

CONGRESS DIRECTOR COURSE
By REG BUSCH

LESSON 1C

I presented this ruling problem in Lesson 1A. This is an excellent example for discussion purposes.

Boardd 18 NS Vul Dealer East

	♠4	
	♥K875	
	♦QJ9652	
	♣73	
♠A97		♠QJ853
♥A43		♥J10962
♦108		♦73
♣AK1094		♣5
	♠K1062	
	♥Q	
	♦AK4	
	♣QJ862	

Bidding:	W	N	E	S
			P	1♣
	1NT	2♦*	P	2♥
	P	3♦	3♦	All pass.

* Alerted by South and explained as transfer.

EW call you after the hand. How do you approach this situation?

Discussion:

In all situations where opponents claim misexplanation, your first task is to decide whether there actually was MI. Perhaps the information was correct and the bid was systemically incorrect. So your first task is to establish what the NS agreement was. But there is a further consideration you should always make.

Tip: Whenever misinformation (MI) or a misbid situation arises, there is in most cases also unauthorized information (UI), and this should also be considered in reaching a judgment. Remember also that MI includes such things as incorrect alerts and failure to alert.

In this case, North has heard South's alert, (whether it was incorrect or not), and subsequently must not take any action suggested over another by this UI.

First step: was there MI? You question both players as to their agreement, and if necessary check their system card. This is the sort of situation where the two players often have different ideas about their agreement (do transfers apply over a 1NT overcall?), and it may not be possible to establish what their agreement actually is. The footnote to Law 75 makes it clear that the Director is to assume misexplanation rather than misbid in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

Assume we decide on MI. Next step: were the opponents damaged? In deciding on this, we proceed as follows. What would be the likely auction in the absence of the MI? Bear in mind that EW are entitled to know that the 2♦ bid was natural. They are not entitled to **know** that NS are

having a misunderstanding, but are entitled to draw that conclusion from South's alert, but at their own risk. North is not entitled to know that South has treated his 2♦ as a transfer, and South is not entitled to know that North's 2♦ bid was natural. North should treat South's 2♥ bid as natural, and should pass having found their best fit. There are all sorts of possible outcomes on this hand, but one likely scenario would be that East would pass, suspecting a misunderstanding between NS, and might then pass out 2♥ opting for a positive score.

One could make a case for South's 2♥ bid being forcing (a reverse), though the 1NT overall makes this less likely. Perhaps we should require North to treat this as forcing for one round and raise to 3♥? Whatever, the likely scenario in this hand is that, without the UI, NS will play in some number of hearts. East will not double. Game is unlikely for EW, and a double may allow NS to escape by legitimately alerting them to their misunderstanding.

In adjusting the score, Law 12C2 requires us to sometimes award non-balancing scores to NS and EW. Suppose we decide that the most likely result in 3♥ is NS -300, but that somewhat less than perfect play will produce a -400 result for NS. We shall award EW +300 and NS -400. We should specify which score is to be used for matchpointing in pairs. Better I think is to treat this sort of result as an average for comparison with the rest of the field, and adjust the NS and EW matchpoints manually.

Assume we decide that there was no MI, but that NS forgot the system. Is that the end of the matter? No adjustment? No, because now we must consider the UI involved. The same considerations apply, and we will make a similar adjustment.

By the way, suppose you meet a quite difficult situation where you find it very difficult to decide what might have happened on this hand without the infraction. Do you just throw your hands in the air and decide to award an Av+ and Av-? No. Read Law 12C1, which says you may award an artificial adjusted score only when no result can be obtained on the hand. When there has been a result, you must assign an assigned adjusted score i.e. an actual bridge score under Law 12C2. Admittedly, 12C2 does say that this score may be assigned in total points or matchpoints, but this refers to a situation where you work out the assigned score, and award the respective result in matchpoints to the two sides. In a very extreme case, it may be acceptable to award some sort of result in matchpoints (which may be the equivalent of 60% / 40%, but is not an artificial adjusted score)

During the course of these lessons, we'll come back often to this type of situation, because this is one of the most difficult area for congress directors. I urge all aspiring congress directors to join the ABDA and receive their quarterly bulletin, which is full of useful information and articles.

More soon.

Reg.