Esther Discusses "Barbara Seagram's Core Bridge Principles for Crossruffing"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen[1]

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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 **"Barbara Seagram's Core Bridge Principles for Crossruffing".** 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, in any case, Esther, would you begin today by first explaining from where today's concepts and examples originate?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I will certainly try to help you. Today's concepts and examples originate from the Fall, 2026 bridge article written by Barbara Seagram, "Teaching Crossruffing", which was published in the American Bridge Teachers' Association The ABTA Journal. Esther has altered some of the cards in the example Boards used here.

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

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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**.

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

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther… In any case, would you please tell us a little bit about this Barbara Seagram person?

Esther: Well, my *loquacious linkster*, of course! Here is an excerpt from the Wikipedia entry on Barabara Seagram:

About **Barbara Seagram**

"**Barbara Seagram** (born 1949 in Barbados, West Indies) is a Canadian Registered Nurse and contract bridge writer, teacher, and administrator. She is co-author of thirty-eight published bridge books, including co-writing with Marc Smith *25 Bridge Conventions You Should Know*, which received the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Book of the Year award in 1999.[1] The book was in its 19th printing and has been translated into French, German, Japanese, Portuguese and Danish. It has now been rewritten and revised in 2023. Seagram was a member of the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) Board of Governors from 1997 to 2009…"

Bruce: Well, Esther, thank you! Would you now share the first example bridge Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, *my studly squirrel*, of course. I certainly want to help you! Here SOUTH as Declarer is playing a 7**S** contract and WEST leads Heart King as the "top" of "touching" Honors in his "longest and strongest" Suit.

	NORTH (**17**) **S:** A Q T 8 **H:** A 5 3 2 **D:** A K 8 6 **C:** 5	
WEST (**6**) **S:** 4 2 **H:** K Q J T **D:** T 9 3 **C:** 9 8 4 3		EAST (**6**) **S:** 6 5 3 **H:** 9 8 7 4 **D:** 4 2 **C:** K Q J T
	SOUTH (**11**) **S:** K J 9 7 **H:** 6 **D:** Q J 7 5 **C:** A 7 6 2	

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther… Would you now talk us through what Declarer SOUTH what "losers" Declarer SOUTH should see once the NORTH Dummy is exposed?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course. *First*, Declarer SOUTH sees that E/W together hold 13 – 4 – 4 = **5** Trump Spade cards but N/S together hold **8** Trump Spade cards including the **8** "highest" Spades. Because E/W hold **5** missing Trump Spades and **5** is an "odd" number the *most likely* "split" (**67.8%** probability[2]) is the most *nearly-equal* "split", the 3-2 "split".

Second, Declarer SOUTH can see that the NORTH Dummy holds **3** Heart "losers", the Heart 5,3,2, and Declarer SOUTH holds 3 Club "losers", the Club 7,6,2. Fortunately, Declarer SOUTH sees that both Hands that he controls hold a singleton, respectively the Dummy's Club singleton 5 and his own Heart singleton 6. And SOUTH sees that both the NORTH Dummy and his own Hand has **4** Trump cards with which to ruff.

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther… I suppose that Declarer SOUTH could ruff **3** Rounds of his own Clubs in the NORTH Dummy and **3** Rounds of the Dummy Heart "losers" from his own Hand.

Esther: Well, Bruce, no, **no**, ***NO!*** If you as Declarer do that you will then be left with only **1** Trump Spade in the **2** Hands that you "control" and so you will not hold enough Trump Spades to "draw" *all* the **5** E/W Trump Spades! Furthermore, when you do not "draw" *all* the E/W Trump Spades you will then not be able "win" the **4** Diamond Tricks that you **must** "win" in order to "make" your 7**S** contract!

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Well, is there a **Cardinal Bridge Principle** that covers the present case and suggests *when you should not crossruff*?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes, **yes**, ***YES!*** As Seagram notes,

> "In a true crossruff, you do not draw trumps. You need to have them in dummy and in your hand [for the ruffs]. Therefore, **if you own a long, good side suit**, like the Diamonds in our hand, ***you must not use the crossruff technique***." (p. 22, emphases and italics added.)

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[2] Within the "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" see: "**A *Comprehensive* List of 8 *Different Categories* of Bridge Probabilities, and How These May Help Guide Your Bidding and Play**":
https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/8_probs.pdf

Bruce: Oh my goodness, Esther… Well, would you now talk us through Declarer SOUTH's "correct" "Line of Play"?

Esther: Well, my *tweaky tortoise*, of course. After "winning" Trick **#1** with the Dummy's Heart Ace Declarer SOUTH must ruff <u>all</u> **3** of his own Club "losers" from the NORTH Dummy.

NORTH (**17**)
S: **A Q T 8**
7 5 3
H: **A** 5 3 2
1
D: **A K** <u>8</u> <u>6</u>
6 4
C: <u>5</u>
2

WEST (**6**)
S: 4 2

H: <u>K</u> Q J T
1
D: T 9 3
6 4
C: 9 8 4 3
7 5 3 2

EAST (**6**)
S: 6 5 3

H: 9 8 7 4
1
D: 4 2
6 4
C: K Q J T
7 5 3 2

SOUTH (**11**)
S: **K J 9 7**

H: 6
1
D: **Q J** 7 5
4 6
C: **A** <u>7</u> <u>6</u> <u>2</u>
2 7 5 3

SOUTH must enter his own Hand **3** times. On Trick **#2** "cashes" his own Club Ace by leading the Dummy's Club 5 and thereby creates a Club void in the Dummy. On Trick **#3** SOUTH leads his Club 2 and ruffs from the NORTH Dummy. On Trick **#4** SOUTH leads the Dummy's Damond 6 to re-enter his own Hand a **2nd** time. On Trick **#5** SOUTH leads his own Club 6 and ruffs from the NORTH Dummy for a **2nd** time. On Trick **#6** SOUTH can lead the NORTH Dummy's Diamond 8 and "cashes" his own Diamond Jack "winner". On Trick **#7** SOUTH can lead his own Club 7 and ruff in the NORTH Dummy for a **3rd** time.

NORTH (**17**)
S: **A Q T 8**
7 5 3
H: **A 5 3 2**
1
D: **A K** 8 6
6 4
C: 5
2

WEST (**6**)
S: **4 2**

H: K **Q J T**
1
D: **T** 9 3
6 4
C: 9 8 4 3
7 5 3 2

EAST (**6**)
S: **6 5 3**

H: **9 8 7** 4
1
D: 4 2
6 4
C: K Q J T
7 5 3 2

SOUTH (**11**)
S: **K J 9 7**

H: 6
1
D: **Q J 7 5**
4 6
C: **A** 7 6 2
2 7 5 3

On Trick **#8** SOUTH can "cash" the NORTH Dummy's Trump Spade Ace. On Trick **#9** SOUTH leads a low NORTH Dummy Heart and ruffs from his own Hand. On Tricks **#10-#11** SOUTH "draws" **2** more Rounds of Trump Spades. On Tricks **#12** and **#13** SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy's Diamond A,K for his **13th** Tricks!

Bruce: WOW, well, Esther, is there any *other* **Cardinal Bridge Principle** about crossruffing that you also wish to teach me?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you! Here is another bridge Board that we can discuss.

NORTH (**12**)
S: Q J T 7 5

H: K Q J T 5

D: --

C: Q J **T**
3 2 **1**

WEST (**6**)
S: 4

H: A 9 8 3 2

D: Q 9 4

C: 9 8 7 2
1 3 2

EAST (**8**)
S: 3 2

H: 7 6 4

D: A K J T 7

C: 6 5 3
2 1

SOUTH (**14**)
S: A K 9 8 6

H: --

D: 8 6 5 3 2

C: A K 4
3 2 1

Here SOUTH is again playing a 7**S** contract. WEST leads his Club 9 as the "top" of "touching" cards in his "longest and strongest" Suit that is not "headed" by an Ace.

Bruce: WOW, Esther, *both* Hands that SOUTH controls hold (1) a red Suit void and (2) **5** "top" Trump Spade cards. This looks like a *prime candidate* for *repeated* crossruffing!!!

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you! You are indeed exactly correct!!! But on this Board Declarer SOUTH on Tricks **#2** and **#3** *must* immediately "cash" **2** more Club Tricks. According to Seagram,

> "If you don't, East will pitch a club while you're busy ruffing hearts in the South hand, and when the endgame arrives, having drawn no trumps at all, East will be poised to ruff one of your winners" and defeat your 7**S** contract. (p. 22)

The success of this "Line of Play" depended on the **7** E/W Clubs "splitting" 4-3. According to Seagram,

> "Once the clubs are safely out of the way, you can settle in and crossruff the rest of the hand, scoring every trump separately." (p. 22)