

**Esther "Pop" Quiz #0456:
"As a Declarer Playing a
Part-Score Heart Contract,
Can You Avoid Making This Error Actually Made in
the 2025 Life Master Pairs Competition?"**

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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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 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).

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.

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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.

The present "Esther Bridge 'Pop' Quiz" is drawn from the ideas and examples presented by Larry Cohen in his excellent article, "Criminal Mistake", published in the July, 2026 issue of the ACBL Bridge Bulletin (p. 55). The present "Real Deal" was played by an ACBL Hall-of-Famer sitting SOUTH in the third session of the 2025 Life Masters, a game in which the player was not at the top of his form.

Dealer: **WEST**

Vul: **N/S**

NORTH (7)

S: 8 4 3

H: K T 8

D: K 7 2

C: J T 7 6

WEST (6)

S: Q T

H: Q 9 2

D: 5 4 3

C: Q 9 8 4 2

EAST (12)

S: 7 5

H: A 7 6 5

D: J T 9 8

C: A K 3

SOUTH (15)

S: A K J 9 6 2

H: J 4 3

D: A Q 6

C: 5

Bidding

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
PASS	PASS	1 D	1 S
PASS	2 S	PASS	3 D
PASS	3 S	PASS	PASS
PASS			

On Trick **#1** WEST led the Diamond 3 in Partner EAST's bid Diamond Suit. Declarer SOUTH won Trick **#1** with his Diamond Ace. On Tricks **#2** and **#3** SOUTH "drew" all **4** E/W Trump Spades finding that the E/W Spades "split" 2-2. On Trick **#4** Declarer SOUTH from his own Hand led the Heart 3 toward the NORTH Dummy's Heart K,T,x.

1. Once the NORTH Dummy is exposed what "losers" should Declarer SOUTH see?
2. Cohen suggests regarding SOUTH's lead of his Heart 4 on Trick #4 that "it was the **lazy** play of the [H]eart suit that you should label '**criminal**'" (p. 55, emphasis added). What instead was the "correct", not "lazy", not "criminal", Heart lead for Declarer SOUTH to make on Trick #4?

To see Esther's **suggested answers**, CLICK:
https://esther-bridge.com/quiz/q0456_a1.pdf