

APPEAL	NABC+ Fourteen
Subject	Unauthorized Information (UI) - Tempo
DIC	Roger Putnam
Event	Spingold Knockout Teams
Session	Round of 8 – Second Half
Date	July 27, 2007

BD#	2
VUL	N/S
DLR	East

Piotr Gawrys	
♠	
♥	9 8 7 6
♦	7
♣	K Q T 9 6 5 4 3

Eric Rodwell		Summer 2007 Nashville, Tennessee	Jeff Meckstroth	
♠	K J 7 6 3		♠	A Q 8 4
♥	A J		♥	K 2
♦	T 8 6 5		♦	A Q J 4 2
♣	A 2		♣	J 7

Bartosz Chmurski	
♠	T 9 5 2
♥	Q T 5 4 3
♦	K 9 3
♣	8

West	North	East	South
		1♣ ¹	Pass
1♥ ²	4♣	Pass ³	Pass
Dbl ⁴	Pass	4♦	Pass
6♦	Dbl	6♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Final Contract	6♠ by East
Opening Lead	♣8
Table Result	6♠ E, made 6, E/W +980
Director Ruling	6♠ E, made 6, E/W +980
Committee Ruling	6♠ E, made 6, E/W +980

(1)	Strong, forcing and artificial.
(2)	Positive with spades or 11-13 balanced.
(3)	Forcing.
(4)	Break in tempo (BIT). Explained as possibly being same structure as lower level. Shows 11-13 balanced as spade hands would bid.

The Facts: The director was called at the conclusion of play of board four. There was a BIT before West's double. East thought the hesitation was 15 seconds – North thought it was 60 seconds. N/S questioned the pull of the double with a correction to six spades.

The Ruling: The director judged that an unmistakable hesitation occurred. The director judged that the BIT demonstrably suggested not passing at either of East's turns. However, the director judged that there were no logical alternative (LA) actions to the actions taken by East. Therefore, in accordance with law 16, the table result of 6♠ by East making six, E/W plus 980 was allowed to stand.

The Appeal: N/S argued that West took about 60 seconds before doubling 4♣ and at least three minutes before bidding 6♦. The BIT suggested that East bid 4♦ rather than pass and also his correction to 6♠, since with a balanced 11-13 HCP West would have no reason to need extra time to bid to decide to double.

East considered his 4♦ to be very clear. His RHO was a sound player who would surely have wild distribution for his 4♣ bid, and East would not get rich making a penalty pass of a partscore with J 7 of trumps. East had a two-suited hand with concentrated values in each suit. 4♦ was clearly indicated. West stated that his 6♦ bid came much more quickly than his double. East said that it was clear that North doubled 6♦ for a spade ruff, so correcting to 6♠ was obvious.

E/W play that after responder has shown values, and the next player makes a pre-emptive bid, opener's pass requests that responder double. If opener pulls the double it shows two places to play (pass/double inversion). E/W also play that had opener's RHO overcalled at the one- or two-level, opener's pass would request responder to clarify his 1♥ response. While West was considering his second call, East wrote notes to his screenmate (North) describing the partnership agreements. He also wrote, "brand new situation; 1st time at 4-level" and "I was never penalizing 4♣; X was slow but not relevant."

The Decision: Behind screens if it takes 25 seconds for the tray to return, there is considered to be no BIT. In later rounds of bidding and in complicated auctions this time may be extended. West could have spent a fair amount of time writing down the implications of East's pass and the extent of the E/W agreements regarding this auction. The fact that N/S waited until two additional boards had been completed weakens their claim that there was a BIT. Nevertheless, the Committee judged that the amount of time the tray spent on the South/West side was enough to constitute a BIT.

West's BIT suggested that he held spades, rather than a balanced hand, which made bidding 4♦ more attractive than passing for East. Was passing the double a logical alternative (LA) for East?

Without the UI, East would know that West had either a positive response with spades or a balanced hand. For bidding 4♦ to be the wrong action, a parlay would be required. West would have to hold a balanced hand, E/W would have to be able to collect 800 versus a game, or E/W would fail to locate a making game or slam. Further, East might have to select an effective opening lead from an awkward hand to lead from. Additionally, the rank of East's suits made it likely that the auction would proceed comfortably if East bid 4♦. The Committee judged that few, if any, of East's peers would seriously consider passing 4♣ doubled with the East hand and none actually would.

Thus, East had no LA to his selected 4♦ bid.

The Committee also agreed with East that North was highly likely to be void in spades for his double, and East's pull to 6♠ was clear.

Therefore, the Committee upheld the director's decision to allow the table result of 6♠ by East making six, E/W plus 980 to stand.

The Committee: Doug Doub (Chair), Ed Lazarus, Mike Passell, Lou Reich and Danny Sprung.

Commentary:

Gerard

OK, let's see if we can focus on that big iceberg instead of those lousy deck chairs.

This whole case was about Pass Double Inversion (PDI). Playing PDI, Meckstroth's pass invites a double on any hand with which Rodwell would sit for a penalty double. Double instead by Meckstroth would have been for takeout, an immediate bid would have been a one-suiter. Passing and then pulling the double shows a two-suiter. For standard players, the primary situation in which PDI applies is where a 2♣ bidder has not yet rebid naturally, e.g. 2♣ (P) 2♦ (4♣). For system players, replace 2♣ and 2♦ in the foregoing example with 1♣ and any artificial response and you have the case at hand.

So, if PDI applied in the actual auction, Meckwell bid exactly as you would expect them to. East had a flexible, rather than a well-defined, hand, West had no reason to do other than what he was invited to do (and he needn't worry about an inadequate penalty because East couldn't be converting), East showed diamonds and a major, West bid a slam, East sniffed out the spade ruff. Indeed, you might ask what took so long? Well, Rodwell might have been trying to remember whether PDI applied, or wondering whether there was any chance that North was crazy or figuring out whether he would have passed a penalty double. He also might have been reconstructing analogous lower level auctions in order to determine at what point his obligation to clarify his hand ceased (IMO that should be whenever his side no longer has a below-game cuebid available). I can well believe "First time ever at the four-level," since there would have to be a parlay of a strong club, ambiguous response (Is 1♥ the only one?) and four-level blast. So, there could easily have been some uncertainty, and even absolute faith in one's ability to recall page 623 of the system notes does not equate with just one instance of real life experience.

But that's a big "if" in "if PDI applied." Meckwell tell you more than you ever want to know about their uncontested auctions, but they aren't on as firm footing when you're in their faces. This is normal for all top pairs, whose hand generators rarely create competitive situations. Just look at the UI and MI cases from the casebooks, throw out the "Hesitation Blackwood" ones and tell me how many times the opponents never bid. In my mind it's criminal that the committee didn't investigate Meckwell's methods. The burden was on them to prove they were playing PDI. If they were, shouldn't they have alerted pass, double and 4♦? I did when I played PDI, and I didn't think it worthy of an Active Ethics award.

Gerard (cont.)

You can't just take their word for it, no matter who they are. Bocchi and Duboin played show and tell and weren't insulted to be asked. Meckwell have had 13 years to organize their system notes since something similar happened, so it should be easy to commandeer Rodwell's computer and do a search for "PDI," giving due consideration to the flexibility of that medium. If it's there, the decision stands even if the reasoning is off base. If it's not, it's back to the drawing board. Meckstroth tried to have it both ways by saying the methods were on but his judgment was not to pass even if they weren't. In other words, he wasn't sure. If playing PDI, he certainly didn't need to explain why he would bid 4♦, since partner could have a small singleton club. But, if you're not playing PDI in the prototypical situation, are you playing it at all?

So the committee didn't do the one thing the case was screaming at them to do and focused on the minutiae instead. In order to determine whether there was a demonstrably suggested LA; you have to determine what kind of hand West could have for double. I know it may be a load to look at page 623 of the notes, but how about doing your job when you should? For my money it's impractical to play that double has the same meaning as if the overcall had been 2♣, since there no longer is room for both partners to describe their hands. Yet everyone seemed to conclude that double was descriptive, paying no attention to the PDI implications of East's pass. Whack-a-mole. Why bother with facts when we can just create our own reality?

The committee might say that it went right to the substance of the case, that its conclusion made it unnecessary to consider other matters. Well what if it had come to the opposite conclusion? Wouldn't it have boxed itself in and possibly have reached the wrong result? The evidence indicates that PDI wasn't a consideration for the committee, so if pass were imposed as a LA that would have been the end of the case. Taking things out of order is more than just a bad habit, it can change a committee's decision.

This was an example of way too much deference being accorded a top pair. It's tempting to take all their statements at face value but there's a greater responsibility that comes with being an adjudicator. If the committee was familiar with the mechanics of PDI, it should have asked for proof and investigated the non-alerts. If the committee's decision was based on "bridge," then how was pass not a LA and pull not demonstrably suggested? And worst of all if the committee bought into "I'm not passing," then the only appropriate comment is "Do you want a blindfold?"

I would have thought that basic understanding of the concept of self-serving statements would have settled that (e.g., the "I'm bidding seven" incident from Fort Worth.) Maybe I'm too cynical but there's a lot here that doesn't compute.

Goldsmith

Was there a BIT? Yes. Everyone at the table knew there was, so there was. Did the UI from the BIT suggest bidding over passing? Absolutely. It suggested a spade fit. (Could it have shown extra values? What would West bid with better balanced hands?) Was passing 4♣ doubled a LA? Let's move around some spot cards...give West KJx/ AJxx/ xxx/ Axx. Then E/W have only one making game, 4NT, which may not be biddable. Is 4NT natural after 4♦ - 4♥ - 4♠? Maybe, but I bet some of E/W's peers wouldn't be sure. E/W will maybe get to 5♦, which goes down. Versus that 3433 hand, North is going for 800 versus a problematic white game, so it surely could be right to pass 4♣ doubled. I'm not one of East's peers, and it's hard to find many, but I did a poll which included several experienced strong club players and a few very strong bidders. The consensus was that passing was clear-cut. Note: the consensus was not that it is clear-cut that passing is a LA, but that passing is the clear-cut normal choice on the hand.

Therefore, passing is a LA and N/S get minus 200 in 4♣ doubled and E/W get plus 200. I think the ruling is not particularly close.

Polisner

I would have liked to have seen some more information about the BIT. as only two opinions were mentioned being 15-60 seconds. My guess is that it was somewhere in the middle. If there was no "unmistakeable" BIT, there can be no adjustment. If West was too good to bid only 4♠ (assuming that his initial response was predicated on a spade positive) he could have bid 4♣ rather than double. I wonder why he didn't unless he decided to now treat his hand as the balanced 11-13. Therefore, I am not sure what the BIT would mean to East. If the BIT did not suggest a particular action being more successful than another, no adjustment was in order. Lastly, East's pull to 6♠ seems routine as there doesn't seem to be a safe way to have West become the declarer in spades to protect a possible Kx, although that would appear very unlikely taking into account the vulnerability, I therefore agree with the decision.

Rigal The committee made an intelligent decision. It is rather hard for the appeals committee to put itself in the place of a pair with such complex agreements, particularly when the sequence comes up for the first time. That said, bridge logic appears to be on East's side with the 4♦ call, and thereafter, it was not UI that was at stake but 'playing bridge.'

Wildavsky By the numbers:
Was there UI? The tournament director (TD) and appeals committee (AC) found that there was.
Did the UI demonstrably suggest one action over another? Certainly it did. A slow double almost always suggests pulling, and here there was the possibility that the slow double suggested spades -- West would have had no reason to consider his call with 11-13 balanced.
Was there a less successful alternative available that was logical? That's the heart of the matter. E/W's reasoning is facile. One could equally well justify passing. Slam is unlikely, while at least plus 200 is all but certain, 500 likely, 800 possible, and 1100 not out of the question. Meanwhile North, a sound player, is likely to have wild distribution. This means our game, even if we reach the best one, is facing poor breaks and is far from certain. Meanwhile North is facing a likely singleton or void in trump and a dummy producing no tricks on offense. He may have over-preempted slightly to take advantage of the ambiguity in the E/W methods. Would pass be an egregious error? To the contrary, pass is logical, perhaps a favorite. On the actual deal North found a great dummy and a favorable lie of the E/W cards in two suits and still goes for 200. Keep the North hand the same and give West an unexceptional 11-13 HCP hand, say:
Jxxx/ AQTx/ xxx/ Ax.
Now 4♣ goes for 800 while E/W have no game. With that hand West would have doubled in tempo.
Given that the TD and AC found that there was a break in tempo I would have adjusted the score for both sides to E/W plus 200.

Wolff

It is not often when our committee can get our "mitts" on a modern high-level case and because of the future in dealing with one, we should take extra pains to try and get it right, at least we have a duty to point out differences as we see it.

For the purpose of my response I am assuming that Rodwell's study was considerable (more than 15 seconds).

1. When a partnership concocts a system wherein a low-level bid has one of two distinctly different holdings then, after an opponent preempts crowding the opener's bidding room, and when passed back to the conventional bidder, that bidder has an ethical responsibility to either bid totally in tempo, or, if not, to certainly not choose a bid wherein his "slow response" tips off what type of hand he has to his partner and at the same time leaves room for partner to choose a wide range of actions, including a penalty pass of his double, when he has the opponent's suit stacked.

2. If an intricate system is worked out, it is the partnership's responsibility to make sure that they do not gain an unethical advantage, by using "greed" to be able to differentiate to partner various choices, knowing the uneven tempo will remove all doubt from partner's mind of the type of hand he has (in this case, spades and not just a simple balanced decent hand).

3. It is clear to me that the committee chose wrongly in determining their decision. When we say Meckwell, we are certainly talking about one of the few very top partnerships in the world, but even that exalted status does not give them the right to be advantaged by uneven tempo. I think that Rodwell, after studying so long (again I assume he took more than the 15 seconds he said he took), should have bid something, say 4♦ (his second suit), to remove all doubt which of the two type hands he held.

4. It is my fervent hope that our top players (better yet all aspiring to be top players) understand the need to be beyond suspicion and to play the game the way we wish all our opponents would play, practicing Active Ethics along with playing the game very well. That combination would serve our game the way it should be served.

Zeiger

Not sure I agree with the final decision, especially as the correction to 6♠ seems to be riskier without the BIT, but no matter. The committee clearly considered all the relevant issues and proceeded in a logical manner. Good enough for me, in a close case. Excellent write up, save for the failure to mention the appeal had merit.