

**"A Concession Discard versus a Ruff:
What Bridge General Principle Should Guide
Your Decision as Declarer?"**

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 **"A Concession Discard versus a Ruff: What Bridge General Principle Should Guide Your Decision as Declarer?"**. 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 outset why don't you tell us the main purpose of today's lesson?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. The purpose of today's **"Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson"** is to teach you an important **"General Bridge Principle"** about *when* you should "concede" a Trick to the Defenders as against "ruffing".

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm... Well, before we delve into your fascinating topic would you first tell us about *who* generated these bridge ideas and *where* these ideas were first published?

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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, Bruce, of course I am happy to address your questions. The present "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson" is based on a 1/8/89 newspaper bridge column, "The Delicate Art of Timing", which was written by Richard Pavlicek. This "Real Deal" was played in the Knockout Swiss Team contest during the 1989 Spring North American Bridge Championships in Reno, NV. Pavlicek sat EAST on this "Real Deal" bridge Board.

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. Esther particularly likes the Bridge Simulation Studies presented on his bridge website:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/rpsi.htm>

and his re-posts of his newspaper bridge columns:

<https://www.rpbridge.net/rpco.htm>

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, OK. Would you now present this "Real Deal" bridge Board that Pavlicek played?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I certainly want to help you. Here is the bridge Board that Pavlicek played in the 1989 bridge championships:

Dealer: **EAST**

Vul: **NONE**

NORTH (12)

S: 3

H: K Q 2

D: A 7 6 5 4

C: K 6 5 3

WEST (13)

S: A Q T 2

H: 9 8

D: K J 3

C: Q J 9 4

EAST (2)

S: J 9 6 5

H: J T 3

D: T 9 8 2

C: T 8

SOUTH (13)

S: K 8 7 4

H: A 7 6 5 4

D: Q

C: A 7 2

Bidding

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
PASS	1 H	DBL*	RDBL**
1 S	DBL***	PASS	3 H
PASS	4 H	PASS	PASS
PASS			

*"Partner, I hold (1) ~13 HCPs, (2) I am 'short' in Hearts, (3) I do not have a 5-card Suit, (4) but I can 'support' any Suit except Hearts."

**"Partner, I hold 3 of your Hearts and have at least a 'near opening' Hand."

***"Partner, I hold 'long' Spades and we may want to 'set' them if they keep bidding Spades."

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you now discuss how the 4 players actually played on this "Real Deal" at Pavlicek's bridge table?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. WEST knew that he held 4 Spades, EAST probably held 4 Spades, and Declarer SOUTH likely held 4 Spades, so the NORTH Dummy was expected to hold a Spade singleton or void. So WEST decided to play "passively" in a Suit where N/S would inevitably "win" Tricks and so led his Trump Heart 8.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what did Declarer SOUTH see as soon as the NORTH Dummy was exposed?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. Declarer SOUTH saw that assuming there was the *most-likely* (67.8% probability²) 3-2 Trump Heart "split" that N/S should "win" 5 Trump Heart Tricks, at least 1 Diamond Trick, the Dummy's Diamond Ace, and 2 Club Tricks, the Club A,K. SOUTH can also afford to ruff 1, but only 1 Spade Trick, given the need to "draw" 3 Rounds of Trump Hearts, for a total of $5 + 1 + 2 + 1 = 9$ Tricks. Declarer SOUTH sees as certain "losers" the 1 Spade "lost" on Trick #1 and 1 Club.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, where can Declarer SOUTH "win" his *needed* 10th Trick?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH plans to try to "promote" a Diamond "winner" from within the NORTH Dummy's "long" Diamonds.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you now talk us through the actual play at Pavlicek's bridge table?

Esther: Well, Bruce, sure.

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

		NORTH (12)	
		S:	3 4
		H:	K Q 2 1 5 7
		D:	A 7 6 <u>5</u> <u>4</u> 2 6 3
		C:	K 6 5 3
WEST (13)		EAST (2)	
S:		S:	
A Q T 2 4 7		J 9 6 5 7 4	
H:		H:	
<u>9 8</u> 5 1		J T 3 5 1	
D:		D:	
K J 3 6 3 2		T 9 8 2 6 3 2	
C:		C:	
Q J 9 4		T 8	
		SOUTH (13)	
		S:	
		K 8 <u>7</u> <u>4</u> 7 4	
		H:	
		A 7 6 5 4 6 5 3 1	
		D:	
		Q 2	
		C:	
		A 7 2	

Led cards are underlined. "Winner" cards are **bolded**.
Unplayed cards are presented in **bold green**.

1. On Trick **#1** Declarer SOUTH "won" with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Heart King.
2. On Trick **#2** SOUTH "cashed" the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Ace. [Diamond Trick #1]
3. On Trick **#3** Declarer SOUTH led a "low" NORTH Dummy Diamond and ruffed from his own Hand. [Diamond Trick #2]
4. On Trick **#4** Declarer SOUTH led a "low" Spade" from his Hand conceding a Trick to E/W but creating a Spade void in the NORTH Dummy.
5. On Trick **#5** WEST led Trump Hearts for a 2nd time and "won" with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Heart Queen.
6. On Trick **#6** Declarer led a "low" North Dummy Diamond and ruffed from his own Hand. [Diamond Trick #3]

7. On Trick #7 Declarer SOUTH led a "low" Spade from his own Hand and ruffed for the NORTH Dummy with the Dummy's Trump Heart 2.

NORTH (12)

S: 3
4
H: K Q 2
1 5 7
D: A 7 6 5 4
2 6 3
C: K 6 5 3

WEST (13)

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

EAST (2)

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

SOUTH (13)

S: K 8 7 4
7 4
H: A 7 6 5 4
6 5 3 1
D: Q
2
C: A 7 2

Now on Trick #8 if SOUTH leads another Diamond from the NORTH Dummy to "drop" the last E/W Diamond card and SOUTH "wins" with his last Trump card, the Trump Heart Ace, then SOUTH cannot "draw" the last E/W Trump card, the Trump Heart Jack. On the other Hand, if SOUTH "ducks" on the Diamond Trick conceding Trick #8 to E/W then E/W will later "win" a 3rd Trick with their Spade Ace and a 4th Trick with the Trump Heart Jack. So, SOUTH 4H contract goes down -1!

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Where did Declarer SOUTH go wrong? Is there any way that SOUTH could "make" his 4H contract? Was Declarer SOUTH "wrong" to try to "promote" Diamonds in the NORTH Dummy?

Esther: Well, Bruce, no, SOUTH was correct to try to "promote" a Diamond in the NORTH Dummy. But SOUTH's "timing" in playing

Dummy Diamonds was "incorrect". Here is a very important
"General Bridge Principle":



Esther says...

"General Bridge Principle"

"As Declarer when you are trying to 'promote' cards in one Hand that you control by ruffing from the other Hand that you control, when you do not have a sufficient number of Trump cards to succeed, then first '*concede*' an *early* Trick in the Suit from the Hand that is 'long' in the Suit."

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen,
Would you now talk us through Declarer's "correct" "Line of
Play" on this bridge Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course!

		NORTH (12)			
		S: 3			
		5			
		H: K Q 2			
		1 3 7			
		D: A 7 $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{2}$			
		C: K 6 5 3			
		9 6			
		WEST (13)		EAST (2)	
		S: A Q T 2		S: J 9 6 5	
		5 9 7		7 5	
		H: $\frac{9}{3}$ $\frac{8}{1}$		H: J T 3	
				9 3 1	
		D: K J 3		D: T 9 8 2	
		2 8 4		8 4 2	
		C: Q J 9 $\frac{4}{6}$		C: T 8	
				6	
		SOUTH (13)			
		S: K 8 7 $\frac{4}{5}$			
		H: A 7 6 5 4			
		9 8 4 3 1			
		D: Q			
		2			
		C: A 7 2			
		6			

1. On Trick #1 Declarer SOUTH "won" with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Heart King.
2. On Trick #2 SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy's Diamond 2, not the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Ace, plays his own Diamond Queen singleton, and WEST "wins" with his Diamond King. [Diamond Trick #1] This *early* concession of a Diamond Trick is *essential* to SOUTH making his 4H contract!
3. On Trick #3 continues to "attack" Trump Hearts and leads his Trump Heart 9 and Declarer SOUTH "wins" with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Heart Queen.
4. On Trick #4 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy's Diamond 5 and ruffs from his own Hand. [Diamond Trick #3]
5. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH leads his Spade King and WEST "wins" with his Spade Ace but now the NORTH Dummy is void in Spades.

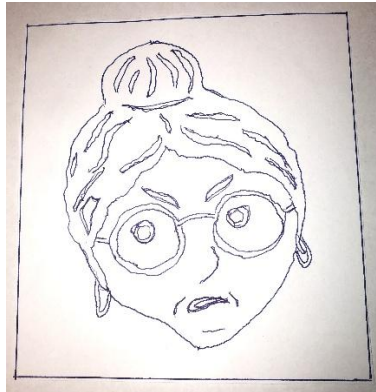
6. On Trick #6 WEST leads his Club 4 and Declarer SOUTH "wins" with his own Club Ace.

		NORTH (12)			
		S:	3		
			5		
		H:	K Q 2		
			1 3 7		
		D:	A 7 $\frac{6}{8}$ $\frac{5}{4}$ $\frac{4}{2}$		
		C:	K 6 5 3		
			10 9 6		
				EAST (2)	
		S:	J 9 6 5		
			7 5		
		H:	J T 3		
			9 3 1		
		D:	T 9 8 2		
			8 4 2		
		C:	T 8		
			10 6		
				WEST (13)	
		S:	A Q T 2		
			5 9 7		
		H:	$\frac{9}{3}$ $\frac{8}{1}$		
		D:	K J 3		
			2 8 4		
		C:	Q J 9 $\frac{4}{6}$		
			10		
				SOUTH (13)	
		S:	K 8 7 $\frac{4}{7}$		
			5		
		H:	A 7 6 5 4		
			9 8 4 3 1		
		D:	Q		
			2		
		C:	A 7 $\frac{2}{10}$		
			6		

7. On Trick #7 Declarer SOUTH leads his Spade 4 and ruffs in the NORTH Dummy.
8. On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy's Diamond 6 and ruffs from his own Hand.
9. On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH "draws" the last E/W Trump card, EAST's Heart Jack.
10. On Trick #10 SOUTH leads a "low" Club to the NORTH Dummy's Club King.

On Trick #11 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" the Dummy's Diamond Ace and the last E/W Diamond "drops". On Trick #12 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" the now "promoted" Dummy Diamond 7 "winner". WEST seeing the NORTH Dummy will be leading a Club on Trick #13 and so presumably reserves his Club Queen for a "win", but Declarer SOUTH by following Esther's *very important*

"General Bridge Principle" will "make" his 4^H contract thanks to an early "concession" in the Suit Declarer is "promoting".



Esther says...

"General Bridge Principle"

"As Declarer when you are trying to 'promote' cards in one Hand that you control by ruffing from the other Hand that you control, when you do not have a sufficient number of Trump cards to succeed, then first '*concede*' an *early* Trick in the Suit from the Hand that is 'long' in the Suit."