

CONGRESS DIRECTOR COURSE
By REG BUSCH

LESSON 5A

1. Here is a little poser that may have you scratching your head and searching the Lawbook.

South is declarer in 4S. There is one trump left in dummy. Declarer holds D AKxxx opposite dummy's D xx. He needs to bring the diamonds home to make his contract. As it happens, the diamonds break 3-3, so he can make his game easily. However, he plays DA, small from dummy. Then he plays the DK, but gets a trick ahead of himself and calls on dummy to ruff. Dummy says 'But there is still a diamond in dummy'. Now declarer retracts his call for a ruff, plays the second diamond, then ruffs out the suit to establish his long diamond winners and make his contract. EW call you and request an adjusted score. Their case: whilst dummy is entitled to prevent an infraction by declarer, once declarer calls for the ruff in dummy the infraction has already occurred, so he is now too late. Had declarer been allowed to ruff his DK, he would have been one down.

Your ruling, and under which Laws?

Another UI problem:

Vulnerability: Nil

Dealer: West

S- xx
H- KJ10xx
D- AQ108
C- xx

S- KQJxx	S- Axx
H- void	H- xxx
D- Kxxx	D- x
C- Axxx	C- KQ10xxx

S- xxx
H- AQxxx
D- Jxxx
C- J

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1S	2H	3H *	4H
4S	P	P	5H
X **	P	5S	All pass

* Explained as a limit raise

** Break in tempo

Heart lead, making only five (declarer didn't realize she had to trump a diamond).

NS claim damage because of East's pull of the 5HX after West's slow double. How do you rule? Would you rule differently if West had thought for some time after the 5H bid and then passed, and then East had bid 5S?

2. Some more on UI:

Those who attended the seminar at Sunshine Coast will recognize this hand. However, I am reproducing it here because it is an excellent discussion example.

Bd 24 / Nil / W

A104
Q1085
AQ104
A2

8
AK964
1097
1098

J75
J2
KJ8
KQJ85

KQ9432
73
63
643

Bidding:

W	N	E	S
P	1NT(15-17)	P	2H (alerted)
P*	2S	3C	All pass

* long think

Result 3C one off for NS +50

NS call at the end of the hand and claim damage in that East's 3C bid was not a 75% action after West's hesitation.

West explained that he did stop and think about doubling 2H as a lead director but wondered if East would take this as having some other meaning. In most cases when you are called, the hesitator will endeavour to explain his reasons so that you don't often have to adjudicate on the fact of the hesitation. Where there is a dispute, you may be able to sort out the facts with some sort of question to the hesitator as 'Did you have a problem?' or 'What were you thinking about?'. In my experience there are very few players who call you for a non-existent hesitation, though there are a few who are a bit quick on the trigger.

We need to make some allowances for the fact that bridge players are not automatons and may need to think about their decisions, particularly in situations where the bidding is already at a high level before it gets back to you. For example

W	N	E	S
1H	X	3H	5C

Very few Wests could act in perfect tempo after this auction.

This leads to a further comment at this table. East said that West was always a slow bidder. Some players are persistently slow, and as directors we need to take cognizance of this. UI arises from a 'break in tempo'. What others would call a hesitation may not be a break in tempo for an habitually slow player. But we must counterbalance this with the observation that even the slowest bidders will not agonise over a Yarborough before passing.

At this table, East stated that she had formed the view that South's bid was for a weak takeout, and that she had better get a bid in now in case 2S was passed out. At this stage, South's hand was unlimited. I'm quite sure that East's view was not a conscious decision to take advantage of the UI. But subconsciously no doubt there was the thought that West must have some values, add those to her own values and NS do not have enough for game.

So what is our decision here? They don't come much simpler than this one.

Was there UI? Yes.

Did East have alternative LA's? Yes

Was East's 3C bid a 75% action? No. Many Easts would pass with this hand.

Could the 3C bid be indicated over the pass by the UI? Certainly.

Were NS damaged? Yes, they could have made 9 tricks in spades

What do we adjust to? The likely result was +140 for NS. Law 12C2 requires us sometimes to give a split score in this situation – to give NS the most favourable result that was likely and EW the most unfavourable result that was 'at all probable'

In other words, we give NS the likely result. For EW, we need to decide that, if perhaps their defence was poor and they may have allowed South to make 10 tricks (without drawing too long a bow), then we shall award them -170.

In deciding on the question of damage, we need to discuss the concepts of 'consequent damage' and 'subsequent damage'. In consequent damage, the damage results directly from the infraction. With subsequent damage, the damage results from some event after the infraction, but not caused by it. In other words, something has happened to break the nexus between the infraction and damage. Consider some possibilities in our present case.

(A) You may take the view that South's failure to compete to 3S was poor bridge (presuming the NS system allows her to do so competitively). I myself would have bid 3S on the South hand (provided it showed just a competitive hand). But subsequent poor bridge does not deprive NS of their rights to an adjustment.

South's failure to bid 3S was perhaps poor bridge, but doesn't lose her right to redress. Without the infraction, NS should have been playing in 2S.

(B) Suppose South had taken the push to 3S. North as declarer went one off because she drew three rounds of trumps therefore not getting her club ruff. Very poor bridge. Does that lose their right to adjustment. No, because they should have been playing in 2S, which they would have made. We adjust the score to NS +110.

Contrast the above with these situations:

(C) After the 3C bid, you are called to the table, explain the Law and instruct bidding to proceed. South now bids 4S, going off 1. Do you adjust? Not in this case. South's 4S bid is a wild, gambling bid. Perhaps South thought along these lines: 'I'll have a go at 4S. If it makes, well and good. If not, well the Director will probably adjust the score because of East's infraction. This sort of approach is called the 'double shot', which could be defined as a wild, gambling action taken on the expectation that if it fails you'll get your adjusted score anyway. This sort of action has broken the nexus between the infraction and the damage. In all these UI and MI situations, non-offenders are still expected to play normal bridge.

The WBF Laws Committee has issued an interpretation which is official: Players damaged will not lose their right to redress merely because of subsequent poor judgment or play, but only if subsequent actions are wild, gambling or irrational or in the nature of a double shot.

Consider the next variation:

(D) South accepts the push to 3S, which is easily made. But South manages to revoke, and the penalty costs a trick for one off. There are two schools of thought here. One says NS should have been in 2S and they made 8 tricks so they are entitled to +110. The other says NS were in a simple 3S. They went down not because of poor judgment or play but because of a revoke. The revoke breaks the nexus between infraction and damage. There is logic in both views. However the dominant view amongst senior world directors is that the revoke is classed as an irrational play, and does break the nexus. The same would apply where other infractions e.g. opening lead out of turn by defenders would lose their right to redress if the damage resulted solely from this.

This is not to say that we won't adjust the scores for the offending side. Even where we have denied redress to the non-offenders, we still apply law 12C2 to the offending side.

Another interesting ruling, also discussed at the seminar.

Hesitation Blackwood

10/E/All

74

3

KQ9

AKQ9754

AQ1032

KJ986

AKJ94		10762
7		A1042
102		---
	5	
	Q85	
	J8653	
	J863	

Bidding:

1S	(2C)	4S
4NT	P	5H
5S		??

4NT = RKCB 5H = 2/5 Aces, not SQ

What do you bid with the East hand? What do you bid if West had thought for some time before signing off in 5S?

This situation occurred recently in the UK at their major event in Brighton. East raised to 6S after a long pause for thought from West before bidding 5S. East claimed the raise to 6S was ‘automatic’. The TD ruled the score back to EW +680. This was appealed and the appeals committee supported the Director’s ruling.

Personally I feel that this was a pretty harsh decision. 6S must go close to being a 75% action (in the UK, it is actually a 70% rule). However, the interest here is in the comments of the committee chairman, which is something we should all remember as a principle in making these ‘hesitation Blackwood’ rulings.

Comments: (By AC Chairman): East has extra, undisclosed values. But the partner of a Blackwood bidder is normally expected to accept his partner’s decision, and when that decision is after a pause for thought, it is not permitted to continue except when partner ‘cannot’ have a hand on which slam will fail.