

"As Declarer in a Suit Contract Running a 'Partial Elimination Endplay'

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 discuss "**As Declarer in a Suit Contract Running a 'Partial Elimination Endplay'**". 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, sorry about that. Well, at the start would you remind us first of what an "**Elimination Endplay**" is?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. As noted in "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #147: "**Using the 'BBO Bridge Master' Website to Repeatedly Practice the 'Elimination Endplay', a Difficult But Sometimes Essential Tool in the Declarer's Toolbox**":

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

"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 or more

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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), 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.

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... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what is a "**Partial Elimination Endplay**" and how is it different than an "**Elimination Endplay**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. In an "**Elimination Endplay**" you "strip" the Opponents of all their cards in certain Suits, often 2 Suits, such that when you *force* an Opponent into the lead the Opponent *inescapably* must lead a card in a Suit that results in your "winning" with a card at an "optimal" lower level. For example, you might hold A,K,9 in a Suit and your LHO holds the Q,J,8 in the Suit and your LHO must lead this Suit. "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #147":

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

uses as an example a Board from the free "**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**" website (Board Level 4 #A-32) so that you can play and *repeatedly* practice making this "**Elimination Endplay**".

However, in a "**Partial Elimination Endplay**" the "[D]eclarer only *partially* eliminates the [S]uits that a [D]efender may safely lead. Whether the [D]efender will have to lead to [D]eclarer's advantage depends on the distribution" which the Declarer must assume (or possibly suspect, or know) that the Opponent holds." [Italics added.]² As defined in the Wikipedia "Glossary of Bridge Terms", a "**Partial Elimination Endplay**" is "an endplay in which [D]eclarer is unable to remove all possible safe defensive [S]uit cards, and must hope that the remaining cards are so distributed that the [D]efense cannot get off lead safely."

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! You are blowin' me away! Well, in any case, can you give us an illustrative bridge Board so that this discussion is more concrete?

² See the "**Partial Elimination**" web posting on the "**Bernard Magee Bridge**" website: <https://bernardmageebridge.com/glossary/partial-elimination/>

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is an example (slightly modified by Esther) from the "Bernard Magee Bridge" "**Partial Elimination**" posting:

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

The final contract is set at **6S SOUTH**. On Trick **#1** WEST leads the Diamond Jack and Declarer SOUTH ruffs. Your plan is to delay playing Hearts until you have first eliminated the other Suits so that if a Heart finesse "loses" to WEST then WEST can *only* return a Heart and give you *both* (1) a discard in the NORTH Dummy and (2) a ruff in your "closed" Hand. However, you *cannot* draw **2** Rounds of Trump and ruff **2** Clubs because the Dummy will be out of Trump cards and it will be safe for E/W to exit in Diamonds.

Therefore, on Trick **#2** you "draw" *only* **1** Round of Trumps. On Tricks **#3** and **#4** you "cash" your "top" **2** Clubs. On Trick **#5** you lead a "low" Club and ruff in the NORTH Dummy. On Trick **#6** you lead a "low" Diamond from the NORTH Dummy and ruff in your own "closed" Hand. On Trick **#7** you lead the Heart 9 from your "closed" Hand and WEST "wins" with the Heart King.

After **7** Tricks N/S have "won" **6** Tricks and E/W have "won" **1** Trick. The **6** cards now held in the **4** Hands are:

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

Because EAST holds the **1** outstanding Trump card the **"Partial Elimination Endplay"** succeeds! If WEST on Trick **#8** leads a Heart SOUTH will "win" in his "closed" Hand with the Heart Queen, on Trick **#9** "draws" EAST's last Trump Spade using the NORTH Dummy Spade King or Queen, and on Trick **#10** lead a "low" Heart to the Declarer's own Heart "top" remaining Honor. The **3** remaining cards in each of the **4** Hands are:

	NORTH (9)	
	S: K	
	H: 7 6	
	D:	
	C:	
WEST (5)		EAST (8)
S:		S:
H:		H:
D: T 9 6		D: Q 8
C:		C: Q
	SOUTH (18)	
	S: J T	
	H:	
	D: --	
	C: 9	

On Tricks **#11** and **#12** Declarer SOUTH can cross-ruff both ways and on Trick **#13** "cash" the last Trump Spade in his "closed" Hand.

If WEST on Trick **#8** instead leads a Diamond SOUTH will "win" in his "closed" Hand with a ruff. On Trick **#9** SOUTH "draws" EAST's last Trump Spade using the NORTH Dummy Spade King or Queen. On Trick **#10** Declarer SOUTH leads a "low"

Heart to his own Heart Ace. The **3** remaining cards in each of the **4** Hands are:

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

On Tricks **#11** and **#12** Declarer SOUTH can cross-ruff both ways and on Trick **#13** "cash" the last Trump Spade in his "closed" Hand.

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! You are blowin' me away! Well, in any case, can you give us another illustrative bridge Board so that this discussion is even more concrete?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. I am going to use as another example Board a Board used in the free "**BBO Bridge Master**" Level 4 Lesson **B-16**. 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 B-16

Dealer: **SOUTH**

NORTH (9)

S: J 6 5
H: 3 2
D: J T 9
C: A K 4 3 2

WEST (14)

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

EAST (3)

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

SOUTH (14)

S: A 4 3 2
H: A K Q J 9 8 7
D: 3 2
C: --

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 H	DBL	RDBL	2 C
3 H	PASS	4 H	PASS
PASS	PASS		

WEST leads the Diamond King, M.U.D. ("Middle, Up, Down") from his Diamond Honor tripleton. WEST plays 3 Rounds of Diamonds and Declarer SOUTH ruffs on Trick #3.

Bruce: Errr, well... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Oh my goodness. Declarer SOUTH has already "lost" 2 Diamond Tricks. And N/S appear to hold 2 Spade "losers". And to make matters very mush worse, Declarer SOUTH has no "entry" into the NORH Dummy to play the Dummy's 2 Club "winners"! Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there any hope at all?

Esther: Well, Bruce, under these circumstances Declarer SOUTH's only hope is that a "**Partial Elimination Endplay**" succeeds! However, success will depend on WEST holding:

1. the Spade K,Q and fewer than 5 Spades,
2. fewer than 2 Hearts, and
3. fewer than 5 Diamonds.

Because WEST bid a "**Takeout/DEMAND Double**" these holdings are actually more likely than they would otherwise be! WEST's **DOUBLE** shows HCPs, "shortness" in the bid Hearts, and likely 4 cards in the unbid Suits. If WEST held (1) ~13 HCPs and (2) a Heart void then WEST likely would have held a biddable 5-card Suit and would have bid that Suit rather than having **DOUBLEd**.

Bruce: Errr, well, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what should Declarer SOUTH lead from his "closed" Hand on Trick #4?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #4 Declarer SOUTH should "cash" his Trump Heart Ace but *only* "draw" 1 Round of Trump. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH should lead a "low" Spade toward the NORTH Dummy's Spade J,x,x holding. If WEST indeed holds the Spade K,Q,x,x WEST will "win" Trick #5. After 5 Tricks N/S have "won" 2 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks and N/S must "win" every remaining Trick. Here are the 8 cards now held in each of the 4 Hands:

NORTH (9)		
S:	J 6	
H:	3	
D:		
C:	A K 4 3 2	
WEST (14)		EAST (3)
S:	K T 9	S: 8
H:		H: T 6
D:	4	D: 8
C:	8 7 6 5	C: Q J T 9
SOUTH (14)		
S:	A 4 3	
H:	K Q J 9 8	
D:		
C:	--	

WEST is "on lead" on Trick #6. WEST will not want to lead his Spade King to be defeated by SOUTH's Spade Ace. If WEST returns the Spade 9 or Ten Declarer SOUTH under the assumptions he has made about WEST's distribution will "win" with the Dummy's Spade Jack. Of course, Declarer SOUTH **must** make these assumptions and the assumptions **must** be true for SOUTH to make his 4H contract.

If WEST on Trick #6 leads either a Diamond or a Club the NORTH Dummy will "win" either of these returns and then (1) "cash" the Dummy's 2 Club Honors while (2) sluffing his own 2 Spade "losers". Declarer SOUTH will exactly "make" his 4H contract!



Esther says...

I, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master and holder of 20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints, *strongly* recommend that you *immediately* proceed to the “**BBO Bridge Master**” website. Once there click on **SKILL LEVEL 4**. Next, click on **SELECT DEAL** and then click **B-16**. Then play that Board as Declarer. Play the Board at least 1 time and preferably 4 or 10 times to practice executing the “*Partial Elimination Endplay*” play!