

APPEAL NABC+ ELEVEN

Subject: Tempo

DIC: Henry Cukoff

Event: IMP Pairs

Session: 1st Qualifying, April 6, 2006

Board #10 Henry Meyer
Vul: Both ♠ Q 9
Dlr: East ♥ Q 9 7 6 4
♦ T 7 5
♣ T 8 7

Peter Clinch	David Stevenson
♠ A J 8 5	♠ K T 7 6 3
♥ K J 3	♥ A 2
♦ Q	♦ K J 3 2
♣ K Q 9 4 3	♣ A 5

Larry Griffey
♠ 4 2
♥ T 8 5
♦ A 9 8 6 4
♣ J 6 2

West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
2NT ¹	Pass	3♦ ²	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♥	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♦ ³	Pass
5♠ ⁴	Pass	6♠	All Pass

- (1) Spade raise, limit plus.
- (2) Artificial, forces game. Per system notes it shows game values with no slam interest.
- (3) Shows one or four key cards by agreement.
- (4) A long hesitation (around three minutes) before bidding 5♠.

The Facts: All agreed to the long hesitation before the 5♠ bid. The opening lead was the ♦A. 6♠ made six, +1430 E/W. East said that he misbid, thinking he was showing zero or three key cards. He said that he immediately knew that he had erred. Although it was not reported to the director at the time, E/W said that West shook his head before 5♠, and it was discussed.

The Ruling: The slow 5♠ demonstrably suggests bidding 6♠. The time it took to bid 5♠ gave East unauthorized information that may have led him to recheck his response. Pass is a logical alternative (two experts were polled). They both would have passed with no hesitation after giving a zero-or-three key card response. Therefore, the director adjusted the result to 5♠, making six, +680 for E/W.

The Appeal: E/W play 12-14 one notrump openers and 4-card majors. The 3♦ bid shows no slam interest facing a limit raise. The 4♣ bid showed slam interest facing those extras. At that point East was always going to bid the slam. N/S did not appear at the hearing.

The Decision: The critical issue here was the fact that the unauthorized information from the tempo break was irrelevant. East had answered Key-Card to show 0-3 key cards. After the 5♠ signoff, East's obligation was to bid on with three key cards – by showing a king if he had the trump queen. He did not, so his 6♠ bid was his ethical action. No infraction occurred and the Committee restored the table result of 6♠ making six, +1430 E/W.

The Committee: Barry Rigal (Chair), Tom Carmichael and Ellen Wallace

Commentary:

Gerard Absolutely not. East would not have bid 4♥ with zero controls, so East's obligation was different than it would have been if West had bid 4NT directly over 3♦. The Committee made the common mistake of assuming that West's 4NT bid was perfect, that if he held QJxxx, KQ, Q, KQJ10x, he would have bid 4♠ over 4♥. Edgar taught me a long time ago that the hesitation removes the possibility of a bridge error from the equation; therefore the responder can not assume that West "must" have a control. Also notice that East didn't attempt to justify 6♠ on zero or three grounds but instead argued one or three, although why he wouldn't have bid 3♦ with AKxxx, Ax, xxx, Axx is beyond me. The ruling was correct that he wasn't entitled to a recount, so the Committee should have at least asked what he would have done without a recount, with particular emphasis on his 4♥ bid. The answer wouldn't have mattered. The process just would have shown that the Committee knew what it was doing. If East really sold the Committee a zero or three bill of goods, shame on both of them. I am still waiting for the first mis-responder who did not immediately recognize that he erred.

Goldsmith Sorry, but no. If East had noticed immediately that he had made the wrong Blackwood response, he could have changed it. Answering the wrong number of aces is really easily argued as a mechanical error rather than a change of mind. So the hesitation helped him realize that he had answered incorrectly.
Precedent shows that ACs reject this sort of appeal. I would. "Next time answer aces right."

Polisner I do not agree with the concept that a break in tempo (BIT) gave partner time to re-check the validity of his prior bid as being somehow an irregularity. No such law exists which supports that contention. Looking at W's hand, one can only wonder what took so long to bid 5♠. If he couldn't recall if they were playing 0314 or 1430, neither way could he bid anything other than 5♠ and await partner to pass or bid more. Good work by the AC.

Rigal The committee found this case very straightforward – and were not happy with the initial ruling. Yes, there were a number of issues to consider, but overall, it seemed like someone had missed the thread.

Wildavsky The AC decision is incomprehensible to me. The tournament directors (TDs) took a poll and discovered that 100% of those polled would have passed with only authorized info. Did the AC think that everyone polled gave an illogical answer?
The AC seems to have been under the misapprehension that the rules of RKCB require going on to slam when one holds three cards. I can assure them that not everyone plays it that way. Having opened the bidding, shown extras, and cue-bid, East could scarcely hold zero key cards, so with a key card and the trump queen West would have bid the slam himself.
Kudos to the TDs -- I don't understand why their diligent work was undone.

Wolff I agree with this decision because only bridge and not UI was the influential factor. Since BITs are usually acted against by tournament directors and committees, this hand needs to be carefully and completely described so that our players will understand.

Zeiger Finally, a terrible ruling. Can't believe we had to wait this long. Change East's diamonds to Axxx. Change West's spades to QJxx. East's rebid would still be 3♦. After 4♣, maybe East would have bid 4♦, maybe 4♥. Did anyone ask how they cuebid with touching controls? With this hand 6♠ would be cold. Now West would have a safe 4NT bid, trusting East not to go on, with only three controls, (East's actual hand) when he signed off in 5♠. The point is that East's argument about "always bidding slam" is a baseless canard. The Committee got trapped into acting on reflex, instead of actually thinking. Instead of +1430, EW should have gotten +680 and an AWMW.
Does anyone think the Committee was annoyed with N/S for not showing up at the hearing? I bet the Committee from NABC+ Appeal 10 would have decided this one correctly.