

Infractions and dealing machines

E-mail your questions to Jeremy Dhondy at ebuproblems@btopenworld.com or write to the editor, Elena Jeronimidis, at 23 Erleigh Road, Reading RG1 5LR.

Please include your name and address even if writing by e-mail.

A READER from Banstead asks: We had a rather odd bidding sequence recently and wondered how you would have ruled had you been the director. My right-hand opponent was dealer and the auction started as follows:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-----------------|------|-------|
| 1♣ | Pass | 1♠ | 2♥ |
| Pass | 2♣ ¹ | | |

¹ I was intending to make a high-card raise bid of 3♣

My right-hand opponent said that this was an insufficient bid. My left-hand opponent said nothing. I then changed it to 2♠ (ridiculous, I know). At that point the director was called. What would your ruling have been?

I hope the director arrived with a law book because this is covered by Law 27 and it is changed in the 2007 laws. It makes no difference whether RHO, LHO, or both indicated a problem. It is the duty of all players to call the TD as soon as any infraction comes to light. Not to do so is an offence. First the TD must allow your LHO the option to accept the 2♣ bid. If he does, then the auction continues without penalty.

If he does not, then, if the TD had been called in time, you could have replaced it with whatever you wished. If you had replaced it with 3♣, then the auction could have proceeded without penalty but if anything else, your partner would have been silenced as below. The bit about allowing 3♣ (because both 2♣ and 3♣ are artificial and carry the same meaning) is new to the 2007 laws and the effect is that it allows more auctions to continue so that a real bridge result can be obtained.

As the TD was called late then, if the 2♣ bid is not accepted, the 2♠ bid stands and your partner must pass whenever it is his turn to call. I hope your new year's resolu-

tion was to call the director as soon as any infraction occurs.

CLIVE Ringrose via e-mail says: Thank you for your two articles in *English Bridge* on doubling and alerting. They have helped to clarify this area.

The bidding sequence below occurred at our club last week:

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|----------|-------|
| 2♠ | Dble | 3♣ | 1♥ |
| Pass | Dble | All Pass | Pass |

North's first double was negative. The second double was for penalties, but I as South did not alert it, as clearly it was for penalties. Your articles indicate that I was wrong. Should I have alerted the call? If my opponents had called the TD, how would he have ruled?

The second double should be alerted. The opponents have bid a suit naturally below the level of 3NT, so double is assumed to be for take-out unless alerted. If your opponents had called the director there would be two issues:

1. Have they been damaged because of the failure to alert? Probably not and the negative double had likely shown some clubs already. The director could award an adjusted score but if, for example, West claimed he would have removed, then the TD would quite likely express the view that he could have asked without jeopardising his side's interests.
2. Should there be a procedural penalty for the failure to alert? There could be but I would be surprised if any director imposed one, unless it was either the fourth time in the session or you stated you were not going to alert because you didn't agree with the rules!



Jeremy Dhondy

ASK JEREMY

MARTIN Edwards via e-mail says: At our club we are having a debate at present about computer-dealt boards. It would be helpful if you could set out the benefits and drawbacks compared to shuffling and dealing at the table at the beginning of each session.

I would list the benefits as:

- No more dealing and shuffling.
- Easy to have two or more sets of boards if needed.
- Hand records available for those lovely post-mortem arguments. ('You should have played the ♠9.' 'I didn't have it.' 'Yes, you did.' 'No, I didn't.')
- Hands that are 'properly' shuffled. (People will say they are wild but for the last twenty years or more the programs have been fine and the accusations are based on perceptions gleaned from poorly shuffled hands. Why else do people play for the queen over the jack? Why do they think a 3-3 break is nearly 50% instead of about 36%?)
- Easy for directors to see the deal if called to the table and also if they need to consult on a judgement ruling.
- Easy to couple with other bits of technology i.e. personal score-cards and hand records on the web site using something like Scorebridge.

There aren't that many drawbacks but:

- Significant capital investment (some clubs share these facilities, some have obtained lottery grants to help).
- Managing the unhappiness of some players for a while.
- The need for some security, i.e. having made-up sets of boards lying around.

If you can afford it, then go right ahead. You won't regret it. □