

**Esther Discusses "Another of David Bird's
52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play:
Winning with 'Unnecessarily High' Cards to
Preserve Precious Entries into Dummy"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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<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 "**Another of David Bird's 52 Great Bridge Tips on Declarer Play: Winning with 'Unnecessarily High' Cards to Preserve Entries into Dummy**". 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, before we discuss one of these tips about playing bridge as Declarer, would you tell us a bit about the author of this 2005 bridge book, David Bird?

Esther: Well, my *gracious giver*, I will certainly try to help you! David Bird is a 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.

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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.

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.

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: Ummm. Hmmmmm. Well, Esther, in any case is there anything else you need to tell our readers before you begin discussing some of Bird's bridge tips for playing bridge as Declarer?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hombre*, yes, indeed. First, I want to make clear that the ideas presented here are dominantly those of David Bird. Second, I have altered some of the cards in the bridge Hands discussed here, unless the Hands are actual Hands from an actual prior competition.

Bruce: OK, Esther. What is the Bird's bridge tip for Declarer play that you wish to discuss?

Win with an 'Unnecessarily High' Card to Preserve Entries Into Dummy [Tip #25, pp. 79-81]

Esther: Well, Bruce, consider the following Board. Opener bid **2NT**, so Responder even if he bids **3NT** is obviously expected to be "weak". This means that entries into the Dummy are likely to be especially *precious* and worthy of being preserved.

	NORTH (5)	
	S: Q 7 4	
	H: 8 5	
	D: 8 6 3	
	C: Q J 7 6 4	
WEST (5)		EAST (10)
S: K T 8 6 3		S: 5 2
H: T 6 4		H: Q J 7 2
D: Q 5 4		D: K 9 7 2
C: 8 2		C: A 9 5
	SOUTH (20)	
	S: A J 9	
	H: A K 9 3	
	D: A J T	
	C: K T 3	

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2NT	PASS	3NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

WEST leads the Spade 6 which is 4th from the "top" of his "longest and strongest" Suit. This enables EAST (and the Declarer) to use the "**Rule of 11**"² to know exactly how many Spade cards higher than the Spade 6 are located in "closed" Hands. Because $11 - 6 = 5$, and once Dummy is "down" EAST sees **2** Dummy Spades higher than the 6, and EAST holds **0** Spades higher than the 6, therefore EAST knows that the SOUTH Declarer holds exactly $5 - 2 - 0 = 3$ Spades higher than the led Spade 6. Similarly, Declarer SOUTH knows given that $11 - 6 = 5$ and Dummy holds **2** higher Spades and Declarer SOUTH holds **3** Spades higher than the 6, therefore SOUTH knows that EAST holds $5 - 2 - 3 = 0$ Spades higher than the Spade 6.

Bruce: Well, Esther, certainly Declarer should play "2nd Hand low" and play the NORTH Dummy Spade 4 and then "win" Trick #1 in his own Hand with the Spade 9. Isn't that pretty obvious?

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: "Esther Bridge Lesson #25: 40 or So Bridge Bidding/Play 'Rules'":

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

Esther: Well, my *studly salamander*, I am not so sure about that! Look closely at the N/S holdings. N/S together hold 5 + 3 = **8** Clubs including **4** of the 5 "top" Clubs. Declarer SOUTH is going to want to "attack" Clubs. E/W together hold **5** Clubs and the most likely "split", given that 5 is an "odd" number, is the most nearly-equal "split", a 3-2 "split". The problem is that because SOUTH's "closed" Hand is so "strong" NORTH's Hand is therefore "weak". This means that Declarer SOUTH has few entries into the NORTH Dummy. Declarer SOUTH holds only 2 "low-ish" Clubs in the Club T,3. This means that the NORTH Dummy Spade Queen is *vital*ly important. Declarer SOUTH's **2** Spades lower than the NORTH Dummy's Spade Queen are *precious*!

Bruce: Well, Esther, what Spade should the SOUTH Declarer play on Trick **#1**?

Esther: Well, my *handsome hombre*, Declarer SOUTH on this Board **must** play his Spade Ace on Trick **#1**! By retaining "low" Spade cards in his "closed" Hand Declarer SOUTH thereby *preserves* the NORTH Dummy Spade Queen as a future "entry" into the Dummy! This Dummy doesn't have many entries, so this is *vital*!

SOUTH can then on Trick **#2** begin "attacking" the Clubs by leading his Club King. EAST is likely to "duck" for **3** Rounds but Declarer SOUTH can soon recover the lead, "knock out" WEST's expected Spade King holding, and then "enter" the NORTH Dummy using the Spade Queen to "cash" his remaining Clubs there.

Bruce: OK, Esther. Well, can you give us another example of when it is important to "win" a Trick using an "*unnecessarily high*" card when you could have won with a "lower" card?

Esther: Well, my *beaudacious beau*, certainly I will try to help you! Here is another Board for you to consider.

NORTH (7)

S: K 5
H: J 6 3
D: Q J T 6 4 2
C: 6 3

WEST (5)

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

EAST (8)

S: A 8 6 3 2
H: 8 4
D: A 7 5
C: 9 7 5

SOUTH (20)

S: Q T 4
H: A K 9 5
D: K 8
C: A K J 2

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2NT	PASS	3NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

WEST leads the Heart 2 which is 4th from the "top" of his "longest and strongest" Suit.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. What task is vitally important for Declarer SOUTH to perform as part of his "Line of Play"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, SOUTH will take at least 2 Spades, 2 Hearts, at least 2 Clubs, and 5 Diamonds, or 11 Tricks. But to do so SOUTH is likely to need to repeatedly enter the NORTH Dummy because E/W will not readily surrender the Diamond Ace and will "duck" a Diamond lead twice. And E/W will certainly try to cut off SOUTH's access to the Dummy by "attacking" Spades. "Winning" Diamond Tricks in an inaccessible NORTH Dummy are not helpful to SOUTH! As Bird (2005) noted:

If you win [Trick #1] cheaply with the ♥9 you will not be able to reach [D]ummy with the [Dummy Heart] ♥J and the contract will fail. Instead you must win with the ♥A or the ♥K. You [then] clear the [D]iamond [S]uit, East winning the second round. Whether East plays a [C]lub or a [H]eart now, you can set up [D]ummy's ♥J as an entry to the long

[D]iamonds. All the [S]uits are guarded, so the defenders cannot hurt you. (pp. 80-81)

Bruce: Wow, Esther, good stuff. Are there any variations on these situations that you wish to discuss?

Esther: Well, my *beaudacious beau*, certainly I will try to help you! What if you are playing a **NT** contract and your Opponents hold not **1**, but **2** "stoppers" in your "long" Suit? Consider the following Board:

		NORTH (4)	
		S: K J 4	
		H: 8 6	
		D: T 8 6 3 2	
		C: 8 5 2	
	WEST (8)		EAST (6)
S:	Q T 8 6 3		S: 7 5
H:	J 9 5		H: Q T 7 3 2
D:	4		D: Q J 9 7
C:	K Q T 7		C: J 3
		SOUTH (22)	
		S: A 9 2	
		H: A K 4	
		D: A K 5	
		C: A 9 6 4	

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2 NT	PASS	3 NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

WEST leads the Spade 6. Declarer plays the NORTH Dummy Spade 4.

Bruce: My goodness, Esther! Don't tell me that Declarer SOUTH should "win" Trick #1 with his Spade Ace!!!!

Esther: Well, Bruce, that is exactly what I am going to tell you! You should "win" Trick **#1** with the Spade Ace, an "unnecessarily high" card, thus "unblocking" the NORTH Dummy Spade K,J for later entry into a very "weak" Dummy, On Tricks **#2** and **#3** "cash" your Diamond A,K. On Trick **#4** lead your Diamond 5 which EAST "wins" with his Diamond Queen or Jack.

If on Trick **#5** EAST switches to a Heart, you "win" with your Heart Ace or King. On Trick **#6** you lead a "low" Spade, the 2. You know that WEST led 4th from the "top" of his "longest and strongest" Suit and probably holds the Spade Queen, so you "win" in the Dummy with the Spade Jack. On Trick **#7** you lead a Diamond from the NORTH Dummy which EAST wins with his Diamond Jack. EAST now holds only **1** remaining Diamond, the Diamond Queen. But you have preserved Spade King as another entry to the Dummy, and will eventually pick up a 3rd N/S Diamond Trick from the NORTH Dummy's "long" Diamonds.

If on Trick **#5** EAST switched to Clubs instead of Hearts, you would "duck" 1 Round and proceed accordingly. You will have prevented E/W from "winning" 3 Clubs and 2 Diamonds.