

**"Playing a Suit Contract as Declarer When One
Opponent Holds a Trump 'Stack':
The '*Trump Endplay*' May Save You!"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

To return to the "Esther Bridge Lessons," CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

To return to the "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quizzes", CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/quiz.html>

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 as Declarer When One Opponent Holds a Trump 'Stack': The '*Trump Endplay*' May Save You!**". 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 so "warm and caring"!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! Well, Esther, you have previously taught us about the "*Elimination Endplay*" play by Declarer in your "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #66:

© Copyright, Bruce Thompson, 2025. All rights reserved.

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**.

What is an 'Elimination Endplay' by Declarer, and How Does Declarer Perform an 'Elimination Endplay'?"

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

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. This example is a modification from one in David Bird's (2008) book, Bridge Endplays for Everyone: Yes, Even You! In this example you are sitting SOUTH as Declarer, and the 4 Hands hold the following Diamonds:

	NORTH	
	D: Q 5 3	
WEST		EAST
D: K T 7		D: A 9 8 4
	D: J 6 2	

As David Bird explains,

"As the cards lie, you cannot make a diamond trick if you play the suit yourself. However, if East or West has to lead the suit first, the situation is different. One of them will have to play high third seat and you will then make the queen or jack in the third round [of diamonds being played]." (p. 5)

The idea of "**Elimination Endplay**" is to "engineer" the card layout over the course of several Tricks such that EAST or WEST **must** lead a Diamond, which you can then either Overtake or ruff!

Bruce: Well, Esther, I assume then that a "**Trump Endplay**" occurs *only* when as Declarer you are playing a Suit contract and you *specifically* run the "endplay" in the Trump Suit.

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. Yes, that is exactly correct. I should also say that the ideas and examples presented here are drawn from Richard Pavlicek's article, "Trump Endings", on his "For Bridge Players" website:

<http://www.rpbridge.net/6f00.htm>

Bruce: Well, Esther, before you teach us about the "**Trump Endplay**" would you tell us a little about the Richard Pavlicek fellow?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes I will. Here is what the Wikipedia entry on Pavlicek says about him:

"Pavlicek began to play bridge in 1964 at the age of 18 while stationed in Stuttgart, West Germany, with the US Army... Since then he has won over 400

events and accumulated more than 16,000 masterpoints... Pavlicek has won 11 North American Bridge Championships... He and William S. Root wrote Modern Bridge Conventions, published in 1981 and still a best-seller in the bridge marketplace."

Pavlicek was the Sunday bridge columnist for the Fort Lauderdale News and Sun-Sentinel from 1984 to 1990. Over 300 of his newspaper bridge columns are posted on his bridge website.

Bruce: Well, Esther, would you now present us with the first example of a "**Trump Endplay**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here is one Board from Pavlicek's web article. The bidding is by me and I have altered a few of the cards in the example:

Dealer: **SOUTH**

	NORTH (12)	
	S: 5 3 2	
	H: K 7 6 4 2	
	D: A Q 7	
	C: K 4	
WEST (8)		EAST (7)
S: K J 9 4		S: --
H: Q T 5		H: A J 9 8
D: T 5 3		D: J 9 8 6
C: Q 9 8	YOU	C: J T 7 5 2
	SOUTH (13)	
	S: A Q T 8 7 6	
	H: 3	
	D: K 4 2	
	C: A 6 3	

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 S	PASS	3 S	PASS
4 S	PASS	PASS	PASS

WEST leads the Diamond 3. Declarer SOUTH "wins" Trick #1 in the NORTH Dummy with the Diamond Ace. On Trick #2 Declarer SOUTH leads the Dummy's Trump Spade 2 and gets quite a shock when EAST plays the Club 2.

Bruce: Well, Esther, that means that the Trump Spade "split" was 4-0 and WEST holds the Spade K,J,9,4! Furthermore, WEST is sitting "after" Declarer SOUTH who holds 6 Trump Spades to the A,Q,T. What can Declarer SOUTH do???

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is a very important Cardinal Bridge Principle:

Cardinal Bridge Principle
When 1 Defender holds a Trump “stack” against you, stop leading Trump cards and go after ruffs!

Bruce: Well, Esther, would you now talk us through the Declarer’s play of this Board and the Declarer SOUTH’s execution of the “**Trump Endplay**”?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. Here is the play of the Hand. Certain Tricks might be taken in a different order without any effect on the results.

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

The winning card is presented in **bold**. The card led on a given Trick is underlined. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH leads a “low” Heart from the Dummy and ruffs in his “closed” Hand. On Trick #6 SOUTH re-enters the NORTH Dummy and on

Trick #7 then leads another Heart for another ruff in his own "closed" Hand.

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

After Trick #9 N/S have "won" 8 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. The 4 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

	NORTH (12)	
	S: 5	
	H: 7 6	
	D: 7	
	C:	
WEST (8)		EAST (7)
S: K J 9		S: --
H:		H: J
D: T		D: J 9
C:		C: J
	SOUTH (13)	
	S: Q T 8	
	H:	
	D: K	
	C:	

On Trick #10 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Diamond 7 and "wins" in his own "closed" Hand with the Diamond King. Now N/S have "won" 9 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. On Trick #11 Declarer SOUTH leads the Trump Spade 8 as his "exit" card to force WEST into the lead. WEST "wins" Trick #11 with the Spade 9. Now N/S have "won" 9 Tricks and E/W have "won" 2 Tricks. Now WEST's remaining 2 cards are the Trump Spade K,J. Whatever WEST leads on Trick #12 WEST has been "Trump Endplayed" and ultimately N/S will "win" 10 Tricks and E/W will "win" 3 Tricks.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, thanks very much for that! In your Example #1 the Trump "stack" was to the left of Declarer SOUTH. Can you give us an example in which the Trump "stack" was to the right of the Declarer?

Esther: Well, sure!

Dealer: **NORTH**

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

Bidding

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1C	PASS	1S	PASS
2S	PASS	3S	PASS
4S	PASS	PASS	PASS

On Trick #1 WEST leads the Club King thus "promising" "touching" Club Honors. SOUTH "wins" Trick #1 in the NORTH Dummy with the Club Ace. On Trick #2 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Trump Spade 2, EAST plays the Spade 7, SOUTH "wins" with his own Trump Spade King, WEST follows with the Trump Spade Jack which portends what is to come.

Based on his premonition that EAST holds a Trump Spade "stack" on Trick #3 rather than further "draw" Trump Declarer SOUTH "cashes" his Diamond King. On Trick #4 SOUTH leads his own Diamond 3, WEST follows with the Diamond 5, SOUTH plays the Dummy Diamond Ace, EAST follows. On Trick #5 SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Diamond 9 and ruffs from his "closed" Hand with the Trump Spade 3.

On Trick #6 SOUTH "cashes" his Heart Ace and on Trick #7 his Heart King. On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH leads his own Heart 5 and ruffs in the NORTH Dummy. On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Club 2, EAST plays the Diamond Queen, and WEST "wins" with his Club Ten.

NORTH (12)

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

WEST (9)

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

EAST (6)

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

SOUTH (13)

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

After Trick #9 N/S have "won" 8 Tricks and E/W have "won" 1 Trick. The 4 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

		NORTH (12)	
		S: A T	
		H:	
		D:	
		C: 7 3	
	WEST (9)		EAST (6)
S:			S: Q 9 8
H: J			H: Q
D: J			D:
C: Q J			C:
		SOUTH (13)	
		S: 6 5	
		H:	
		D:	
		C: 9 8	

On Trick #10 WEST "cashes" his Club Q, the NORTH Dummy's Club 3 is played, EAST sluffs his Heart Queen, and Declarer SOUTH sluffs his Club 8. On Trick #11 WEST leads his Club Jack, Dummy follows, and EAST ruffs with his Trump Spade 8. Now N/S have "won" 8 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks. The 2 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

		NORTH (12)	
		S: A T	
		H:	
		D:	
		C:	
	WEST (9)		EAST (6)
S:			S: Q 9
H: J			H:
D: J			D:
C:			C:
		SOUTH (13)	
		S: 6 5	
		H:	
		D:	
		C:	

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, after EAST "wins" Trick #11 isn't EAST, who initially held a Trump Spade "stack" sitting before Declarer SOUTH, now "endplayed"? Won't SOUTH "win" the last 2 Tricks no matter what EAST leads on Trick #12 and thus exactly "makes" his 4S contract?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes indeed. All because Declarer SOUTH sensed the Trump "stack" held by EAST and *stopped "drawing" Trump!*



Esther says:

Why not proceed *immediately* to “**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**” Level-4 Lesson #**D-18** to practice executing a “**Trump Endplay**”? Search “BBO”, then Click “Bridge Master”, then Click “Play”, then Click “Level 4”, then Click “D-18”. 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>