

"When You Can *Only* 'Make' Your Contract if Something Very, Very Unlikely Has Happened, Then That is *Exactly* the Way that You Must, *Must*, **Must**** Play as Having Happened"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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

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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 discuss **"When You Can Only 'Make' Your Contract if Something Very, Very Unlikely Has Happened, Then That is the Way that You Must, *Must*, ****Must**** Play as Having Happened"**. 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, well, Est... err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there anything you wish to say initially before you talk us through today's "Esther Bridge Lesson"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes indeed. I, Esther, on my **"Esther Bridge Lessons"** website have 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 final contract, each of which you then play as Declarer. At the end of play you can then request a solution in which

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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.

the optimal "Line of Play" is discussed step by step. The present "Esther Bridge Lesson" is drawn from "**BBO Bridge Master**" Level-2 **Lesson B-19**. Note that across repeated play "**BBO Bridge Master**" may change some Hands in given lessons. Esther may have altered some cards in some Hands.

BBO Bridge Master Level 2 Lesson B-19

Dealer: **SOUTH**

NORTH (18)

S: K Q J T

H: K 9 6 4

D: A Q

C: Q J T

SOUTH (15)

S: A 5 4 3

H: A T 3 2

D: 4 3 2

C: A K

Bidding*

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	PASS	2 C	PASS
2 H	PASS	4 NT	PASS
5 D**	PASS	6 H	PASS
PASS	PASS		

*The bidding is by Esther.

This 5D** bid is a "**Roman Key Card 1430**"² bid that says, "Partner, among the 5 'key' cards (i.e., the 4 Aces and the Trump King) I hold either 3 or 0 'key' cards." Because (1) SOUTH opened 1**NT** and (2) NORTH holds 1 Ace and the Trump Heart King NORTH knows that SOUTH holds 3 rather than 0 "key" cards.

On Trick #1 WEST leads the Diamond 5.

Bruce: Errr, well, Est..., err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what is the first thing that Declarer SOUTH should do once the NORTH Dummy comes down?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. Declarer SOUTH should first count his "losers":

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

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

1. Declarer SOUTH can see that he will "lose" **1** Diamond Trick if EAST holds the Diamond King. On Trick **#1** Declarer SOUTH runs a finesse by playing the NORTH Dummy Diamond Queen which "loses" to EAST's Diamond King. Now Declarer SOUTH **must** "take" every remaining Trick to "make" his **6H** contract!
2. Declarer SOUTH can see that he is in danger of losing **1** or **2** Trump Heart Tricks because N/S hold the "top" 2 Hearts and then 6 smaller Hearts and are missing the Trump Heart Queen and Jack.

Thus, SOUTH's **6H** contract is in *considerable* danger.

Bruce: Errr, well, hmmm... Well, what Trump Heart "split" would be most favorable to N/S?

Esther: Well, Bruce, the Trump Heart "split" most favorable to N/S would be a 3-2 "split" while the least favorable "split" would be 5-0. The probability of a 3-2 "split" is **67.8%**³ while the probability of the other 2 "splits" (4-1 and 5-0) is 100% - 67.8% = **32.2%**.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther, ...err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what does this mean regarding how Declarer SOUTH **must** play this Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Declarer SOUTH **must** play the Board assuming that the Trump Hearts "split" 3-2. This is because this happening is the *only* way the Declarer SOUTH can *possibly* "make" his **6H** contract, and not because the 3-2 "split" indeed is the most likely "split".

Bruce: Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, will Declarer SOUTH certainly "make" his contract if the Trump Hearts "split" 3-2?

Esther: Well, Bruce, no! Even if the Trump Heart "split" indeed is 3-2 Declarer SOUTH can only "make" his contract if (1) one E/W Opponent holds a Heart doubleton, and (2) that Opponent holds the Trump Heart Q,J, and thus Declarer SOUTH

³ 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

can "drop" both these Trump Heart Honors by successively playing the Trump Heart Ace and the Trump Heart King.

Bruce: WOW, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, but *how likely* is a Trump Heart Q,J doubleton even if there is a 3-2 "split"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here are all the *possible* 3-2 "splits" of the Trump Heart cards, Q,J,8,7,6:

1. **Q,J** **8,7,6**
2. Q,8 J,7,6
3. Q,7 J,8,6
4. Q,6 J,8,7
5. J,8 Q,7,6
6. J,7 Q,8,6
7. J,6 Q,8,7
8. 8,7 Q,J,8
9. 8,6 Q,J,7
10. 7,6 Q,J,8

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Esther. You are telling me that (1) I **must** assume that a 3-2 Trump Heart "split" occurred, even though there is a **32.2%** probability that the "split" is not 3-2, and that (2) I **must** *further* assume that if the "split" is 3-2 one E/w Opponent indeed holds the Q,J Trump Heart doubleton even though only a mere **10%** of the **10** possible 3-2 "splits" involve one E/W Opponent holding the Trump Heart Q,J doubleton! This all seems *very, very, very* unlikely!!!

Esther: Well, Bruce, BINGO! But you simply **must** assume even a *very, very, very* unlikely event occurred whenever that event occurring is the only way for you to make your contract. This allows you to capitalize on these *very unlikely, but possible*, events when they indeed occur. And there is no *downside* on your assuming this unlikely event because if this *very, very, very* unlikely event did not occur your contract will be set *anyway*!!!

You **must** allow for the possibility of a *miracle* occurring!!! In the words of my close personal friend, the now deceased ACBL LifeMaster, **Walt Disney**, "**In duplicate bridge, miracles occur every day!**"

BBO Bridge Master Level 2 Lesson B-19

Dealer: **SOUTH**

NORTH (18)

S: K Q J T
H: K 9 6 4
D: A Q
C: Q J T

WEST (1)

S: 9 8 7 5
H: 8 7 6
D: J 9 8 5
C: 9 7

EAST (6)

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

SOUTH (15)

S: A 5 4 3
H: A T 3 2
D: 4 3 2
C: A K

Bidding*

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	PASS	2 C	PASS
2 H	PASS	4 NT	PASS
5 D	PASS	6 H	PASS
PASS	PASS		

*The bidding is by Esther.

On this Board, played “correctly” by Declarer *SOUTH*, the 6**H** contract will “make”!