

## **"The '*Intra-Finesse*': A Specialized Finesse for Advanced/Advancing Bridge Players"**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

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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 "**The '*Intra-Finesse*': A Specialized Finesse for Advanced/Advancing Bridge Players**". 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, before you teach us the specialized "**intra-finesse**" would you first remind us what a "simple finesse" involves?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. A "simple finesse" is a card play by Declarer in which the Declarer attempts to secure an "extra" Trick by assuming that a particular Opponent holds a "missing" Honor. For example, if you are sitting SOUTH as Declarer playing a 4**H** contract. Let's say your LHO was Dealer and opened by bidding 1**S** and you and the NORTH Dummy hold:

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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.

NORTH Dummy

**S:** A Q

SOUTH **YOU**

**S:** 8 3

Because WEST, your LHO, bid 1**S** you assume that WEST holds Spade Honors and likely the "missing" Spade King. On this basis you may lead your Spade 3 from your "closed" (hidden) Hand and if WEST plays "second Hand low" you play the Dummy's Spade Queen rather than the Spade Ace. If indeed WEST holds the Spade King and has "ducked" you will then take **2** Spade Tricks rather than only **1**.

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Est... err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, before you get into the details of the "**intra-finesse**" would you tell us a little about who invented this specialized finesse?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, sure. From 1974 through 1994 BOLS the Dutch Distilling Company sponsored a bridge tips competition each year. One year Brazilian world bridge champion **Gabriel Chagas** proposed as "BOLS Bridge Tip" a specialized finesse that he labelled the "Intra-Finesse". This "BOLS Bridge Tip" can be located on Harold Schogger's bridge website.<sup>2</sup>

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, I understand that there are indeed numerous specialized finesses, such as the "double finesse", the "obligatory finesse", and the "ruffing finesse". Please tell us what distinguishes the "**intra-finesse**" from the "simple finesse" and from other "specialized" finesses.

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, of course I will try to help you. The "**intra-finesse**" becomes relevant when you as Declarer are "missing" **3** Honors (including possibly the Ten) in a Suit in which you must "win" **3** Tricks to "make" your contract. For example, you and the NORTH Dummy might hold:<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See: <https://www.haroldschogger.com/bols1.htm>

<sup>3</sup> This example is based on one presented by Jeff Tang on his excellent "BridgeBum" website in an article titled, "Intra-Finesse", but some cards have been modified by Esther: [https://www.bridgebum.com/intra\\_finesse.php](https://www.bridgebum.com/intra_finesse.php)

NORTH Dummy

**S:** A 9 5 3

WEST

**S:** K T 6

EAST

**S:** J 2

SOUTH **YOU**

**S:** Q 8 7 4

A "simple finesse" might involve you leading toward the NORTH Dummy Ace, and on the next Trick returning a small Spade planning to play your own Spade Queen unless EAST "covers" with the Spade King. However, running the "simple finesse" will result in WEST "winning" 2 Spade Tricks.

**Bruce:** Errr, well, hmmm... How would Declarer SOUTH instead play an "intra-finesse"?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, Declarer SOUTH first leads the Spade 3 from the NORTH Dummy and if EAST plays "second Hand low" and "ducks" Declarer will stick in his Spade 8. WEST will "win" the Trick with his Spade Ten and then return a different Suit. This "promotes" the NORTH Dummy's Spade 9. Upon regaining the lead Declarer SOUTH can lead his own Spade Queen to finesse WEST for the Spade King and play "low" in the NORTH Dummy (1) "winning" in his "closed" Hand but also (2) "dropping" EAST's Spade Jack. Finally, Declarer SOUTH can lead to the NORTH Dummy's Spade Ace for his 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Spade Trick.

**Bruce:** Errr, well, Esther, ...err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, could you give us another example please?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, OK. Here is another example based on one presented in Mike Lawrence's 2006 bridge book, How to Play Card Combinations, but I have altered some of the cards. Lawrence won 3 Bermuda Bowl Championships and was runner-up in this competition twice. He also has published numerous bridge books.

NORTH Dummy

**S:** A 7 3

WEST

**S:** K T 6 5 2

EAST

**S:** J 4

SOUTH **YOU**

**S:** Q 9 8

WEST made a 1S Overcall during the auction so SOUTH knows that WEST holds 5+ Spades with good "Suit Quality". N/S are

"missing" the Spade K,J,T. You need **2** Spade Tricks to "make" your contract.

First, Declarer SOUTH leads the Spade 3 from the NORTH Dummy, assuming EAST plays "second Hand low", SOUTH plays the Spade 8 or 9, and "loses" to WEST's Spade Ten. After regaining the lead Declarer SOUTH leads his Spade Queen to both (1) hook WEST's Spade King and (2) "squash"/"drop" EAST's Spade Jack. If WEST "ducks" SOUTH plays "low" in the NORTH Dummy. If WEST "covers" with his Spade King SOUTH will play the NORTH Dummy Spade Ace and "cash" an additional Spade "winner".

**Bruce:** Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, is there any way I can practice playing an "**intra-finesse**"?

**Esther:** Well, Bruce, yes indeed. I, Esther, on my "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" website have previously recommended the "**BBO Bridge Master**" website:

<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. The "**BBO Bridge Master**" Level-3 **Lesson B-28** illustrates the "**intra-finesse**". Within the BBO Bridge Master website you can CLICK on "SELECT DEAL" in order to play this Board as Declarer (even repeatedly).