

**"As Declarer in a Suit Contract Do Not
'Overlove' Either (1) Your 'Side' Suit A,K's or
(2) Even All Your Trump Cards"**

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 in a Suit Contract Do Not 'Overlove' Either (1) Your 'Side' Suit A,K's or (2) Even All Your Trump Cards"**. 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, at the start would you tell us what you mean by "overloving" your "side" Suit Honors or even some of your Trump cards?

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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**.

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. First, let me remind you that there are several reasons why as Declarer you may want to discard or sluff cards, even certain "winners" including even "high" Honors such as Aces and Kings. For example, if you are playing a **NT** contract and the Dummy holds Q,J,T in a Suit and your own "closed" (hidden) Hand holds (1) the A,K doubleton in the Suit and your Hand (2) has no "outside" entries to the Dummy or only 1 "entry" you may wish to discard your own A,K in order to "unblock" the **3** "winners" in the Dummy's Q,J,T holding. You are "trading" **2** "winners" for **3** "winners".

Or, in a Suit contract if the Dummy holds a King singleton and you as Declarer hold the A,x in the Suit you may wish in some circumstances to "overtake" the Dummy's King with your Ace and then ruff your remaining "low" card in the Suit. In other words, in duplicate bridge it can sometimes pay to think "outside" the box.

Bruce: Well, Esther, would you make this discussion concrete by talking us through a complete bridge Board in which the Declarer gains by making *several* "outside the box" plays?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. On my "**Esther Bridge Lessons**" website I 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. Here as an illustration I will use the *free* "**BBO Bridge Master**" Level-5 **Lesson C-15** which gives you the opportunity to see and *repeatedly practice* for *free* playing a given bridge Board. I have altered a few of the cards in these Hands from the Board.

BBO Bridge Master Level 5 Lesson C-15

Dealer: **SOUTH**

	NORTH (9)	
	S: 6 5	
	H: Q J T 9 7	
	D: Q J T	
	C: Q J T	
WEST (8)		EAST (4)
S: J 9 8 7		S: A
H: A K 6 5 3		H: 8
D: 8 6		D: 9 7 5 4 3 2
C: 8 6		C: 9 7 5 4 3
	SOUTH (19)	
	S: K Q T 4 3 2	
	H: 4 2	
	D: A K	
	C: A K 2	

Bidding

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

WEST leads the Heart Ace thus "promising" the Heart King and asking Partner EAST to "signal" if EAST can "win" a 3rd Round of Hearts.

Bruce: Well, Esther, in a Suit contract the first task for the Declarer is to try to identify his "losers" and then try to formulate a "Line of Play" to "dump" those "losers". What "losers" do you see, Esther?

Esther: Well, Bruce, here I see 1 Spade "loser" or possibly 2 if an Opponent holds a "Trump stack", to the E/W Spade Ace, and 2 Heart "losers", to the E/W Heart A,K. I am "missing" $13 - 2 - 6 = 5$ Trump Spades. When there is an "odd" number of cards "missing" the *most-likely* "split" is the *near-equal* 3-2 "split". To be exact, the probability of a 3-2 "split" is **67.8%**, the probability of a 4-1 "split" is **28.3%**, and the probability of a 5-0 "split" is **3.9%**.²

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

Thus, a 3-2 "split" is $67.8\% / 28.3\% = 2.4$ times more likely than a 4-1 "split". Of course, although $67.8\% > 28.3\%$, but also $28.3\% \neq 0!$

Bruce: OK, Esther, well, E/W on Tricks #1 and #2 "win" 2 Rounds of Hearts. On Trick #3 WEST returns another Heart given that EAST has "signaled" that he can "win" Trick #3. EAST on Trick #3 plays his Trump Spade Ace. Esther, what card should Declarer SOUTH play on Trick #3?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH has no Minor "losers" and is now void in Hearts. Therefore, on Trick #3 SOUTH should "underruff"! Therefore, on Trick #3 Declarer SOUTH should "underruff" from his "closed" Hand by playing the Trump Spade 2.

Bruce: Wow, Esther, OK. On Trick #4 EAST returns the Club 3. SOUTH "wins" with his own Club Ace. On Trick #5 Declarer SOUTH leads his Trump Spade King "winner". WEST "follows" but EAST sluffs another "low" Club. Thus, SOUTH knows that WEST initially held 4 Trump Spades to the Spade Jack. Esther, what should SOUTH do now?

Esther: Well, Bruce, there are several reasonable "Lines of Play". After Trick #5 N/S have "won" 2 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks. The 8 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

	NORTH (9)	
	S: 6	
	H: Q J	
	D: Q J T	
	C: Q J	
WEST (8)		EAST (4)
S: J 9 8		S:
H: 6 5		H:
D: 8 6		D: 9 7 5 4 3
C: 8		C: 9 7 5
	SOUTH (19)	
	S: Q T 4 3	
	H:	
	D: A K	
	C: K 2	

One creative "Line of Play" is for Declarer on Trick #6 to lead his own Club 2 to the NORTH Dummy Club Jack "winner".

Bruce: OK, Esther, what should SOUTH do on Trick #7?

Esther: Well, Bruce, as I previously mentioned there are many reasons for sluffing or "discarding" cards. And one of these reasons is to "unblock" a greater number of "winners" in 1 of the 2 Hands that Declarer SOUTH holds. On this Board SOUTH's Diamond A,K are "blocking" the NORTH Dummy's Diamond Q,J,T.

On Tricks #7 and #8 SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy's 2 Heart "winners" and successively "discards" his own "blocking" Diamond A,K. It may be painful, but "overloving" your Diamond A,K would cost you 1 Trick!

After Trick #8 N/S have "won" 5 Tricks and E/W have "won" 3 Tricks. The 5 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

NORTH (9)		
S:	6	
H:		
D:	Q J T	
C:	Q	
WEST (8)		EAST (4)
S:	J 9 8	S:
H:		H:
D:	8 6	D:
C:		D:
		C:
		9 7 5
		9 7
SOUTH (19)		
S:	Q T 4 3	
H:		
D:		
C:	K	

Bruce: OK, Esther, what should Declarer SOUTH do next?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH should "cash" 1 of the NORTH Dummy's Diamond "winners". Declarer SOUTH sees that the NORTH Dummy holds a Club Queen "winner" while the Declarer's own Hand holds the Club King "winner". Declarer SOUTH has no shortage of "entries" back into his own "closed" Hand. So, on Trick #9 Declarer SOUTH should discard his own Club King that provided zero added value on the Dummy "winner" Diamond Honor.

On Trick #10 SOUTH leads a NORTH Dummy Diamond and ruffs from his own "closed" Hand. After Trick #10 SOUTH holds 3 cards, the Trump Spade Q,T,4, while WEST holds 3 cards, the Trump Spade J,9,8.

On Trick #11 SOUTH will lead his "low" Trump Spade to force WEST into the lead. WEST is now "endplayed". E/W will "win" a 4th E/W Trick during the last 2 Tricks but Declarer SOUTH will inevitably exactly "make" his 3S contract thanks

to not “overloving” 1 Ace, 2 Kings, and 1 Trump card in his own Hand!



Esther says:

“Why not proceed *immediately* to ‘**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**’ Level-5 Lesson #C-15 to practice “**Not ‘Overloving’ Your ‘Side’ Suit Honors or Your Own Trump Cards**”? Search ‘BBO’, then Click ‘Bridge Master’, then Click ‘Play’, then Click ‘Level 5’, then Click ‘C-15’. 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>