

APPEAL CASE NABC+ NINE
 Subject: Unauthorized Information (UI)
 DIC: Henry Cukoff
 Event: National IMP Pairs
 Session: 2nd Qualifying, April 6, 2006

Board #2 Carole Grob
 Vul: N-S ♠ 9 6 5 2
 Dlr: East ♥ A J 7 4
 ♦ 6
 ♣ J 9 6 4

Buddy Hanby	Sally Wheeler
♠ K T 7 4 3	♠ J 8
♥ T 8 3	♥ K Q 9
♦ Q T 9	♦ K J 7 5 2
♣ T 2	♣ K 7 3

Geoff Mallette
 ♠ A Q
 ♥ 6 5 2
 ♦ A 8 4 3
 ♣ A Q 8 5

West	North	East	South
		1NT ¹	Db1 ²
2♠	Pass	Pass	Db1
All Pass			

- (1) Announced as 12-14.
- (2) Opening hand plus.

The Facts: 1NT was announced as 12-14 HCP. North took considerable time to sort her hand (about 20 seconds) before looking up and seeing that there were three bidding cards already on the table. Thereupon she volunteered that the first double showed an opening hand or better (bids show less than an opening hand). Then she asked whether the 2♠ bid was natural. Then she took about ten more seconds before she passed. South's second double was for takeout. 2♠ failed by three tricks, +500 N-S. North and South each have between 2,000 and 4,000 masterpoints.

The Ruling: North's question about the naturalness of the unAlerted 2♠ bid showed that she had enough values to consider bidding. The questions and the tempo constituted UI. The UI demonstrably suggested South's second double over a less successful logical alternative of pass. In accordance with laws 16 and 12C2, the director adjusted the table result to 2♠ down three, undoubled, N/S +150.

The Appeal: N/S candidly admitted the facts and acknowledged that Law 16 was applicable to this case. They believed, though, that there was no logical alternative to the second double. West contended that the South hand had not grown very substantially: the ♠Q was less likely to be well positioned, there were no good “spot cards” in the South hand, and South’s hearts (the suit North is most likely to stretch to bid) are shorter than his other offered suits. Also, the heart suit is honorless.

The Decision: The Committee found that there were both a hesitation and a question prior to North’s pass, and that they suggested that North might have some interest in entering the auction. North even testified that she considered bidding 3♥. The hesitation and the question both suggest that South should keep the auction alive.

The Committee spent little time determining that pass (rather than a double at his second turn) is a logical alternative for South. If West had held North’s ♥A instead of the ♥3, the auction might have been identical back to South’s second action. Then the double might cost N/S fourteen or more IMPs. A simple consideration of the dangers of doubling a second time should indicate that pass is a logical alternative. The Committee found that a substantial number of South’s peers would pass at South’s second opportunity.

Accordingly, the Committee upheld the director’s decision to adjust the table result to 2♠ down three, undoubled, N/S +150, E/W -150.

Before the hearing, the director, in screening, had fully explained to the N/S pair how Law 16, Unauthorized Information, is applied. The Committee decided that after having the director explain the relevant law to them and having the director’s rationale for their ruling explained to them, a pair of N/S’s experience should have known not to bring this case to a Committee. Therefore, the Committee awarded an Appeal Without Merit Warning to each member of the N/S pair.

The Committee: Michael Huston (Chair), Ed Lazarus and Tom Peters.

Commentary:

Goldsmith All good, but this is close enough to a procedural penalty (PP) for abuse of UI that the AC needs to say why they rejected it. I wouldn't have. My criterion for a PP is roughly to give them when I look at the offender's hand and think, "you can't do that!" Since that is a normal reaction to South's choice, I think he deserves a PP.

On the other hand, if N/S is playing takeout doubles in South's seat, then isn't North's pass forcing? Since N/S didn't mention it, presumably it wasn't, so that's irrelevant.

Polisner Simple case, correct ruling and award of AWMW.

Rigal Correct award of an AWMW. Yet again a pair brings an appeal because they don't like the way they have been punished for their infraction – but the law is the law.

Wildavsky I agree that this appeal had no merit.
It's also worth noting that no player has any business volunteering information during the auction. Unless an opponent asks a question one must restrict one's vocabulary to the single word "Alert" and when called for to the three ACBL mandated announcements "Transfer", "Forcing", and "Could be short."

Wolff To me it is not as clear cut as the director and the committee suggested, but all in all it would be my ruling also. I was more interested in what happened at the screening where the appellees were instructed on the possibility, in the event of losing, that they may be charged with an AWMW if no additional substantive facts were presented.

Zeiger Slam dunk.