

## Shall we call the Director?

Technical errors like a lead out of turn or a revoke are fairly straightforward for a director to deal with. Some of the other frequent problems are more happily resolved if club members have a better idea of some of the principles involved.

Here is a short list of such problems on which a director may have to rule. Players are always encouraged to call the director (pleasantly) and they will resolve any issues.

**Hesitation** This is the most difficult for a director because it is easy for a player to get upset about a ruling that goes against them.

**Hesitation in the bidding:** If your partner does hesitate then the Laws say that you “may not choose from among logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by that extraneous information”. Sometimes your bid is clear cut and no problem arises but at other times there may be a choice and that’s when a problem may arise. The director will decide (ideally after consulting with others) whether your bid will be allowed and you may appeal that decision if you disagree with it. Note that, even if you were “always going to bid that”, the director instead has to assess what others may do.

On the other hand, just because partner has hesitated it does not mean that you must always pass. If your hand clearly justifies it then bidding is fine.

**Hesitation in play:** A good example is when dummy has KJxxx in a suit and declarer leads towards it. If you have Axx you may need to think about your play: however, if you have Qxx instead, there is nothing for you to think about – and the opponents will reasonably be miffed if you do (hesitating because you were thinking about, say, giving count is not considered reasonable in these circumstances).

### **Hesitation with a singleton**

If you have just one card in the suit led you should play it automatically, in tempo; if you delay (maybe because you are thinking about the next trick), the opponents are entitled to assume you have another card in that suit and may be damaged subsequently because of that. Deliberate hesitation so as to mislead declarer is strictly against the Laws. Even if the declarer does not complain he will take note and mark you in his mind as being less than fully ethical.

An important exception to this is on the first trick when you are allowed, indeed encouraged, to think about the whole hand before playing a card, even if it is a singleton.

**Asking questions:** Do not ask unless you are thinking of bidding.

The Laws allow a player, at his turn to bid, to ask about the meaning of the opponents' bidding. However, there is a potential downside from such an action in that, if you ask and then pass, you have told the other 3 players that you have some particular interest in that part of the auction. Your opponents may use that information to their advantage but it is "unauthorised information" for your partner and he may be disadvantaged because of it. If, instead, you wait until the end of the auction, you can ask for a full review and explanation of all alerted bids – without giving your partner a potential problem.

For example, LHO opens 2C (alerted as the opponents are playing Benji), your partner passes and RHO bids 2D (also alerted). Maybe you have a good diamond suit and would like partner to lead a diamond. So you ask what the 2D bid means (you are told negative) and double. All this is fine. But suppose, instead you still want diamonds led but feel you are just too weak to double the 2D – now you should pass without asking; if you ask and then pass, it suggests to partner that you would like a diamond lead but unless it is clear cut (i.e. unless he does not have a "logical alternative") your partner will then be prevented from leading a diamond.

### **Slow play**

The club has a rule that no board may be started if there is less than 3 minutes remaining on the clock. The director usually does not have time to enquire and determine which pair was primarily at fault for the slow play. Consequently, if a board has to be withdrawn, 50% will usually be awarded to both sides. It is recognised that this will not always be fair but hopefully it balances out over time. The 3 minute rule is designed to maintain a reasonable speed of play throughout the evening but to work properly it needs all players to be proactive in not starting a board late; the director has enough to do without checking this all the time.

### **Revoke**

Call the director immediately!

The penalty for a revoke is much less if it is not "established" – which is when no one from the offending side has played to the next trick.

The penalty is usually 1 trick (or 2 if you ruffed when you revoked). But exceptions apply.

### **Appeals**

The club has no formal appeal process. If you disagree with a ruling, advise the director as soon as possible, ideally that night and 24 hours after play at the latest. As memories fade, you will find it harder to agree the facts necessary for the appeal to be successful.