

Esther "Pop" Quiz #0183:
"Beware of Marty Bergen's Bridge "Rule of 20"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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About Bergen

Marty Bergen is a 10-time National Bridge Champion. Bergen has written a column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin since 1976. Two of his 69+ bridge books/booklets have won Best Bridge Book of the Year Awards from the American Bridge Teachers' Association. His 1996 book, Points Schmoints!, one of the best book award winners, has been especially influential. One of Esther's most treasured bridge books is Bergen's 2011 little "pocket book", Pocket Posh: Tips for Bridge Players. Bergen has invented quite a few bridge conventions/systems including DON'T, Bergen Limit Raises, and the "**Rule of 20**".

About Bergen's "Rule of 20"

In 1996 Marty Bergen published his book on bridge, Points Schmoints! The book won the Outstanding Bridge Book of the Year Award from the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA).

Within the first dozen pages of Points Schmoints! Bergen introduced his "**Rule of 20**" for decided whether you can (and should) open the bidding with a Suit bid when you have fewer than ~13 HCPs. The "**Rule of 20**" says that you can open a Suit bid if the sum of (1) your HCPs and (2) the number of cards in your "longest" 2 Suits equals **20** or more.

The "**Rule of 20**" is built on the premise that 2-Suited Hands play very well in Suit contracts. As Bergen noted, for example, in his 2011 *extraordinary* little "pocket book", Pocket Posh: Tips for Bridge Players:

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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, the purported ACBL Double Triple Emerald Gold Platinum LifeMaster with 20+ million ACBL MasterPoints, in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So, this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

“Any [H]and with 5-5 distribution has great potential. This is especially true when you have **good [S]uits**, and really gets exciting once you find a fit.” (p. 17, emphasis added)

Tragically, too often newer bridge players fail to attend to the importance of Suit Quality when invoking the “**Rule of 20**”.

Ron Klinger

Ron Klinger (1941-) is an Australian contract bridge player who has written more than **70** bridge books including his 1990 book, Guide to Better Card Play, which won the “American Bridge Teachers’ Association (ABTA) Bridge Book of the Year Award.” His book, Right Through the Pack Again, won the 2010 “International Bridge Press Association Book of the Year Award.” He was Editor of Australian Bridge for 13 years (1972-1985). For many years he has written, and still currently writes, a weekly bridge column for both the Sydney Morning Herald and The Sun-Herald.

About the “Suit Quality Test (‘SQT’) Score”

Klinger also originated the Ron Klinger “**Suit Quality Test (‘SQT’) Score**”. The “**SQT Score**” is computed by adding together (1) the number of cards held in the Suit and (2) the number of Honors (including the Ten) held in the Suit. Suit contracts set at a level of “**SQT Score**” - 6 are generally relatively safe.

Correctly Applying Bergen’s “Rule of 20”

1. *Sitting 1st within the auction what would you bid with these holdings? What are the Ron Klinger “SQT Scores” of your “longest” 2 Suits?*

YOU

♠ A J 8 7 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ 7 ♣ A J 9 8 4 (10)

2. *Sitting 1st within the auction what would you bid with these holdings? What are the Ron Klinger “SQT Scores” of your “longest” 2 Suits?*

YOU

♠ T 8 7 3 2 ♥ 7 6 5 4 3 ♦ A Q ♣ A (10)

3. *Sitting 1st within the auction what would you bid with these holdings? What are the Ron Klinger “SQT Scores” of your “longest” 2 Suits?*

YOU

♠ A 3 2 ♥ -- ♦ A Q T 4 3 ♣ 7 6 5 4 3 (10)

4. Sitting 1st within the auction what would you bid with these holdings? What are the Ron Klinger "SQT Scores" of your "longest" 2 Suits?

YOU

♠ 5 3 ♥ 4 ♦ A Q T 4 3 ♣ A T 9 4 3 (10)

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:
https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0183_a1.pdf