

Esther Discusses

"Practicing the '*Elimination Endplay*' Using BBO Bridge Master: The Declarer's Salvation When He Confronts One '*Danger Opponent*' and Things Look Bleak"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.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 "**Practicing the '*Elimination Endplay*' Using BBO Bridge Master: The Declarer's Salvation When He Confronts One '*Danger Opponent*' and Things Look Bleak**". 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, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. Well, in any case, would you please give us a bridge Board that we can consider to make this discussion of ruffing and sluffing "losers" more concrete?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you! I am going to use as an example Board a Board used in the Level 3 Lesson **C-24**. On my "**Esther Bridge Lessons**"

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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.

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. I may have altered some cards in some Hands.

BBO Bridge Master Level 3 Lesson C-24

Dealer: **SOUTH**

		NORTH (11)		
		S: K 5 3 2		
		H: Q 3 2		
		D: A Q 3		
		C: 6 4 3		
	WEST (14)		EAST (3)	
	S: Q J T		S: 9	
	H: A K J T 9		H: 8 7	
	D: K T 9		D: 8 7 6 5 2	
	C: 7 5		C: Q J T 9 8	
		SOUTH (12)		
		S: A 8 7 6 4		
		H: 6 5 4		
		D: J 4		
		C: A K 2		

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 S	2 H	3 S	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Bruce: Errr, well, Esther... Are you actually being nice to me?

Esther: Well, my *inquisitive interlocutor*, of course I am being "nice" to you! Why wouldn't I be "nice" to you?

Bruce: Errr, well, in any case, Esther, on Trick #1 WEST leads the Heart Ace and "wins". Once the NORTH Dummy comes "down" WEST and EAST see that the Dummy holds a "protected" Heart Q,x,x. EAST plays "low", his Heart 7, on Trick #1.

On Trick #2 WEST leads his Heart King and EAST plays "high" with his Heart 8. E/W by Partnership Agreement when the Partner playing 3rd on A,K and plays "low/high" this "signals" that the Partner playing 3rd can "win" a 3rd Round

of the led Suit. In this case, because the NORTH Dummy holds the Heart Q,x,x, WEST knows that EAST on Trick #3 can ruff a 3rd Round of Hearts. WEST will want to make this 3rd Heart lead "early" before Declarer SOUTH has the opportunity to "draw" Trump. Now what should EAST lead on Trick #4?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. On Trick #4 EAST holds no more Trump Spades and so cannot lead Trump. EAST holds no more Hearts and again cannot lead Hearts, EAST will not lead Diamonds because if WEST holds the "protected" Diamond King (e.g., K,x,x) then EAST leading a Diamond will gift N/S with 2 Tricks rather than 1 Diamond Trick. WEST is likely to hold the Diamond King given that WEST Overcalled during the auction. So, on Trick #4 EAST leads his Club Queen to "show" Partner his Club "touching" Honors. Declarer SOUTH "wins" Trick #4 with his Club Ace.

Bruce: Ummm. Hmmmmm. Well, OK, Esther, shouldn't Declarer SOUTH on Trick #5 now begin to "draw" Trump? How should Declarer SOUTH proceed?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes, indeed. Declarer SOUTH should begin "drawing" Trump. After EAST ruffed on Trick #3, because N/S together initially held $4 + 5 = 9$ Trump Spades, on Trick #5 E/W together still hold $13 - 9 - 1 = 3$ Trump Spades.

At the start of play E/W held 4 Trump Spades. Because 4 is an "even" number an equal 2-2 "split" was not the most likely "split". An initial 3-1 "split" had a 49.7% probability while a 2-2 had a 40.7% probability and a 4-0 "split" had a 9.5% probability.² By leading a "low" Trump Spade from his "closed" (hidden) Hand on Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH can "draw" at least 1 E/W Trump card and learn more about what the initial Trump Spade "split" actually was.

Bruce: Well, OK, Esther, that all makes sense. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH "wins" with the NORTH Dummy Trump Spade King but EAST "shows out" of Trump Spades. What does this mean for the Declarer?

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

Esther: Well, my *studly salamander*, E/W "won" **3** Tricks at the start of play. The fact that EAST has now "shown out" of Trump Spades means that WEST now holds the Trump Spade Q,J and now EAST will "win" at least **1** more E/W Trick for a total of **4** Tricks. This means that Declarer SOUTH must "win" every other Trick or his 3S contract will fail.

Bruce: Well, my oh my Esther. What should Declarer SOUTH do now? Please, please, tell me!

Esther: Well, my *curious carnivore*, now the Diamond finesse has become essential! Fortunately, on this Board the Dummy held **11** HCPs, Declarer's Hand held **12** HCPs, and EAST by opening the bidding showed **~13** HCPs. This means that EAST initially likely held $40 - 11 - 12 - 13 = 40 - 36 = \sim 4$ HCPs. This also means that WEST almost certainly holds the "missing" Diamond King and so Declarer SOUTH *knows* how to finesse through WEST.

Bruce: Well, Esther, what card should Declarer SOUTH play from the NORTH Dummy on Trick **#6**? Declarer SOUTH also knows that the NORTH Dummy holds **2** "low" Clubs and his own "closed" Hand holds the Club A,x, so an additional Club "loser" is also possible unless Declarer SOUTH can "dump" one of these "loser" Clubs. Esther, how can Declarer SOUTH possibly escape with his (bridge) life???

Esther: Well, I will certainly try to help you. On this Board WEST was and is the "**Danger Player**" who is the E/W Opponent now holding (1) **2** Trump Spade Honors and (2) $13 - 4 - 3 = \mathbf{6}$ HCPs. After **5** Tricks the **8** cards remaining in each of the **4** Hands are:

NORTH (11)

S: 5 3 2

H:

D: A Q 3

C: 6 4

WEST (14)

S: Q J

H: T 9

D: K T 9

C: 7

EAST (3)

S:

H:

D: 8 7 6 5

C: J T 9 8

SOUTH (12)

S: A 8 7 6

H:

D: J 4

C: K 2

When one Opponent is a "**Danger Player**" it is sometimes possible that a Declarer can run an "**Elimination Endplay**"³ to defang the "**Danger Opponent**". As noted in Esther's web posting, "**Happy 100th Birthday, Duplicate Bridge!**", the "Elimination Endplay" was popularized by **George Sturgis Coffin** (1903 - 1994) who in 1932 published the first of numerous editions of his hugely influential bridge book, Endplays: Eliminations, Squeezes, Coups. Esther has previously posted an "Esther Bridge Lesson" about the "**Elimination Endplay**":

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

Bruce: Well, Esther, would you now please talk us through executing this "**Endplay**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #6 Declarer SOUTH, who "won" Trick #5 with the NORTH Dummy Trump Spade Ace, now leads a "low" Spade from the Dummy to the Trump Spade Ace in his "closed" Hand. On Trick #7 Declarer SOUTH leads his Diamond 4 and WEST "covers" with his Diamond King and SOUTH "wins" in the NORTH Dummy with the Dummy's Diamond Ace. On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" the "promoted" Diamond Queen. On Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH leads the Dummy's last Diamond for a ruff from his "closed" Hand.

On Trick #10 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" his own Club Ace. At this point WEST has now been "stripped" of all his Clubs and all his Diamonds.

³ An "**Elimination Endplay**" is also sometimes called an "**Endplay**" or "**Strip-and-Endplay**" or "**Throw-in Play**".

At this point N/S have "won" 7 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks. Declarer SOUTH needs 2 more Tricks to "make" his 3S contract.

	NORTH (11)	
	S: 3 2	
	H:	
	D:	
	C: 6	
WEST (14)		EAST (3)
S: Q		S:
H: T 9		H:
D:		D:
C:		C: J T 9
	SOUTH (12)	
	S: 8 7	
	H:	
	D:	
	C: 2	

Bruce: Well, Esther, on Trick #11 what should Declarer SOUTH lead from his "closed" Hand?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #11 Declarer SOUTH leads his Trump Spade 8 and forces WEST to "win" with his Trump Spade Queen. The Trump Spade 8 is called the "exit card" when Declarer pulls the trigger on his "Elimination Endplay". The play of the Trump Spade 8 "endplays" WEST. WEST must play a Heart card on Trick #12.

	NORTH (11)	
	S: 3	
	H:	
	D:	
	C: 6	
WEST (14)		EAST (3)
S:		S:
H: T 9		H:
D:		D:
C:		C: J T
	SOUTH (12)	
	S: 8	
	H:	
	D:	
	C: 2	

On Trick #12 when WEST leads a Heart Declarer SOUTH will ruff in the NORTH Dummy and sluff the Club 2 "loser" in his

"closed" Hand. On Trick **#13** Declarer SOUTH will lead the NORTH Dummy Club 6 for a ruff in his "closed" Hand and his **9th** Trick. Declarer SOUTH has "made" his **3S** contract by an "**Elimination Endplay**" run against WEST, the "**Danger Player**".



Esther 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 3**. Next, click on **SELECT DEAL** and then click **C-24**. Then play this Board as Declarer. Play the Board at least 1 time and preferably 4 or 10 times!