

**Esther Discusses "As Declarer Play of the Hand
When You and Dummy Together Hold
an 'Unbroken' Suit Honor Sequence:
The 'L-L/H-H Unblocking Rule' "**

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 "**As Declarer Play of the Hand and You and Dummy Together Hold an 'Unbroken' Suit Honor Sequence: The 'L-L/H-H Unblocking Rule' "**". 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 today by first explaining from where today's concepts and examples originate?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, I will certainly try to help you. Today's concepts and examples originate from Andrew Robson's excellent website posting, "The Unblocking Rule"

<https://www.andrewrobson.co.uk/article/articles/3375>

Here is a little background information about Andrew Robson:

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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**.

About Andrew Robson

Andrew Robson (1964 -) is an English professional bridge player, writer, and teacher. He has won **7** Gold Cup competitions and **3** North American Bridge Championships. He also was “runner-up” in **2** Gold Cup competitions and **1** North American Bridge Championship competition. Robson is bridge columnist for The Times and Country Life. He previously also wrote bridge columns for The Oldie, The Spectator, and the Express on Sunday.

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?

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Would you now begin to talk us through the example Board?

Esther: Well, my *loquacious linkster*, of course! Here is an example Board. I have modified some of the Hands in Robson’s example.

Dealer: **SOUTH**

Vul: **NONE**

		NORTH (16)	
		S:	A Q J 2
		H:	K Q 3
		D:	A 4
		C:	9 8 6 2
WEST (7)		EAST (0)	
S:	T 9 6	S:	8 7 5 4
H:	8 5	H:	T 9 7 6
D:	J 9 6 2	D:	T 8 7 5
C:	K Q J T	C:	5
		SOUTH (17)	
		S:	K 3
		H:	A J 4 2
		D:	K Q 3
		C:	A 7 4 3

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 H*	PASS	1 S	PASS
1 NT	PASS	4 NT**	PASS
6 NT	PASS	PASS	PASS

*This bidding is with the British ECOL bidding system which bids "weak" 1**NT** and not within the Standard American Yellow Card system.

This is a "Quantitative Raise**" that says, "Partner, if you are at the "top" of your initial 1**NT** bid, please bid 6**NT**."

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... WEST quite appropriately on Trick #1 led the Club King as the "top" of a "touching" sequence of Honors in a "long" Suit. Declarer SOUTH "won" Trick #1 with his Club Ace. What should Declarer SOUTH notice about the 2 N/S Hands that SOUTH Controls?

Esther: Well, Bruce, what it is very important for Declarer SOUTH to notice is that N/S together hold the Heart A,K,Q,J,4,3,2. This is very important! N/S hold 7 Heart cards and E/W together hold 13 - 7 = 6 Heart cards. This raises the appealing prospect that Declarer SOUTH can "win" 6 Heart Tricks unless the E/W Heart cards break in a very unfavorable way!

Additionally, N/S together held the Spade A,K,Q,J,3,2. So, N/S together held 6 Spades including the "top" 4 Spades. Now after Declarer SOUTH "wins" Trick #1 with his Club Ace it is not very important which Suit Declarer SOUTH attacks first. But the order in which Declarer SOUTH plays the cards in these 2 Suits, on the other hand, is critically important!

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... What is the bridge "Rule" that should govern your play as Declarer when you are "cashing" these 2 "long" Majors?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here is the "**Unblocking Rule**" when as Declarer your Partnership holds *unbroken* "touching" Honors in a "long" Suit":

"When you are playing from the Hand that you as Declarer controls that holds '**L**onger' length in the Suit, lead the '**L**owest' card. On the other hand, when you are leading from the hand with s**H**orter length, lead the '**H**ighest' card!"

I call this the "**Unblocking L-L/H-H Rule**".

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... At the actual bridge table Declarer SOUTH did not follow your "**Unblocking L-L/H-H Rule**". After Trick #10 Declarer SOUTH was left holding the C 7,4,2 and the NORTH Dummy held the S Q,J and the C 9. The trouble was

that the lead was in Declarer SOUTH's Hand. The 6NT was inevitably doomed because the cards in the 2 Major Suits were played in the wrong order, and not **L-L/H-H**. Would you make this very *concrete* for your dedicated readers and say *exactly* how these Major Suits should have been played by Declarer SOUTH?

Esther: Well, my *studly salamander*, I will certainly try to help you.

		NORTH (16)	
		S: A Q J 2	
		H: K Q 3	
		D: A 4	
		C: 9 8 6 2	
WEST (7)		EAST (0)	
S: T 9 6		S: 8 7 5 4	
H: 8 5		H: T 9 7 6	
D: J 9 6 2		D: T 8 7 5	
C: K Q J T		C: 5	
SOUTH (17)			
S: K 3			
H: A J 4 2			
D: K Q 3			
C: A 7 4 3			

Here is how Declarer SOUTH should have played this Board:

1. On Trick #1 Declarer SOUTH "wins" with his own Club Ace.
2. On Trick #2 SOUTH "cashes" his Spade King "**H**igh" because SOUTH is "**sH**orter" in Spades than the NORTH Dummy.
3. On Trick #3 SOUTH leads his Spade 2 "**L**ow" because the SOUTH is leading to the NORTH Dummy that is "**L**onger" in Spades and "wins" with the Dummy's Spade Jack.
4. On Tricks #4 and #5 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy's Spade A,Q and from his own Hand discards his Club 4,2 "losers".
5. On Tricks #6 and #7 leads the NORTH Dummy's Heart K,Q "**H**igh" because the NORTH Dummy is "**sH**orter" in Hearts.
6. On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy Heart 3 to his own Heart Jack.
7. On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" his own Heart Ace and discards the NORTH Dummy Club 2 "loser".
8. On Trick #10 Declarer SOUTH leads his Diamond 3 "**L**ow" to the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Ace.

9. On Tricks **#11** and **#12** Declarer SOUTH returns the NORTH Dummy's Diamond 4 to "cash" his own Diamond K,Q.
10. Thereafter Declarer SOUTH "loses" a Club Trick but "makes" his **6NT** contract!

Bruce: Hmmm, well, Esther... Couldn't this "Unblocking **L-L/H-H** Rule" be simply stated as, "Play your 'high' card Honors from your 'short' side first"?

Esther: Well, my *surly salad eater*, your "Rule" might also work!