

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0373:  
"Bridge Play as Declarer:  
(1) When Should You 'Draw' Trump? and  
(2) in Which Hand That You as Declarer Control  
Should You Ruff?"**

**Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen<sup>1</sup>**

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

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Today's bridge bidding questions are drawn from Larry Cohen's excellent article, "Declarer Play Basics: What Can We Do About It?", in the April, 2026 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin (pp. 57-58). Esther may have altered some of the cards in the examples.

### **About Larry Cohen**

By the age of 22, **Larry Cohen** 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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](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.

numerous books including **6** books that have won the American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) "Bridge Book of the Year Award":

Larry Teaches Modern Bidding Vol. I, II, and III (Self-Published 2020);

On The Other Hand (co-written with David Bird) (2019);

On The Other Hand - Defense (co-written with David Bird) (2020);

Tricks of the Trade (2018);

Larry Teaches Opening Leads (2014); and

To Bid or Not to Bid: The LAW of Total Tricks (1992).

Esther regards Cohen's 1992 book on the "**Law of Total Tricks**" as probably being the *most important bridge book of all time!* This book is published in 6 different languages and was the best-selling bridge book of the 1990's.

Esther in "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #177: **Larry Cohen's '3-Step System' for Planning Declarer's 'Line of Play' for a Suit Contract**" has discussed Cohen's 3-step system for playing Suit contracts:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/3Step Tr.pdf>

The **3 steps** in Cohen's system for developing an initial "Line of Play" for a Declarer playing a Suit contract are, *in order*:

1. **Estimate what Tricks you might lose in the Hand holding the most Trump cards assuming both your Hand and the Dummy hold an *unequal* number of cards.**
2. **Next, ask yourself, "what can you do about your possible 'losers'?"**
3. **Finally, ask yourself, "Once your Partnership gains the lead should your *first* move then be to 'draw' Trump?"**

The present "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quiz" focuses on the **3<sup>rd</sup>** step in Cohen's 3-step system.

In all the examples herein Declarer is playing a Spade contract.

**Example #1**

Dummy

♠ Q T 2

♥ 3

**YOU**

Declarer

♠ A K J 7 6

♥ A 6 5 4

1. How many "losers" should Declarer SOUTH see in the **2** Majors?
2. Upon first gaining the lead should Declarer SOUTH immediately then "draw" Trump?

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:

[https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0373\\_a1.pdf](https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0373_a1.pdf)