

Esther Discusses "As Declarer Protecting Against RHO Opponent's Overruff When You and Opponent LHO Are Both Long in the Same Suit"

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 Protecting Against RHO Opponent's Overruff When You and Opponent LHO Are Both Long in the Same Suit**". 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! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other.

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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**.

Well, in any case, Esther, are there any preliminary comments you wish to make before you begin teaching your lesson?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. And, yes, indeed I would like to make an important preliminary announcement. The ideas and Boards discussed in the present lesson are drawn from David Bird's excellent 2005 book, 52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer, and specifically from Tip #6 (pp. 22-24). However, I may have altered some of the cards in the Boards.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, good stuff! But before you show us the 1st Board, would you tell us a little about this David Bird fellow?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. **David Bird** is a very highly regarded British bridge writer. He has authored more than 140 bridge books and has claimed that he is the most prolific bridge author of all time. 52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play is one of these 140+ books. He also is the bridge correspondent for both the Mail on Sunday and the London Evening Standard newspapers. He also over 30+ years has authored in Bridge Magazine a series of humorous bridge stories about fictional bridge-playing monks in the fictional St. Titus Monastery.

Now here is the 1st Board. Notice the Declarer SOUTH and his LHO, WEST, both are long in the same Suit, Hearts. Declarer SOUTH knows that WEST is "long" in Hearts because WEST opened the auction by bidding 1H. Once the NORTH Dummy comes "down" Declarer SOUTH can see that the NORH Dummy is short Hearts, and then knows that EAST also is "short" in Hearts. This implies that EAST may be able to "overruff" a Heart ruff in the NORTH Hand.

NORTH (7)

S: 9 6 4 2

H: 6 3

D: A J T 2

C: Q T 3

WEST (12)

S: A 2

H: K Q J T 5

D: Q 8 6 3

C: 8 5

EAST (4)

S: T 8

H: 8 4

D: 9 7 5 4

C: A 9 7 4 2

SOUTH (17)

S: K Q J 7 5

H: A 9 7 2

D: K

C: K J 6

Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1H	PASS	PASS	1S
PASS	2S	PASS	4S
PASS	PASS	PASS	

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther, the problem is that the NORTH Dummy, while holding 4 Trump Spade cards, only holds relatively *low* Spades, while among "top" Trump Spade Honors E/W hold *both* the Spade Ace and the Spade Ten. What if EAST holds the Spade Ten which is, of course, higher than the highest Trump card in the NORTH Dummy, the Spade 9?

Esther: Well, Bruce, that certainly is something that Declarer SOUTH needs to protect against. And this situation is not that rare, so it is *important* to know as a Declarer *how to handle* the problem!

Bruce: Oh, my, Goodness, Esther. What can Declarer SOUTH do to avoid a dire and avoidable fate?

Esther: Well, Bruce, on Trick #1 WEST led the Heart King. Declarer SOUTH wins in his "closed" (hidden) Hand with his Heart Ace. WEST then knows what "Line of Play" the Declarer SOUTH will take: "attack" Hearts to set up a ruff in the NORTH Dummy of Hearts to "dump" SOUTH's Heart "Losers".

Knowing that EAST is "short" Hearts and may hold the Trump Spade Ten sitting "over" the NORTH Dummy 9 Declarer SOUTH **must** not "draw" Trump at this point! Instead,

Declarer SOUTH on Trick #2 leads his Diamond Queen. As Bird (2005) suggested,

“Whether or not W[EST] elects to cover [with his Diamond King], you will score three Diamond [T]ricks and can throw one of your [H]eart losers. When you play a [T]rump to the [K]ing and [A]ce, W[EST] cannot beat the contract. He can cash one [H]eart winner but a third round of [T]rump would be unproductive. Since you have no [H]earts left in the S[OUTH] [H]and, E[AST] cannot enjoy a successful overruff” (pp. 22-23)

Bruce: Errr, Esther. OK. Can you give us a 2nd example of you as Declarer protecting against an *RHO overruff*?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you! Here is another Board to illustrate these bridge principles:

NORTH (13)			
S:	Q 4		
H:	J 7 5 3		
D:	A Q T 5		
C:	A 7 4		
WEST (14)		EAST (1)	
S:	A K J T 2	S:	9 7
H:	A	H:	8 6 4
D:	9 8 4 2	D:	7 6 3
C:	Q T 8	C:	J 9 6 3 2
SOUTH (12)			
S:	8 6 5 3		
H:	K Q T 9 2		
D:	K J		
C:	K 5		

Bidding

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

Note. A list of cards played *Trick-by-Trick* is appended to the end of this “*Esther Bridge Lesson*”. Esther has modified the bidding discussed by David Bird in his book.

Bruce: Errr, well, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther. WEST “cashes” his 2 “top” Spades and continues with his Spade Jack. You as Declarer SOUTH counts WEST as likely holding 5 Spades because WEST Overcalled 1S. You Declarer SOUTH hold 4 Spades and you SOUTH initially can see 2 Spades in the

NORTH Dummy. Once WEST "cashes" the first 2 Spade "winners" both WEST and you SOUTH see that the NORTH Dummy is void in Spades and likely EAST is void in Spades.

It is obvious to Declarer SOUTH that once on Trick #3 WEST leads a 3rd Spade if you Declarer SOUTH ruff "low" in the NORTH Dummy then EAST will likely "win" the Trick by overruffing. So you Declarer SOUTH **must** play the NORTH Dummy Trump Heart Jack. EAST sluffs a Diamond.

On Trick #4 if Declarer SOUTH leads a "low" Trump Heart from the NORTH Dummy WEST will "win" with the Heart Ace singleton and then lead another Spade to allow Partner EAST to ruff. So instead, Declarer SOUTH on Trick #4 leads to "cash" the NORTH Dummy Diamond Ace and plays his Diamond King. On Trick #5 you SOUTH lead the NORTH Dummy Diamond Queen and play the Diamond Jack from your "closed" Hand.

On Trick #6 you lead the NORTH Dummy Diamond Ten. EAST sluffed a Diamond on Trick #3. EAST must either ruff or sluff on the Trick #6 Diamond. EAST ruffs, and you overruff in your "closed" Hand.

On Trick #7 you SOUTH enter the NORTH Dummy by leading a "low" Club to the NORTH Dummy Club Ace. On Trick #8 you lead the Dummy Diamond 5, and once again EAST must either ruff or sluff. EAST ruffs. You Declarer SOUTH overruff.

On Trick #9 you Declarer SOUTH lead your Trump Heart King which WEST overtakes with his Heart singleton Heart Ace. You will eventually lead a "loser" Spade to be ruffed in the NORTH Dummy and the contract is made.

Esther: Well, Bruce, that certainly sounds like a plan to me!
Just to summarize:

NORTH (13)

S: Q 4
 H: J 7 5 3
 D: A Q T 5
 C: A 7 4

WEST (14)

S: A K J T 2
 H: A
 D: 9 8 4 2
 C: Q T 8

EAST (1)

S: 9 7
 H: 8 6 4
 D: 7 6 3
 C: J 9 6 3 2

SOUTH (12)

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

				Trick Count	
				N/S	E/W
1. W: ♠A*	N: ♠4	E: ♠7	S: ♠3	0	1
2. W: ♠K*	N: ♠Q	E: ♠9	S: ♠5	0	2
3. W: ♠2	N: ♥J*	E: ♦3	S: ♠6	1	2
4. N: ♦A*	E: ♦6	S: ♦K	W: ♦2	2	2
5. N: ♦Q*	E: ♦7	S: ♦J	W: ♦4	3	2
6. N: ♦5	E: ♥6	S: ♥9*	W: ♦8	4	2
7. S: ♣5	W: ♣8	N: ♣A*	E: ♣2	5	2
8. N: ♦T	E: ♥8	S: ♥T*	W: ♦9	6	2
9. S: ♥K	E: ♥A*	N: ♥3	W: ♥4	6	3

NORTH (13)

S:
 H: 7 5
 D:
 C: 7 4

WEST (14)

S: J T
 H:
 D:
 C: Q T

EAST (1)

S:
 H:
 D:
 C: J 9 6 3

SOUTH (12)

S: 8
 H: Q 2
 D:
 C: K