

Esther Discusses
"Playing a Suit Contract When Both
Opposing Pairs Have Demonstrated
'*Reciprocal Suit Fits*' "

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 "**Playing a Suit Contract When Both Opposing Pairs Have Demonstrated '*Reciprocal Suit Fits*'**". 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 first by telling us what you mean by a "**Reciprocal Suit Fits**"?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I will certainly try to help you.

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?

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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.

Well, in any case, "Reciprocal Suit Fits" involve situations in which both opposing Partnerships may hold *different 8+* card "fits" or even both opposing Partnerships may indeed hold not 1 but **2 8+** card "fits"! This latter situation is called a "**Double Double Reciprocal Fit**"!

Here is an illustrative example previously discussed in my "**Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson**" on the importance of playing as declarer when both Opposing Pairs hold "**Mirrored Hands**":

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/Mirror H.pdf>

This example is from Ted Muller's article, "Mirror Hands (3)" on his "Ted's Bridge World" website:

<https://tedmuller.us/Esotericz/MirrotHands-3.htm>

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

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

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

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This Board is quite unusual in that (1) every player holds **10** HCPs, (2) both EAST or WEST can "make" a **5C** or **5H** contract, (3) both NORTH or SOUTH can "make" a **5D** or **5S** contract, and (4) all 4 players can "make" a **3NT** contract even though both Pairs hold only **20** HCPs! Here is a Double Dummy Analysis (DDA) of the Boards showing all "makeable" bridge contracts on the Board:

	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	5	-	5	3
S	-	5	-	5	3
E	5	-	5	-	3
W	5	-	5	-	3

This DDA was performed using the "Bridge Solver" Double Dummy Analysis website:

<https://dds.bridgewebs.com/bridgesolver/upload from chrome.htm>

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, errr..., is it *common* for both opposing Pairs to hold **8+** card "fits" in different Suits?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you! As discussed in **Section #6** of my "Esther Bridge Lesson" titled "**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, if you and your Partner hold **1** 8-card "fit" in **1** Suit there is a **66.7%** probability that your Opponents also hold **1** 8-card "fit" in a different Suit. If you and your Partner hold **2** 8-card "fits" in **2** Suits there is a **32.1%** probability that your Opponents hold **2** 8-card Suit "fits" and a **47.6%** probability that your Opponents hold 9-card fits in **2** other Suits!

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, errr..., I imagine that when both opposing Partnerships hold "fits" in different Suits and you are playing a Suit contract as Declarer that you must play taking this situation fully into account. Is that correct, Esther?

Esther: Well, my *studly Studebaker*, you are certainly correct about that!

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther, would you talk us through a bridge board involving both opposing Pairs holding "**Reciprocal Suit Fits**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, as you may know 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. Here in the present lesson I am going to use as an example Board the Board used in the **Bridge Master** Level 5 Lesson **B-09**. I may have altered some cards in some Hands.

BBO Bridge Master Level 5 Lesson B-09

Dealer: **EAST**

NORTH (3)

S: 5 4 3 2

H: --

D: J 7 4 2

C: Q T 9 8 7

WEST (8)

S: 6

H: K Q J T 9 7

D: Q 9 6 5

C: 4 2

EAST (11)

S: T

H: A 8 6 5 4 3 2

D: K 8

C: A 6 5

SOUTH (18)

S: A K Q J 9 8 7

H: --

D: A T 3

C: K J 3

Bidding

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
1H	DBL	4H	PASS
PASS	4S	5H	5S
PASS	6S	PASS	PASS
PASS			

WEST leads his Heart King, the highest card in Partner EAST's bid Suit.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Ummm... WEST's lead of his Heart King offers Declarer SOUTH the opportunity for a ruff from 1 N/S Hand and a sluff/discard from the other N/S Hand. (1) From which N/S Hand should Declarer SOUTH *ruff* and (2) from which N/S Hand should SOUTH *discard*?

Esther: Well, Bruce, a discard from the NORTH Dummy will be useless to N/S. Furthermore, Declarer SOUTH wants to keep all the Clubs in his own "closed" Hand. And the N/S Diamonds may become useful. So, SOUTH could actually ruff in *both* the NORTH and SOUTH Hands and will "win" *no fewer Tricks* with the N/S Trump Spades by playing this way. Here SOUTH overruffs with his own Trump Spade 7.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Thank you very much. So, shouldn't Declarer SOUTH now try to "draw" the **2** "missing" E/W Trump Spades?

Esther: Well, my *curious carnivore*, you are *exactly* correct! On Trick #2 Declarer SOUTH "drops" both the "missing" 2 Trump Spades.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Now what should Declarer SOUTH lead on Trick #3?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Declarer SOUTH on Trick #3 SOUTH should lead his own Club King. As it turns out EAST holds the Club Ace but EAST will "duck" in order to have a "stopper" against N/S "promoting" his "long" Clubs which having "drawn" all the E/W Trump cards can now be safely "run" once the E/W Club Ace is "dropped".

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... After Trick #3 N/S have "won" 3 Tricks and E/W have "won" 0 Tricks. The 10 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

	NORTH (3)	
	S: 5 4	
	H: --	
	D: J 7 4 2	
	C: Q T 9 8	
WEST (8)		EAST (11)
S:		S:
H: Q J T 9 7		H: A 8 6 5 4 3
D: Q 9 6 5		D: K 8
C: 4		C: A 6
	SOUTH (18)	
	S: K Q J 9 8	
	H: --	
	D: A T 3	
	C: J 3	

Now what should Declarer SOUTH lead on Trick #4?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Declarer SOUTH on Trick #4 SOUTH should lead his own Club Jack.

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... I guess Declarer SOUTH should play the NORTH Dummy's "low" Club on Trick #4. Is this correct?

Esther: Well, Bruce, now this time you are *completely incorrect!!!* SOUTH should lead his own Club Jack on Trick #4 not to "win" Trick #4 but instead to "unblock" the NORTH Dummy's Club T,9,8 some of which will (1) later become "promoted" into "winners" and (2) a place to later "dump" Declarer SOUTH's own Diamond "losers".

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... On Trick #4 EAST again "ducks" and again does not play his Club Ace. Because EAST repeatedly "ducked" in Clubs the NORTH Dummy's Club Suit is now likely dead. What hope does Declarer SOUTH now have for "making" his 6S contract?

Esther: Well, Bruce, there is still a chance for Declarer SOUTH to make his 6S contract. SOUTH must hope (and therefore **must** assume) that EAST holds (1) a Diamond K,9, K,8, Q,9, or Q,8 doubleton and (2) the Club Ace so that EAST can be forced into the lead to be "endplayed".

On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH plays a "low" NORTH Dummy Diamond, EAST plays his Diamond 8, Declarer SOUTH plays his Diamond Ten, and WEST "wins" Trick #5 with his Diamond Queen. After Trick #5 N/S have "won" 4 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. The 8 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

	NORTH (3)	
	S: 5 4	
	H: --	
	D: J 7 4	
	C: T 9 8	
WEST (8)		EAST (11)
S:		S:
H: Q J T 9 7		H: A 8 6 5 4 3
D: 9 6 5		D: K
C:		C: A
	SOUTH (18)	
	S: K Q J 9 8	
	H: --	
	D: A 3	
	C: 3	

On Trick #6 WEST has no real choice except to return the Diamond 5, SOUTH plays the NORTH Dummy 4, EAST must play his Diamond King, and SOUTH "wins" Trick #6 with his Diamond Ace.

On Trick #7 Declarer SOUTH can lead his own Diamond 3 to finesse against WEST. No matter which Diamond WEST plays on Trick #7 N/S will then on Tricks #8 "win" 1 more Diamond Tricks. On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH will sluff/discard his own Club 3 "loser". At this point Declarer SOUTH's Trump Spades are all "good" and SOUTH exactly "makes" his 6S contract.



Esther says:

“Why not proceed *immediately* to ‘**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**’ Level-5 Lesson #**B-09** to practice executing the play of this Board where both Pairs held “fit” in different Suits? Search ‘BBO’, then Click ‘Bridge Master’, then Click ‘Play’, then Click ‘Level 5’, then Click ‘B-09’. You can play this Board *repeatedly* in Bridge Master for *free!*”

Esther also says...

“I have now prepared a ‘Map’ of all the ‘**Esther Bridge ‘Pop’ Quizzes**’ that use ‘BBO Bridge Master’ lessons to teach the ‘*Squeeze Play*’, the ‘*Elimination Endplay*’, the ‘*Loser-on-Loser Play*’, the ‘*Unblocking Play*’, and the ‘*Dummy Reversal Play*’”:

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