

**"As a Duplicate Pairs MatchPoint Player
Is Your Goal a 'Top' 100% Board or a
'Better Than Average' 70% Board?"**

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 a Duplicate Pairs MatchPoint Player Is Your Goal a 'Top' 100% Board or a 'Better Than Average' 70% Board?"**. 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 get you to focus on developing and articulating a *specific* Board Percentage goal that should govern your and Partner's (1) bidding and (2) play. This needs to be *specific* and is a matter of *explicit* Partnership Agreement! Do you and Partner in your (1) bidding and (2) play want to pursue a **100%** Board Percentage on *each* and *every* bridge Board, or instead do you want to pursue a **70%** Board Percentage on *each* and *every* bridge Board?

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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.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm... Wouldn't you as a bridge MatchPoints players **always** want a **100%** bridge Board Percentage on *each* and *every* single bridge Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course you would like a **100%** bridge Board Percentage on *each* and *every* single bridge Board in order to "balance out" some of your *less favorable* bridge Board Percentages, such as **0%**, that you also earned during a given competition.

But bridge requires you to make a TON of decisions on which you *balance* rewards as against risks. If your goal is to earn a **100%** bridge Board Percentage on *each* and *every* single bridge Board you are inherently going to have to take way *more risks*! You are going to have to (1) make more bids that are risky and (2) play for more Overtricks that may involve risks!

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, how do Partners sort through these decisions?

Esther: Well, Bruce, these decisions turn on whether you and Partner want to come in **1st** and any other competition ranking is of *no (zero) interest* to you. Or do you and Partner instead want to try to earn ACBL MatchPoints in each competition? If your goal is to earn MatchPoints in each competition then you will do quite well if you set the goal of earning a bridge Board Percentage of **70%** on *each* Board. In virtually every ACBL bridge MatchPoint competition if you and Partner have a Total Percentage **70%** or higher you will almost certainly come in **1st** in the competition!

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you now discuss a specific bridge Board so that this discussion becomes more concrete?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. The present "Esther Bridge Dialog Lesson" is based on the 11/22/87 Pavlicek newspaper bridge column, "Table Presence Is Key to Success".

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

The following "Real Deal" Board was played by Gracie Gabbai sitting SOUTH in the 1987 Open Pairs competition in the Robert Reynolds Memorial Bridge Tournament in Miami.

Dealer: **SOUTH**

Vul: **BOTH**

		NORTH (10)				EAST (7)	
		S:	A 7 3 2			S:	J T 9 4
		H:	J T 7			H:	8 4 2
		D:	9 5 4			D:	K Q J 6 2
		C:	K Q 6			C:	8
WEST (8)							
S:	8 6						
H:	A K 9 3						
D:	8 3						
C:	J 9 7 4 2						
		SOUTH (15)					
		S:	K Q 5				
		H:	Q 6 5				
		D:	A T 7				
		C:	A T 5 3				

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	PASS	3 NT *	PASS
PASS	PASS		

*NORTH quite correctly did not bid "2**C** Stayman" asking Partner for a 4-card Major because although NORTH held (1) 8-10 HCPs and (2) a 4-card Major NORTH's distribution was 4-3-3-3. Responder should never bid "2**C** Stayman" when holding a 4-3-3-3 or 3-4-3-3 "flat" distribution:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/staym 2.pdf>

WEST leads his Club 4 as **4th** from the "top" of his "longest and strongest" Suit so that once the NORTH Dummy is exposed Partner EAST (and Declarer SOUTH) can use the "**Rule of 11**"² to determine exactly how many Club cards higher than the Club 4 Declarer (and EAST) hold.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you talk us through Declarer Gracie Gabbai play of the Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. Declarer SOUTH saw as "likely" "winners" **4** Clubs, given WEST's lead, **3** Spades, the Spade A,K,Q, and **1** Diamond, the Diamond Ace, for a total of 4 + 3 + 1 = **8** Tricks. SOUTH's initial plan was to develop a **9th** Trick in Hearts.

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see "Some of the 40 or So Bridge Bidding/Play 'Rules'":
<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/rules.pdf>

	NORTH (10)	
	S: A 7 3 2	
	H: J T 7	
	D: 9 5 4	
	C: K Q 6	
WEST (8)		EAST (7)
S: 8 6		S: J T 9 4
H: A K 9 3		H: 8 4 2
D: 8 3		D: K Q J 6 2
C: J 9 7 4 2		C: 8
	SOUTH (15)	
	S: K Q 5	
	H: Q 6 5	
	D: A T 7	
	C: A T 5 3	

1. On Trick #1 Declarer SOUTH "ducked" in the north Dummy and "won" with her own Club 10.
2. On Trick #2 SOUTH led a "low" Heart in the hopes of "promoting" N/S Hearts to create a 9th Trick and WEST "won" with his Heart King.
3. On Trick #3 WEST led a "low" Club to the NORTH Dummy Club Queen.
4. On Trick #4 Declarer SOUTH led the NORTH Dummy's Heart Jack and WEST "won" with his Heart Ace.
5. On Trick #5 WEST realizing the futility of further pursuing Clubs and shifted to leading a small Diamond to EAST's Diamond Jack.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Declarer SOUTH could guarantee her contract by "winning" Trick #5 with her Diamond Ace. Shouldn't a Declarer ALWAYS *immediately* "make" her contract as soon as she can do so?

Esther: Well, Bruce, again it depends upon what the Declarer's goal is: a **70%** Board Percentage, or a **100%** Board percentage! As Pavlicek noted,

"...tournaments are not won by being lazy. With nine tricks you look for 10, with 10 you look for 11, etc."

At the actual bridge table on this "Real Deal" Declarer Gracie Gabbai saw the potential of "winning" a 10th "extra" Trick in Spades. But if the 13 - 4 - 3 = 6 Spades did not "split" 3-3 then this 10th Trick could *only* be "won" by running a "Squeeze Play" against EAST:

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

The "Squeeze Play" required SOUTH to "win" all but 1 of the remaining Tricks. SOUTH on Trick #5 "ducked" 1 Round

of Diamonds to put EAST in the lead. On Trick **#6** EAST returned a "low" Diamond and Declarer SOUTH then "won" the **2nd** Diamond Round with his own Diamond Ten. SOUTH next on Trick **#7** "unblocked" Clubs by playing the last Club Honor in the NORTH Dummy. Then on Trick **#8** SOUTH "cashed" her own Club Ace forcing EAST to discard his Spade "stopper" in order to keep his "high" Diamond, and SOUTH then "won" the rest of the Tricks for a total of **10** Tricks!