

Minutes of the Tallahassee Duplicate Bridge Club's Board of Directors Meeting on June 17, 2026

Board members present were Roy Forman, President; Shelley Klein, Vice President; Joe Labat, Club Treasurer; David Thistle, Club Secretary; Paul Boisvert; Shelly Brimacombe; and Debbi Solo, Novice Representative.

Club Manager Nancy Ross was on travel.

Guest Speaker: Judy Donohue.

President Roy Forman called the meeting to order at 4:58 pm at the church.

The board unanimously approved the May minutes.

President's Remarks

We, as a club, are grateful to Fernando for drafting a memorandum explaining certain of the rules that govern play, such that no unauthorized information be exchanged between partners. His text is appended and is on the club website. Club members are strongly requested to read this document.

Club Manager's Report (presented by Roy)

Roy led a discussion about the July calendar. The club dinner will be on Friday, July 10 at Pepper's (Village Square Blvd). The next board meeting will be on July 15 at the church.

Treasurer's Report (Joe Labat)

- The club showed a small profit for the month of May.
- The club bought a metal, rolling cart for use at the Sunday games at Westminster Oaks.

Education Committee's Report (Shelley Klein and Debbie Dodd (Cochairs), Shelley Brimacombe, Nancy Ross, and Joyce Stillwell)

No report from the committee, but note that Shelley Klein and Shelley Brimacombe are teaching a non-club-sponsored course on Wednesdays at Shelley Klein's home. Shelley Klein is also teaching a club-sponsored course before the Monday game at the church.

Novices Report (Debbi Solo)

Debbi reported that the participants in the Monday game are getting used to the idea that the director must be called for every irregularity. She noted that an article dealing with this issue appeared in a recent issue of *Bridge Bulletin*.

Bylaws Committee's Report (David Thistle (Chair), Paul Boisvert)

No report.

Disciplinary Committee's Report (Paul Boisvert (Chair), Gloria Ford, Jim Lyle, and Marge Meeter)

No report.

Old Business

Guest Speaker Judy Donahue gave an update on the next bridge cruise, which will be in April of 2027 on a Royal Caribbean ship. Games will be sanctioned by ACBL as a sectional tournament, so players can win silver points. Thirty club members have registered to play, which leaves 10 spots. If any spots remain after the July 1 deadline, nonclub players will have the chance to register. Judy anticipates that a bus will be hired to take players to the ship and back.

New Business

Traditionally, the club has contributed to a charity on the longest day of the year. The board unanimously passed a motion to contribute \$100 the Alzheimer's Association.

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted by David Thistle, Club Secretary

To: TDBC Board

From: Fernando R. Tesón

Re: Unauthorized information

Date: March 28, 2026

I. Introduction

At your request, I did some research on the topic of unauthorized information at the table, an issue that has generated controversy at the club. Unauthorized information is governed by article 16B of the 2017 Laws of Duplicate Bridge:

“B. Extraneous Information from Partner

1. Any extraneous information from partner that might suggest a call or play is unauthorized. This includes remarks, questions, replies to questions, unexpected alerts or failures to alert, unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement or mannerism.
 - (a) A player may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorized information if the other call or play is a logical alternative.
 - (b) A logical alternative is an action that a significant proportion of the class of players in question, using the methods of the partnership, would seriously consider, and some might select.
2. When a player considers that an opponent has made such information available and that damage could well result he may announce, unless prohibited by the Regulating Authority (which may require that the Director be called), that he reserves the right to summon the Director later (the opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the fact that unauthorized information might have been conveyed).
3. When a player has substantial reason to believe that an opponent who had a logical alternative has chosen an action suggested by such information, he should summon the Director when play ends. The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C1) if he considers that an infraction of law has resulted in an advantage for the offender.”

Players are supposed to exchange information only through the bidding. An unauthorized information is information that is *extraneous* to the bidding. Unauthorized information (from now on, UI) may be conveyed in many ways. While the most frequent variety of UI is a break in tempo (noticeable hesitation), UI can be conveyed, as 16B (1) says, in many ways such as remarks, questions, excessive speed, grabbing a bidding card from the box and putting it back, doubling with emphasis (so we’re sure partner doesn’t remove it), etc.

II. Preliminaries

A few of caveats are in order.

First, no one should be offended if opponents call the director. When there is an irregularity, anyone is entitled to call the director. The possibility of UI is an irregularity, and calling the director is an attempt to resolve the irregularity in an equitable manner. It is not an accusation. According to 16B(2), a player who thinks an opponent has noticeably hesitated can announce that he reserves the right to call the director if he thinks the hesitation has harmed his side. This announcement, too, should not offend or alarm anyone.

Second, players are entitled to hesitate, to take as much time as they want. Hesitating is not an infraction. A player has every right to take all the time they need to make their decision. But the player who breaks tempo puts pressure on partner, who now sees her options limited by her obligation not to use UI. So no, the tempo-breaker does not breach the rules, but the partner of the tempo-breaker is banned from considering the information that the hesitation may have conveyed. The one case where a hesitation is unethical is if *intentionally made for the purpose of communicating UI to partner*. I am satisfied that this is unlikely to occur at the club; at least, I haven't seen it. Which leads me to the third caveat.

Third, a player can convey UI (by hesitating, for example) without having any *intent* to commit an infraction. I would go further: a player who illegally *uses* his partner's UI also (usually) lacks the intent to violate the rules. The brain is a funny thing: it processes the information we receive and leads us to act on that information naturally. A player who bids based on partner's UI may not be aware that she is committing an infraction; she uses the information subconsciously. That is why no one should take offense if opponents correctly observe that an illegal UI has led to a breach of the rules. No suggestion of devious intent is meant. This is bridge, not life, and these are the laws of duplicate bridge, not the criminal law.

III. Two Rules

A natural reading of 16B yields, I think, the following two rules:

- 1) If a player receives *specific* UI he may not choose the bid suggested by the UI, unless he doesn't have any other logical (i.e. reasonable) alternative.

Here's an example taken from an actual hand played at the club: North: 1C; East: 1H; South: 3C, explained as weak; West: 4H At this point North squirmed in his seat, hesitated for a while, pulled the 5C card (which everyone saw), put it back in the box, and finally doubled. East passed, and South bid 5C. The director was called and he let the result stand, on the theory that South had a weak hand and a heart void. The call is mistaken, I think, because North had *demonstrably* indicated that he considered bidding 5C before he doubled. Because pass was a logical alternative for South, he had an obligation to choose that call in preference of the one indicated by partner's UI, 5C. This is true even if South "had his bid." A player who received *specific* UI must refrain from choosing the suggested call unless there is no logical alternative.

- 2) If a player receives UI that is *not specific* but still suggests her to "do something," she can choose any of the logical alternatives at her disposal (in other words, she may choose what she deems "her bid"). In these cases, the bid will be unethical if she clearly would not have made it but for UI received-in other words, if her bid is not a reasonable alternative.

This is the most frequent case at the table. Here's an example (with some changes) also from the club. North: 1S; East 2NT (minors); South: double; West: 3D; North: 3H; East: 4D. South mulled for a considerable time and finally doubled. West passed, and North bid 4H, at which point the director was called. Did North have an obligation to pass? South's hesitation followed by the double suggested that he considered bidding 4 in a major, so 4H seemed indicated by South's UI. However, North had KQxxxx; KJxxxx,void,x. The director judged that North had his bid, and let the result stand (4H doubled, down 1), on the theory that North chose a logical alternative.

I think it all depends on whether South's hesitation before his double demonstrably suggested bidding 4 of a major (one of opener's suits.) In other words, North should not bid 4H if South's hesitation followed by the double was *specific* information that South considered pulling to 4H before he doubled. But that is unclear. Maybe South considered passing or bidding 3NT. If South's UI was *non-specific* ("I considered bidding or passing instead of doubling"), then North is entitled to his natural bid, which in this case, with 6-6 in the majors and no defensive strength, might reasonably be 4H.

Active ethics (the practice of going the extra mile to avoid the appearance of impropriety) also plays a role. In the example above, North could have chosen to pass the double on the belief that his bidding after the UI would look bad. The matter is complicated, because North, if he honestly thinks that he would have bid anyway, can still go ahead and bid. Here as elsewhere, ethics is more blurred than law.

Here's another example (suggested to me by Kenneth Harris): North:1C; East:1S; South (after noticeable hesitation): Pass; West: Pass; North: 2C; all pass. After the hand was played, E-W called the director, claiming that North improperly rebid 2C over his partner's UI with Jxxxx in clubs, a minimum hand, and 5332 distribution. The director let it stand (2C down 1, when 1S makes). I think the result should have been changed to 1S made, as North *does not have a logical call* with that hand. Even though South's UI was non-specific (maybe he had spades, maybe he considered 2C or 1NT before passing), North's only logical alternative with his hand was to pass, and his bid can only be explained as making use of partner's UI.

This case shows the complexity of UI situations. North might have legitimately reasoned that the passes by South and West suggested that the points were evenly split around the table, so competing with his 5-card suit was reasonable (logical). But *once his partner conveys UI he no longer has the option of bidding*, because his view (points are evenly split) is now colored by the non-specific UI (partner must have some values) and the ethical action is to pass.

IV. Conclusion

In summary: UI can be specific or non-specific. If the UI is specific, the recipient of the information may not choose the suggested call, unless there is no logical alternative. So, if partner's UI demonstrably suggests to double, the player may not double, even if this is a logical alternative, when there is another logical alternative. Saying "I had my bid" will not work. In contrast, if the UI is non-specific, the recipient may choose any bid that is a logical alternative. In this case, "I had my bid" will work. However, active ethics requires that the player strain to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

A final caveat: whether an information is specific or non-specific will often be a matter of judgment by the director. The case above, where the offender waves the bidding card before passing, is extreme. But there are other cases, less extreme, where the UI should still be deemed specific. In a competitive auction where the player hesitates it may be obvious that the hesitation conveyed specific UI, such as doubts on whether to compete further (not doubling). Rigid rules are not possible here; it will depend on multiple contextual factors.

Respectfully submitted,

Fernando R. Tesón