

"Using the 'BBO Bridge Master' Website to Repeatedly Practice the 'Elimination Endplay', a Difficult But Sometimes Essential Tool in the Declarer's Toolbox"

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 talk us through **"Using the 'BBO Bridge Master' Website to Practice the 'Elimination Endplay', a Difficult But Sometimes Essential Tool in the Declarer's Toolbox"**. 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 so "warm and caring"!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

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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: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other. Well, in any case, Esther, is there anything you need to say at the outset of today's lesson?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. And yes, there is indeed something I wish to say at the outset of my bridge lesson today. I am going to use as an example Board a Board used in the Level 4 Lesson **A-32**. On my "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" website I have previously recommended the "**BBO Bridge Master**" free lessons:

<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. Note that across repeated play "**BBO Bridge Master**" may change some Hands in given lessons. I may have altered some cards in some Hands.

BBO Bridge Master Level 4 Lesson A-32

Dealer: **SOUTH**

	NORTH (7)	
	S: 5 4 3 2	
	H: 4 3 2	
	D: A K 6 5	
	C: 4 3	
WEST (8)		EAST (10)
S: 7		S: 8 6
H: Q J T 9		H: A K 8 7
D: Q T 9 8		D: 7
C: Q J T 9		C: K 8 7 6 5 2
	SOUTH (15)	
	S: A K Q J T 9	
	H: 6 5	
	D: J 4 3 2	
	C: A	

Bidding

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

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, on Trick #1 WEST leads the Club Queen from the "top" of his "touching" Club Honors. Declarer SOUTH "wins" Trick #1 with

the Club Ace in his own "closed" (hidden) Hand. Once the NORTH Dummy is exposed what "losers" can Declarer SOUTH see?

Esther: Well, Bruce, the good news is that SOUTH can see that N/S together hold **10** Trump Spades including the "top" **6** Spades! But SOUTH can see **2** "inescapable" Heart "losers". SOUTH also could "lose" **2** Diamond Tricks if WEST holds **4** Diamonds to the Diamond Queen. Thus, SOUTH's **4S** contract is in some "peril".

Whenever your contract is in *peril* it is *often* wise to consider whether running an "elimination endplay"² may be helpful.

An "elimination endplay" can be defined as a "tactical play in which the Declarer *intentionally* puts an Opponent on lead at a strategic moment previously *engineered* by the Declarer such that the Opponent **must** make a lead that then loses one of more Tricks in an advantageous manner from the Declarer's perspective." A Declarer executes an "endplay" either to allow his contract to make when it otherwise would not make, or to secure vitally important Overtricks!

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I look forward to you teaching us about this "endplay" using this BBO Bridge Lasso's board as a concrete example! On Trick **#2** should Declarer SOUTH then immediately proceed to "draw" the **3** E/W Trump Spade cards?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes, there is no reason to delay. In this case the **3** "outstanding" Trump Spades are all "drawn" on Tricks **#2-#3**.

Bruce: Well, Esther, what then should Declarer SOUTH lead on Trick **#4**?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick **#4** Declarer SOUTH should lead a "low" Diamond to the NORTH Dummy Diamond Ace. On Trick **#5**

² An early, influential book on endplays was the 1932 book by George Sturgis Coffin: Endplays at Bridge Explained: A Systematic Treatise on the Three Kinds of Master Plays, Eliminations, Coups, Squeezes, which was published in numerous editions over decades, and is still available on Amazon under a similar title. A more recent book (2008) on "endplays" was written by David Bird, who has written more than **130** bridge books and is bridge correspondent for both the Mail on Sunday and the London Evening Standard: Bridge Endplays for Everyone: Yes, Even You!

SOUTH should lead the remaining **1** Club in the NORTH Dummy toward his own Hand for a ruff. Here are the **8** cards now held in the **4** Hands after **5** Tricks:

	NORTH (7)	
	S: 5 4	
	H: 4 3 2	
	D: K 6 5	
	C:	
WEST (8)		EAST (10)
S:		S:
H: Q J T		H: A K 8 7
D: Q T 9		D:
C: J T		C: K 8 7 6
	SOUTH (15)	
	S: Q J T 9	
	H: 6 5	
	D: J 4 3	
	C:	

On Trick **#6** SOUTH knows that E/W together initially held 8 Hearts including all **8** of the "top" Hearts. It is now time to put EAST or WEST "on lead" to force an Opponent to make difficult (i.e., *impossible*) choices about what to lead next. On Trick **#6** Declarer SOUTH leads a Heart knowing that either EAST or WEST **must** "win" Trick **#6**. In this case WEST "wins" with his Heart Ten.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, then what happens?

Esther: Well, Bruce, a Diamond return by WEST on Trick **#7** will allow SOUTH to play Diamonds for only **1** "loser". If WEST leads the Diamond Queen SOUTH will "cash" the Dummy's Diamond King, and then "cash" his own Diamond Jack. If WEST leads the Diamond Ten or 9 SOUTH will "cash" his Diamond Jack, and then "cash" the Dummy's Diamond King. So, a Diamond lead by WEST is not attractive to WEST. Nor is a Club lead because WEST can see a Club void in the NORTH Dummy that still holds 2 Trump Spade cards.

So, all other choices about what WEST can lead on Trick **#7** have been "**eliminated**". WEST *must* lead a Heart on Trick **#7**. EAST "wins" Trick **#7** with his Heart King. Now EAST will not lead a Club, given the Club void in the NORTH Dummy, and on Trick **#8** instead EAST will lead his Heart Ace. Declarer SOUTH ruffs from his own Hand on Trick **#8**.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, what happens next?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH from his own Hand leads a "low" Diamond. When WEST plays the Diamond 9 SOUTH "ducks" in the NORTH Dummy to force EAST or WEST to again be "on lead".

So far N/S have "won" 6 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks. Here are the 4 cards now held in each of the 4 Hands:

	NORTH (7)	
	S: 5 4	
	H:	
	D: K 6	
	C:	
WEST (8)		EAST (10)
S:		S:
H:		H: 8
D: Q T		D:
C: J T		C: K 8 7
	SOUTH (15)	
	S: Q J	
	H:	
	D: J 4	
	C:	

On Trick #10 if WEST leads the Diamond Ten Declarer SOUTH will "win" in his "closed" Hand with the Diamond Jack and on Trick #11 then "cash" the NORTH Dummy Diamond King. On Trick #10 if WEST leads the Diamond Queen Declarer SOUTH will "win" in with the NORTH Dummy Diamond King and on Trick #11 then "cash" the Diamond Jack in his own "closed" Hand.

If on Trick #10 WEST leads a Club Declarer SOUTH will ruff in his "closed" Hand but also sluff the Diamond 6 in the NORTH Dummy. In either case Declarer SOUTH thanks to an "elimination endplay" will exactly "make" his 4S contract.



Esther says:

Why not proceed *immediately* to “**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**” Level-4 Lesson #**A-32** to practice making an “*elimination endplay*” on this Board? Search “BBO”, then Click “Bridge Master”, then Click “Play”, then Click “Level 4”, then Click “A-32”. You can play this Board *repeatedly* in Bridge Master for *free*!