

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0143:
"A Lesson for Beginners: Can You Make a 4S Game
Contract When Your Partnership Holds Only 20
HCPs?: T is for Tump Cards and Transportation"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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

<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

To return to the "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quizzes", CLICK:

<https://esther-bridge.com/quiz.html>

Many players who are *new* to bridge place a heavy (and *deadly*) emphasis in High Card Points (HCPs) when deciding whether they can open or whether they can make Game contracts. Yet Suit contracts are not primarily about HCPs. Suit contracts instead are *primarily* about (1) Trump card counts and (2) distribution shapes. This emphasis was vividly illustrated in the ACBL bridge documentary film, "Moonraker", in which ACBL LifeMaster James Bond bid and made a 7C DOUBLED REDOUBLED contract when his Partnership *together* held a mere 8 HCPs! See:

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

The idea that Trump card counts and Hand distribution shape are *critical* when bidding Suit contracts came to the forefront of bridge thinking with the publication of 2 bridge books in the 1990s. First, in 1992 Larry Cohen published his bridge books, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks. Second, Marty Bergen published his 1996 bridge book, Points Schmoints!. Both of the books won the Bridge Book of the Year Award from the American Bridge Teachers' Association!²

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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.

² For more information on the "Law of Total Tricks" see: "Esther Bridge Lesson #43: Are the 'Rule of 20' and the 'Law of Total Tricks' Both Broken?":

[https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/count\(s\).pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/count(s).pdf)

Esther on her "Esther Bridge Lessons" website has 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 present "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quiz" question is drawn from "BBO Bridge Master" Level-1 **Lesson B-2**. Note that across repeated play "BBO Bridge Master" may change some Hands in given lessons. Esther may have altered some cards in some Hands.

Board B-2, Level 1

NORTH (9)

S: Q J T 9

H: 7 6 5

D: K Q J

C: 6 5 4

SOUTH (11)

S: A K 8 7 6 5 4

H: 4 3 2

D: --

C: A 3 2

Bidding

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

On lead WEST plays his Heart Ace. This lead is either a singleton or "promises" the Heart King that will be played 2nd, and asks Partner, "Partner, assuming the NORTH Dummy holds at least 3 Hearts, can you 'win' Trick #3 in Hearts either (1) with the Heart Queen or (2) by ruffing?"

E/W take 3 Heart Tricks "off the top". You must take all the remaining Tricks to "make" your contract. EAST "wins" Trick #3 and switches to Clubs by playing the Club 9.

1. Sitting SOUTH as Declarer should you "duck" or play your only Club "stopper", the Club Ace?

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:
https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0143_a1.pdf