

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0313:
"A Cardinal Bridge Principle: As Declarer
Give Up Your *Inevitable* 'Losers' EARLY"**

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Bridge is a game of exceptions. But bridge is also a game involving **Cardinal Bridge Principles**. For example, **Marty Begein** has offered a number of **Cardinal Bridge Principles**.

About Marty 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 in the first few pages of Points Schmoints! the "**Rule of 20**".

1. In the December, 2024 issue (p. 55) of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin Bergen in his monthly bridge column argued, "I have always believed that any [S]uit headed by four honors should be treated as if it had an additional card."
2. In the first few pages of his award-winning 1996 bridge book, Points Schmoints!, Bergen proposed his "**Rule of 20**". The "**Rule of 20**" says, "Assuming your longest 2 Suits have good 'Suit Quality', you can (and should) open by bidding a Suit contract if the sum of (1) the number of cards you hold in your longest 2 Suits and (2) the number of HCPs you hold together equals 20 or more."

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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.

Another bridge luminary is **Larry Cohen**.

About Larry Cohen

By the age of 22, Larry had won his first two of **25** National Bridge Championships, the Blue Ribbon Pairs and the prestigious Spingold Teams. Between 1979 and 2008, Cohen won **57** first or second place finishes in national and world competitions. In 2002, the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) named Cohen "Player of the Year". Cohen is also listed on the ACBL's "Top 10 Living Most Influential Bridge Personalities". In 2020, in his first year of eligibility, Cohen was elected to the ACBL Hall of Fame. Cohen has had long-term bridge partnership with players such as Marty Bergen and David Berkowitz.

Cohen's bridge writings have been massively influential. Cohen for many years has published a monthly column in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. Cohen has authored numerous books including **6** books that have won the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) "Bridge Book of the Year Award".

3. In his 1992 award-winning bridge book, To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks, Cohen argued that you can generally "make" a Suit contract set no higher than the number of Trump cards your Partnership holds - 6 pretty much irrespective of HCPs. This principle is reflected in ACBL LifeMaster James Bond, 007, being able to make his **7C** DOUBLED REDOUBLED contract when his Partnership together held only **8** HCPs:

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

This principle is also reflected in the Board on which any of the 4 players can "make" (1) either **5C** and **5H** contracts or **5D** and **5S** contracts and (2) a **3NT** contract even though every player holds only **10** HCPs!

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/Mirror H.pdf>

Today's "**Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quiz**" is about another **Cardinal Bridge Principle**:

"As Declarer Give Up Your *Inevitable* 'Losers' EARLY"

The ideas and the example Board presented here are drawn from Larry Cohen's January, 2026 article, "General Principle" (p. 53), in the ACBL Bridge Bulletin. Esther may have altered some of the cards in the illustrative Board. Cohen played this Board in an *actual* online duplicate bridge game.

Dealer: **SOUTH**

Vul: **E/W**

NORTH (11)

S: A T 8 4

H: T 9 8

D: A 9 8 6

C: K 2

WEST (10)

S: 7

H: K Q J 5 3

D: J T

C: Q J 8 5 3

EAST (6)

S: J 3 2

H: 7 2

D: K Q 7 2

C: T 9 7 4

SOUTH (13)

S: K Q 9 6 5

H: A 6 4

D: 5 4 3

C: A 6

Bidding*

SOUTH

1**S**

PASS

WEST

2**S****

PASS

NORTH

4**S**

EAST

PASS

*This bidding is by Esther.

This is a "Michaels Cuebid**"² "showing" both Hearts and Clubs.

On Trick #1 WEST leads the Heart King thus "promising" the Heart Queen and "long" Hearts.

1. After the NORTH Dummy is exposed what "losers" should Declarer SOUTH see?
2. What card should Declarer SOUTH play on Trick #1?

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:
https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0313_a1.pdf

² Within the "Esther Bridge Lessons" see: "5 Overall 'Two-Suited Distribution Cuebid' Systems": https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/5_cuebids.pdf