

Comparable Calls – after an Insufficient Bid (IB) is cancelled

Two points to note:

- Rulings are very system dependent – what is a comparable call when playing Acol may be quite different to a pair playing Precision.
- No system defines the meaning of an illegal bid!

The Director needs to know the meaning of possible calls in order to decide which replacement call falls under the non-penalty headings of:

- ‘making good’ – ie making the lowest legal call specifying the same denomination; or
- ‘comparable’;

Before the offender makes their choice the TD will have needed to discuss this with the player, possibly away from the table, and decided which calls the offender can choose as ‘comparable’ if they so wish.

There are 3 tests for a comparable call:

- Call has the same or similar meaning to that of the IB
- Call’s meaning defines a sub-set of the IB’s meaning
- Call has the same purpose – asking; relay; etc

Which leads on to the second point: “What is the meaning of an “IB”?”

There are four likely reasons for a player to make an IB:

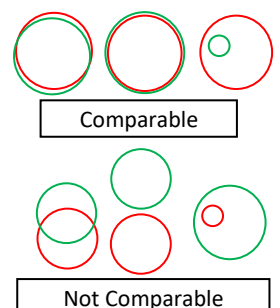
1. Mechanical error – An unintended card pulled from the bidding box. This is NOT an IB and ruled as if it ‘never happened’;
2. Slip of the mind. Partner opens 2NT, player thinks “OK I’ll use Stayman - 2C”;
3. Didn’t notice the last bid: 1C (1S) “1H”;
4. Mis-saw (heard) the last bid: STOP 3C (but partner ‘sees’ 2C) “2D”

The meaning of the IB depends on which of the above is the reason. The TD needs to decide (eg by questioning) which, in their opinion, it is:

1. No meaning it didn’t happen – auction can continue
2. The player thought they were using Stayman and so 2C meant ‘please bid a major suit if you have one’. 3C would probably mean the same.
3. 1H means what it would have done had RHO had passed.
4. 2D means what it would have done if partner had opened 2C.

The first two comparability tests require comparison of meanings. Imagine: Inside a **RED** circle are all the facts consistent with the IB. Inside a **GREEN** circle the facts true for the replacement (not bid because it could be pass or x).

1. If they are pretty much on top of one another – comparable
 2. If the **green** circle lies within the **red** circle – comparable
- Otherwise not comparable



Deciding why the IB occurred and whether the meaning is ‘similar’ can be difficult. TDs will need to appraise the players of their right to appeal!

Congleton Bridge Club – Directing notes

Notes

If comparable then, by definition, there will be insignificant UI; and that law cannot be enforced. But the TD can adjust the score if, it is likely that direct damage has been caused

If the players are expert enough to take advantage of any small differences of meaning I suggest the bids are not comparable; if not there will be no harm in keeping things simple.

A couple of examples, trying to avoid situations where making good is the obvious alternative:

1. N 1NT E 2H S 2H “Director”

- Director determines that (2H) wasn't seen and shows 5 spades but could be of any strength except invitational with 5S and 4H (unless experts won't find out last bit!)
- With a weak hand S can just make good with 2S (it would also be comparable); since 2H showed spades and 2S is the lowest legal bid also showing spades.
- If S has a game going hand with 6+ Spades then 4S would be a reasonable shot regardless to whether it was comparable or not; N wouldn't be bidding any way (unless E/W chose a 5H sacrifice). The **RED** circle encompasses so many hands with 5+S that the **GREEN** circle of a 4S bid fits well inside – So comparable; leaving N free to compete at the 5 level if necessary.
- If S's hand is game going with 5S and wants to investigate? Playing no conventions 3S seems ok as a comparable bid. Well within the **RED** circle.
Playing Lebensohl, for example, 3S (game forcing but no stop in H) would also be comparable. The alternative Leb. bid to show game going values with a stop in H would be 2NT to be followed by 3S. Unfortunately 2NT is not comparable because there are lots of hands which don't contain 5S (and therefore outside the **RED** circle) which would be bidding 2NT.

Why does the 2NT need to be penalised? Without the IB the 2NT could show many hands which will be defined after the 3C relay. If E/W decide to raise to sacrifice in 4H N won't know about S's spades. Now he does!

2. N 3C E pass S 2D “Director”

- What on earth is happening here? What does 2D mean?
 - If it was a slip of the mind and the bid intended was 3D then it probably shows a hand with at least a D stop that wishes to go to game.
 - If they hadn't noticed the 3C and thought they were opening then it shows whatever the pair are playing as an opening 2D (multi- maybe)
 - If they thought N opened 2C then it is either a weak reply or a relay showing very little
- Until the TD has decided (with certainty or balance of probabilities if necessary) then it is impossible to determine what is making good or what is comparable.
Just for fun let's take them one by one!
 - Doesn't seem much point in looking beyond making good with 3D
 - Multi 2D – Say, either weak 2H/S or strong 3C/D. A **RED** circle with 4 distinct areas. No bid can make that good (showing any of 4 denominations!).
 - If the player has one of the weak types then, IMO, no calls are comparable. You know that, opposite a 3C opening you are totally outgunned by the opposition. Either go quietly or plump for 4H/S or 5C and hope!
 - With a strong D type then it looks like 3D could be comparable.
 - After a mis-seen 2C it depends on what system is being played
 - If 2D is weak (<8 ish) then there are no comparable bids, as hands with a much wider point range would pass 3C. presumably you pass and partner is silenced. (Probably doesn't matter!)
 - If 2D is a forced relay it has no meaning (Infinite **RED** circle) and so any bid lies within it. You may bid on without penalty.

Luckily very few situations get this complicated, most are sorted by 'making good', an obvious comparable bid, a non-comparable resigned pass or a punt at a final contract.