

**Esther Discusses "If You Can 'Make' a  
'Moysian 4-3 Fit' 4H or 4S Contract with  
Only 7 Trump Cards, Can You 'Make' a  
'Pavliceckian 2-3 Fit' 4S Game Contract with  
Only 5 Trump Cards?"**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

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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 "If You Can 'Make' a 'Moysian 4-3 Fit' 4H or 4S Contract with Only 7 Trump Cards, Can You 'Make' a 'Pavliceckian 2-3 Fit' 4S Game Contract with Only 5 Trump Cards?". 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 Richard Pavlicek's 7/20/86 newspaper bridge column, "What's the Game?":

<https://www.rpbridge.net/7c08.htm>

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<sup>1</sup> 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**.

Here is a little background information about Richard Pavlicek:

### About **Richard Pavlicek**

**Richard Pavlicek** (1945- ) has won **11** North American Bridge Championships, including a record-setting **3** straight wins in the Reisinger Board-a-Match Teams, 1982-84, and again in 1990. He won the 1973 inaugural Grand National Teams tournament and repeated a win there in 1997. He has written or co-authored several bridge books, including with co-author William S. Root their 1981 book, Modern Bridge Conventions. From 1984 until 1990 Pavlicek was the Bridge Columnist for the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel.

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

**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... Are you actually suggesting to me that a bridge Declarer could "make" a **4S** contract when his Partnership together holds only  $2 + 3 = 5$  Trump Spade cards?

**Esther:** Well, my *loquacious linkster*, of course! I think that it is important for you to understand that a variety of miracles can happen *every day* at the bridge table! *First*, for example with respect to **HCPs** I have previously emphasized to you the ACBL bridge documentary film about ACBL LifeMaster James Bond, 007, who in the ACBL bridge documentary film "*Moonraker*" "made" a **7C DOUBLED REDOUBLED** contract when his Partnership together hold *only 8* HCPs!:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/moonraker.pdf>

*Second*, with respect to **Trump card counts**, I have previously discussed with you and Partner together holding a "**Moysian 4-3 Fit**" with only **7** cards in your Trump Suit:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/moysian.pdf>

You can indeed make a **4H** or a **4S** Game contract when your Partnership holds only **7** Trump cards. The "modern" American bridge system emphasizes bidding **5**-card Majors and holding **8+** Trump cards to bid **4H** or **4S**. But as Pam LaShelle, in an

article posted on the Austin Bridge website, "The Moysian Fit",<sup>2</sup> noted:

"Alphonse Moyse (1897-1973), genius bridge columnist, fabulous bridge player was a strong advocate of opening 4 card majors and even went so far as to advocate playing in a 4-3 fit. He wrote for over 20 years and wrote under the names of Josephine and Eli Culbertson in newspapers and bridge magazines. He thought that many times you could make a game contract in a 4-3 fit when no other game would make. Time has proved that he was right!"

**Bruce:** Well, Esther, all I can say is, **WOW!!!**... I thought you *usually* need your Partnership to hold ~26+ HCPs and 8+ Trump cards for your Partnership to "make" a 4**H** or 4**S** contract!

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, that is all "correct"! But, Bruce, the operative word is "*usually*". I think that it is important for you as my "hapless bridge student" to understand that **"Bridge is a game of General Bridge Principles, but also a game of exceptions!"** Now here is the relevant bridge Board that Richard Pavlicek presented in his 1986 newspaper bridge column which involved the Declarer's Partnership holding a **"Pavlice kian 2-3 Fit"** of 5 and not 8 Trump cards:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://austinbridge.org/sbruce/lecture/Intermediate-Advanced%202023%20Moysian2.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Please note that the term **"Pavlice kian 2-3 Fit"** is a term invented by Esther and is not generally recognized (yet) within the bridge community!

Dealer: **NORTH**

Vul: **BOTH**

|  | NORTH (14)          |  | EAST (3)            |
|--|---------------------|--|---------------------|
|  | <b>S:</b> T 2       |  | <b>S:</b> 8 6 5 4 3 |
|  | <b>H:</b> A K 5 4 3 |  | <b>H:</b> 9 2       |
|  | <b>D:</b> K T       |  | <b>D:</b> 9 3       |
|  | <b>C:</b> A 8 6 3   |  | <b>C:</b> Q J T 7   |
|  | WEST (12)           |  | SOUTH (11)          |
|  | <b>S:</b> K Q J     |  | <b>S:</b> A 9 7     |
|  | <b>H:</b> Q J T 6   |  | <b>H:</b> 8 7       |
|  | <b>D:</b> Q J 8 7   |  | <b>D:</b> A 6 4 3 2 |
|  | <b>C:</b> 9 4       |  | <b>C:</b> K 5 2     |

**Bruce:** Hmmm, well, Esther... Are you telling me that N/S on this Board can "make" a 4**S** contract when together they hold *only*  $2 + 3 = 5$  Trump cards??? What happened to the "**Law of Total Tricks**"?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, that is indeed not what I am telling you!!! Instead, I am telling you that:

1. N/S *can* indeed "make" a 4**S** contract on these holdings, and
2. N/S *can not* "make" *any other* Game contract on this Board (i.e., not 3**NT**, not 4**H**, not 5**C**, and not 5**D**)!

Bruce, here is the "**Double Dummy Analysis**" of this Board showing all possible "makeable" contracts for all 4 players on this Board conducted using the online site "**Bridge Solver**":

[https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload\\_from\\_chrome.htm](https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload_from_chrome.htm)

|   | <b>C</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>H</b> | <b>S</b> | <b>NT</b> |
|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| N | 4        | 3        | 3        | 4        | 2         |
| S | 4        | 3        | 3        | 4        | 2         |
| E | -        | -        | -        | -        | -         |
| W | -        | -        | -        | -        | -         |

As Pavlicek notes, "You guessed it—four spades is the only makeable game."

In short, Bruce, on this Board:

1. N/S will not "make" a 4**H** Game contract even though N/S hold (a)  $5 + 2 = 7$  Trump Hearts and (b) **2** "top" Honors, the Heart A,K.

2. N/S will not "make" a 5C Game contract even though N/S hold (a)  $4 + 3 = 7$  Trump Clubs and (b) 2 "top" Honors, the Club A,K.
3. N/S will not "make" a 5D Game contract even though N/S hold (a)  $2 + 5 = 7$  Trump Diamonds and (b) 2 "top" Honors, the Diamond A,K.
4. N/S will not "make" a 3NT contract even though N/S hold  $1 + 2 + 2 + 2 = 7$  1<sup>st</sup>-Round "control" cards, the Spade Ace, the Heart A,K, the Diamond A,K, and the Club A,K.
5. But N/S will "make" a 4S Game contract even though N/S hold (a)  $2 + 3 = 5$  Trump Spades and (b) only 1 "top" Honor, the Spade Ace! Yes, Virginia, the Suit with (a) the *fewest* Trump cards and (b) the *fewest* Honors is the *only* Game contract that will "make"!



Esther says..

**"Bruce, welcome to the *fascinating*  
and *complex* world of duplicate bridge!"**

**Bruce:** Oh, my, Esther, I am in *shock*! Does this mean that the bridge "**Law of Total Tricks**" is *dead*?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I hardly think so! Bruce, this is a simple matter. **"Bridge is a game of General Bridge Principles, but also a game of exceptions!"** And, no, I don't think that the "**Law of Total Tricks**" is dead! I instead merely think that **"Bridge is a game of General Bridge Principles, but also a game of exceptions!"**

**Bruce:** Hmmm, well, Esther... Could you talk us through the Declarer's "Line of Play" on this Board as described by Richard Pavlicek, the inventor of the "**Pavlicekian 2-3 Fit**"?

**Esther:** Well, my *studly salamander*, I will certainly try to help you. Here is how Declarer SOUTH played this Board according to Pavlicek:

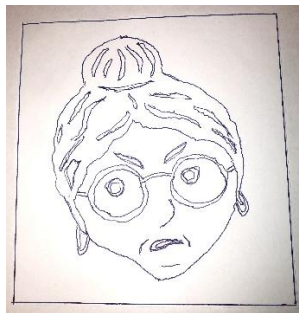
1. On Trick **#1** after WEST led the Spade King Declarer SOUTH "wins" with his own Club Ace.
2. On Tricks **#2-#7** SOUTH "cashes" all his A,K "winners" ending in the NORTH Dummy.
3. On Trick **#8** SOUTH leads a "low" NORTH Dummy Heart and ruffs with his own Trump Spade 7 (unless EAST ruffs with the 8 in which case SOUTH Overruffs).
4. On Trick **#9** Declarer SOUTH leads a "low" Diamond and ruffs with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Spade Ten.
5. On Tricks **#10** Declarer SOUTH leads a NORTH Dummy Heart and ruffs with his own Trump Spade 9.

At this point Declarer SOUTH has successfully "made" the N/S 4**S** contract holding *only* (1)  $2 + 3 = 5$  Trump Spade cards and (2)  $14 + 11 = 25$  HCPs! The "**Pavlicekian 2-3 Fit**" prevails!



**Bruce says...**

"But, Esther, even if bridge players *can* 'make' a 4**S** Game contract even when holding a '**Pavlicekian 2-3 Fit**', do you think 2 real world bridge Pair players would *ever* 'find' this 4**S** contract???"



**Esther says...**

"Well, Bruce, probably not. Nevertheless, I do think it is important for newer bridge players to *conceptually* understand that (1) HCPs, (2) Trump card counts, and (3) Suit distributions interact in *complex* ways to define what is indeed possible at the bridge table!"