

CONGRESS DIRECTOR COURSE
By REG BUSCH

LESSON 5B

The problems set in Lesson 5A:

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?

Comment:

[Please note that after these answers were written the WBF Laws Commission made a ruling that, when declarer calls for a card from dummy that is a revoke card, dummy may enquire of declarer concerning his possible revoke under Law 42B1. Jan Peach]

I can't give you a generally agreed answer, because there isn't one! I have strong views on this, but many disagree. Let's look at the relevant Laws:

42B1. Dummy may ask declarer when he has failed to follow suit whether he has a card of the suit led. To me, this obviously refers to a situation where declarer has failed to follow suit in his own hand.

42B2: Dummy may try to prevent any irregularity by declarer. Law 45B says that declarer plays a card from dummy by naming it. Once he has done so, the card is legally played. It is now too late for dummy to *prevent* the irregularity because the irregularity has already occurred. Some would argue that dummy's intervention prevents the irregularity of *establishing* the revoke. I don't accept this. Establishment of a revoke is per se not an infraction – it is merely a part of the post revoke process that decides whether there is a penalty and what it is.

Law 43A1c. Dummy must not participate in the play, nor may he communicate anything about the play to declarer.

This to me is the clincher. Declarer was heading for disaster by ruffing his winning king until dummy woke him up. This clearly to my mind is participating in the play. The defenders have been damaged. Declarer, left to his own devices, would have gone down. I would adjust the score to one off.

Some of those who disagree quote Law 44C: *In playing to a trick, each player must follow suit if possible. This obligation takes precedence over all other requirements of these Laws.* However, as I see it, this is merely a statement of how the game is played. In soccer, there is a basic rule that players may not handle the ball. But sometimes they do, and the Laws of Soccer make provisions to cover this.

In most cases, a revoke by dummy is no big deal in that the director will adjust where damage has been done to defenders. But this is a special case where declarer, by revoking in dummy, would have advantaged the defenders, and dummy's intervention cost defenders that advantage.

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?

Comments:

This was a pairs event (in the USA, not local). Let's follow our catechism.

Was there UI? Yes, West's slow double.

Were there LAs for East? Yes, pass or 5S.

Was East's 5S a 75% action? I believe a significant number of players would pass in a smooth auction.
So we'll say no.

Could East's 5S bid have been demonstrably influenced by the UI? This East claimed that, from the bidding, she 'knew' that West was void in hearts. This is a little self-serving. It's not obvious that West was void in hearts, but the diagnosis is much more likely after West's very slow double. Remember again the aphorism that, if partner makes a slow double, he won't be unhappy if you pull it. Whilst I have a little sympathy for East (I'd wonder how many defensive tricks my 6 card club suit will produce), I would adjust the score for the above reasons.

Now for the second question. Suppose West had thought for some time and then passed. Would you now accept a 5S bid by East?

Not quite so clear. It is obvious from the bidding that EW hold the balance of points in this hand. Many experienced partnerships have an understanding in this situation. If West doubles the 5H, he prefers to defend. If he bids an immediate 5S, his hand is much more suited to playing than defending. If he passes, this pass is forcing, and East must either double 5H or bid 5S. In other words, when West passes in this auction, he is saying to East 'I'm not sure whether to bid or double. I'm passing the decision to you, partner'. Now a slow pass by West is not conveying UI to East. His pass conveys exactly the same information as his hesitation – I'm not sure what to do. If EW can establish that they have this sort of understanding, then I would find no problem with East's 5S bid.

Supposing this same situation arose in a teams event. Now I would find a decision much more difficult. With the East hand, with my 6 card club suit and singleton diamond, I would be worrying about the double game swing, with us making game in a spade club fit and them in a heart diamond fit. (This is why at my first bid I would have bid 3C before supporting partner's spades. This gives partner a much better idea of how well the hands are fitting, and we may well have found a 6C spot.). I would find the 5S bid by East more acceptable on the basis of, when in doubt, bid one more rather than risk the double game swing.