

Law 23C

This paper originated as four emails contributed by Max Bavin to a discussion on the European Bridge League TD Forum in September 2017.

In determining whether to adjust a score under this law, I suggest we compare and contrast the following two statements; 'without the assistance gained through the infraction' and 'had the infraction not occurred'. The former of course being precisely what law 23C actually says and means, the latter most definitely being precisely what it does not say or mean.

Let us also consider in more detail the concept of 'assistance'. The infractor himself can hardly gain any assistance from his own infraction; in fact, most likely all he's got himself is a load of hindrance and several unpalatable options available to him.

The player who MIGHT have gained assistance is the infractor's partner, as when the subtle difference between the original call and the valid replacement assists him in taking the winning decision. Hopefully this line of thinking might be helpful; it certainly answers what is sometimes referred to as the Prague case* [score stands - no assistance gained through the infraction].

The occasion on which the infractor himself gains assistance is the 23A1-type case, wherein there is a difference known to all the table between the normal systemic meaning of a call and the actual meaning. Jacob alluded to a case of a 14-16 1NT opening out of turn, replaced with a 1NT overcall (normally 15-18 with good stopper in opponent's suit). The TD would be correct to allow this as a comparable call, but 23C might well come into play if the ability to show a 14-16 NT rather than a 15-18 one turned out to be advantageous.

This is a different sort of case entirely to the 23A2-type Prague case, in which, the infractor distorts his own bidding entirely at his own risk.

Now we move to part 3; the Richard Bley side question** in the South African case. Dealer South, North opens 1♥ (not accepted); what if South doesn't make his normal 2♣ opening because North won't have a comparable call available if he does, but does something else instead?

The answer of course is to not dive headlong into 23C just yet, until we have first applied the earlier laws. Opening bid out of turn at partner's turn; 31B1, which includes reference to 16C2 regarding the withdrawn 1H call.

In other words, South isn't allowed to know about the 1♥ call just yet so isn't allowed to distort his own bidding - this under the UI laws, nothing to do with 23C. Once we've got over that hurdle, then we can apply 31A2 upon North and the reference to comparable calls therein etc. etc.

Part 4 of 4 is merely to confirm that if we do end up adjusting via this law then we're in the equity laws [12c1(b)etc.], NOT the UI laws; and that the infraction referred to therein is the original call out of rotation/insufficient bid - nothing to do with what happened afterwards. In other words, to judge what would have happened had the original infraction never occurred. Therefore weighted scores will be quite common, and will quite possibly include some proportion of the actual table result, and may even be lazy sounding 60% - 40% type rulings under 12C1(d).

Also to confirm that the laws are careful enough to specify that lead penalties can never apply once we enter into the world of comparable calls [e.g. 31A2(a)] and emphasise in 23B that neither do the UI ones.

As TDs, we just need to be careful to apply any earlier laws which may be relevant before rushing into Law 23, and only enter into #23 as and when appropriate.

** The South African question was:

A.

North is the dealer but South opens out of turn 1♥ (they play 5 card majors), and not condoned.

North opens 2♣ (N/S biggest bid)

N/S normally play a relay of 2♦ over a 2♣ opening

This response under these circumstances does not seem to be a comparable bid (although the new laws did talk about relays)

A bid of 2♥ certainly would not mean 12 to 19 points

3♥? But the holding could be only 5 hearts? And is this comparable?

What would be an comparable response by South under these circumstances?

B.

There is also the system where after a 2♣ opening 2♥ is a bust hand, a number of our members use this.

Again 3♥? (Certainly doesn't signify 12 to 19 points after a 2♣ opening)

Richard Bley's side question:

What shall we do with a North who decides not to open 2♣ because of the problems arising finding a comparable call?

* The "Prague case":

Board 14
 East Deals
 None Vul

♠ 5 4		
♥ 8 7 2		
♦ A 10 6 4 3 2		
♣ K 2		

♠ Q 9 8 7	N	
♥ A J 3	W	E
♦ J 9	S	
♣ 10 8 5		

♠ A K 6 2		
♥ K Q 9 4		
♦ K 7 5		
♣ 6 3		

♠ J 10 3		
♥ 10 6 5		
♦ Q 8		
♣ A Q J 9 7		

W	N	E	S	
		1♦ ¹		1♦ is better minor (1NT=12-14)
1♠	TD!			

After West's bid OOT TD gives ruling and bidding continues

W	N	E	S	
		1♦ ¹	2♣	1♦ is better minor (1NT=12-14)
2♠	3♦	4♠	all pass	

East plays 4♠. Contract made (10 tricks makes unbeatable).

NS call TD "EW reached game on 23 points because West could bid at the 2 level with only 8 points and a 4 card suit"