

**"As Declarer a Type of 'Coup Endplay' Called the
'Trump Coup Endplay' Can Work Miracles
When One Opponent Holds All the Remaining Trump
Cards Including a 'High' Trump Honor"**

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 a Type of 'Coup Endplay' Called the 'Trump Coup Endplay' Can Work Miracles When One Opponent Holds All the Remaining Trump Cards Including a 'High' Trump Honor"**. 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 a **"Coup Play"** is?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. A **"coup"** is one of a variety of bridge **"endplays."** As noted in "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #68: **"A Brief Review of 8**

Bridge 'Coup' Plays: From 'Bath' to 'Vienna'":²

"Merriam-Webster's defines a 'coup' as 'a sudden decisive exercise of force' often involving a 'violent overthrow or alteration'. In duplicate

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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.

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: <https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/coup.pdf>

bridge, '**Coup**' refers to a *diverse* set of *different* play strategies for *different* situations, each given specific *descriptive* names (e.g., 'Scissors Coup', 'Merrimac Coup', 'Vienna Coup'), that can be used to structure the Opponents' 'Lines of Play' in ways that are favorable to the player executing the '**Coup**'. '**Coups**' have as a feature Opponents being generally unable to escape the '**Coup**' effects once the '**Coup**' is implemented."

One variation of a "**Coup Endplay**" is the "**Trump Coup Endplay**".

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you give us a brief definition of what a "**Trump Coup Endplay**" is?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you:

A bridge "**Trump Coup Endplay**" is a strategy to outmaneuver an Opponent who holds outstanding Trump cards including a "high" Trump card. The "**Trump Coup Endplay**" is performed by you as Declarer reducing your Trump card length to be *less than or equal* to that of the Opponent holding Trump cards including the outstanding Trump "high" card, and then leading a "side" Suit card from either your or Dummy's Hand *forcing* that Opponent to ruff such that you can Overruff. The "**Trump Coup Endplay**" is beneficial when one Hand you control holds no Trump cards to finesse through the Opponent still holding the "high" Trump card.

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

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. Here is an example of a "**Trump Coup Endplay**" modified from the Wikipedia entry, "Trump Coup", in which Declarer SOUTH is playing a Spade contract and the NORTH Dummy is on lead.

	S -	
	H A	
	D -	
	C 4 2	
S -		S K 4
H 7		H 6
D -		D -
C A K		C -
	S A Q	
	H 4	
	D -	
	C -	

Obviously, Declarer SOUTH has no Trump Spades remaining in the NORTH Dummy that can be used to finesse through EAST. On Trick #11 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Heart Ace. Next, on Trick #12 when Declarer SOUTH leads a Club from the NORTH Dummy SOUTH will Overtake whichever Trump Spade EAST plays and then "win" Trick #13 in his own "closed" Hand.

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Would you explain the basic steps for executing the "Trump Coup Endplay"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. There are 2 basic steps to executing a "Trump Coup Endplay":

1. You must ruff yourself down to the same Trump card length as the Opponent holding Trump cards including a Trump Honor, and then...
2. Near the end of play you must be in the Hand you control that is opposite your Partnership's Hand holding your remaining Trump cards. Usually you need to be in the Dummy because usually (not always) your own "closed" Hand holds your Partnership's "long" trump cards. and You then lead a "side" Suit from Dummy that both your Opponent still holding Trump cards can ruff and you can in turn Overruff.

Bruce: Oh, my, goodness, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! But I thought that a Declarer never should never "shorten" the "long" Trump holdings in his own "closed" Hand because these Trump cards will always "win" anyway and by doing so we will not gain "extra" Tricks. Instead, we want to ruff in the Dummy that is usually "short" in Trump cards!!!

Esther: Well, Bruce, indeed, that is *usually* the case. But bridge is a game of "exceptions" and the "**Trump Coup Endplay**" involves one of these exceptions! As Michael Arnowitz noted in his web posting, "Defending and Declaring a Trump Coup":³

"As beginners, we are taught not to voluntarily shorten our trump in our long hand. These trump will be as good at the end of the hand as at the beginning, so *we don't want to lose control*. Trump coup hands are an *exception* to this. We *must* shorten our trump to the same length as the defender to our right who has the finessable [Trump] honor." [italics added]

Bruce: Well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you now talk us through the play step-by-step on a bridge Board involving "**Trump Coup Endplay**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. 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 I am going to use as an example Board a Board used in the **Bridge Master** Level 4 Lesson **D-08**. I may have altered some cards in some Hands.

³ See: <https://mapiano.com/coup.htm>

Trump Club Trick will "set" the N/S 5C contract. To protect against EAST holding the Club T,x,x,x Declarer SOUTH will now set up his **"Trump Coup Endplay"**.

1. On Trick #4 Declarer SOUTH leads a "low" Diamond to ruff in his own "closed" Hand.
2. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH leads a "low" Trump Club to the NORTH Dummy's Club King. WEST indeed "shows out" of Clubs and the initial 4-0 Trump Club "split" is revealed.
3. On Trick #6 Declarer SOUTH continues the process of "stripping" EAST of his Diamonds by ruffing another Dummy Diamond in his "closed" Hand. After 6 Tricks N/S have "won" 4 Tricks and E/W have "won" 2 Tricks. The 7 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

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

- Now EAST and Declarer SOUTH both hold 3 Trump Club cards.
4. On Tricks #7 and #8 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" his highest 2 Heart "winners". On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" his Heart Queen "winner" and discards the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Queen. After 9 Tricks N/S have "won" 6 Tricks and E/W have "won" 2 Tricks. The 6 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

		NORTH (13)		
		S: J 8		
		H:		
		D:		
		C: K Q		
WEST (13)			EAST (1)	
S: Q 9			S:	
H:			H: J	
D: K T			D:	
C:			C: T 5 3	
		SOUTH (13)		
		S:		
		H: 2		
		D:		
		C: A 9 8		

5. On Trick #10 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Spade 8. There are several "winning" "Trump Coup Endplay" scenarios from here, such as:

		NORTH (13)		
		S: <u>J</u> <u>8</u>		
		12 10		
		H:		
		D:		
		C: K Q		
		13 11		
WEST (13)			EAST (1)	
S: Q 9			S:	
13 10			H: J	
H:			10	
D: K T			D:	
12 11			C: T 5 3	
C:			13 12 11	
		SOUTH (13)		
		S:		
		H: <u>2</u>		
		11		
		D:		
		C: <u>A</u> 9 8		
		13 12 10		

The "winning" card is **bolded**. The led card on each Trick is underlined.

Or on Trick #10 EAST may play his Trump Club Ten:

NORTH (13)		EAST (1)	
S:	<u>J</u> <u>8</u> 12 10	S:	
H:		H:	J 11
D:		D:	
C:	K Q 13 11	C:	T 5 3 10 13 12

WEST (13)	SOUTH (13)
S:	S:
Q 9 13 10	H: <u>2</u> 11
H:	D:
D: K T 12 11	C: A 9 8 10 13 12
C:	

The "winning" card is **bolded**. The led card on each Trick is underlined.

The "**Trump Coup Endplay**" against EAST is successful and Declarer SOUTH will exactly "make" his 5C contract.



Esther 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*’, the ‘**Distribution Safety Play**’, and the ‘*Dummy Reversal Play*’”:

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

Esther also 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 **D-08**. Then play that Board as Declarer. Play the Board at least 1 time and preferably 4 or 10 times to practice executing the “**Trump Coup Endplay**” play!