

APPEAL NABC+ ONE

Subject: Tempo

DIC: Henry Cukoff

Event: Silodor Open

Session: 1st Final, Saturday, April 1, 2006

Board #10	Sabine Auken		
Vul: Both	♠ K 9		
Dlr: East	♥ Q 4 2		
	♦ A 7 6 3		
	♣ K Q 9 6		
	Alex Kolesnik	Bob Etter	
	♠ J T	♠ 8 7 5 2	
	♥ A T 8 6	♥ J 9 7 5 3	
	♦ T 8 4 2	♦ Q J 5	
	♣ 8 4 3	♣ 2	
	Daniella VonArmin		
	♠ A Q 6 4 3		
	♥ K		
	♦ K 9		
	♣ A J T 7 5		
West	North	East	South
		P	1♣ ¹
P	1NT ²	P	2♥ ³
P	2♠	P	3♣
P	4♣	P	5♣ ⁴
P	6♣	All Pass	

- (1) Strong and artificial.
- (2) 8+ HCP, forcing to game.
- (3) Transfer to spades.
- (4) Break in tempo.

The Facts: 1♣ was strong and artificial, showing 16+ HCP if unbalanced. 1NT denied a four-card major and a five-card minor and showed 8+ HCP (game forcing) in a balanced hand. 2♥ was a transfer to spades and was duly alerted. 2♠ showed exactly a doubleton spade (hence a 2344 pattern). There was a break in tempo before South bid 5♣. 6♣ made 6, on the opening lead of the A♥; +1370 N/S.

The Ruling: The directors consulted with three (unnamed) world class players, each of whom said he would not pass because his hand was so good. The directors decided that Pass was not a logical alternative and allowed the table result (6♣ making six, N/S +1370) to stand.

The Appeal: There was no dispute that there was a break in tempo. E/W argued that North, by bidding 4♣, had shown significant extra values and was “bid out.” With a weaker hand and a weak red suit, she could have bid her other red suit, else bid 3NT. The hesitation made it likely that South had the needed red controls.

The Decision: The Committee partially agreed with E/W’s assertion about the 4♣ bid, but thought 4♣ would also be bid with certain prime minimums, e.g. Kx, xxx, xxxx, KQxx, or, xx, Axx, xxxx, KQxx. They noted that South would not have shown clubs with 5224 shape unless interested in slam; if not interested in slam, she would have just bid 3N. Therefore, when South bid 5♣, she was marked with extra distribution and a minimum for her previous auction. The finite but small possibility that South had two losing Hearts did not make pass a logical alternative; on all other hands, slam should be laydown. (A slam that is cold 75% of the time but has no play the other 25% is still a good slam, although not in the familiar sense. For this hand, a 75% estimate is conservative.) AQJxx, Jx, K, AJxxx was the only hand presented to show that 6♣ had any dangers. Accordingly, the Committee decided that there was no logical alternative to bidding 6♣, and it ruled that the table result (6♣ making six, N/S +1370) was to stand. (The possibility that South’s slow 5♣ call did not demonstrably suggest slam interest as opposed to doubt about strain was also considered in passing but not pursued since the first argument was persuasive.)

E/W, experienced players, should have recognized that North with four super cards opposite a black two-suiter in the 16+ HCP range, had a slam drive, even without the matchpoint considerations. The possibility that slam might go down opposite a particularly poor and carefully chosen South hand, does not make pass a logical alternative for North. Having tried and failed once with the director, E/W should have known to give up their pursuit. Therefore, the Committee gave the E/W pair an Appeal Without Merit Warning (AWMW).

The Committee: Bart Bramley (Chair), Michael Huston, Ed Lazarus, Bruce Rogoff, John Solodar.

Commentary:

Gerard Well, I wouldn't bid 4♣ with either of the Committee's prime minimums but the rest is OK. With everything else, 5♣ making five could not be the optimal matchpoint result since other tables would have an easier time getting to 4♠ or 3NT than this one. Harsh but correct as to the AWMW. If they don't bring anything extra to the committee room, hit them with it.

Goldsmith Sounds about right. The AWMW is marginal, but acceptable. If Atlanta Case 17 had been handled right, this appeal would never have happened, because E/W would already have had an AWMW. Let's call this AWMW partial compensation for the one missing from last year.

- Polisner** It is certainly more attractive to bid 6♣ after the break in tempo (BIT). If this was an IMP event, I would definitely roll the contract back to 5♣, but at matchpoints, it is clear to bid the slam as 5♣ is unlikely to fetch much of a score.
- Wildavsky** I think this appeal had merit.
The AC judged that bidding was clear cut, therefore they ruled against the appellants. They appear to have assessed the AWMW on the same basis -- there ought to be a stricter standard. This kind of bidding decision is precisely the sort that ACs are better placed to decide than tournament directors, and with a prima facie case E/W should not have been censured by making sure it was heard in the proper venue.
- Rigal** The committee's ruling was stern but entirely fair. Given that the tournament director (TD) had determined there was no logical alternative to bidding on, the appeal was without merit. The point was well made, that an alternative and a logical alternative are different animals. Yes there is one hand where it is right to pass; that does not make passing a logical alternative (LA).
- Wolff** While I agree with the equity decision chosen by the committee, it contradicts all recent cases which, after a BIT, any possible unsatisfactory hand partner may hold has kept that partner from being able to bid on. I haven't really agreed with that method of making the decision, but it did have the advantage of discouraging hesitation disruption (HD) from taking place. HD did take place here, so, make no mistake, when we allow it; we are saying that we, the committee, will make an independent decision, based on our judgment whether partner may bid on.
- Zieger** I'm curious what South's other rebids after 4♣ would have meant. I wish the Committee had told us. Before deciding pass, by North, could not be a LA, the Committee needed to know as much about South's options as North did. The Committee was almost certainly correct, but an AWMW in this case, when so many egregious appeals have escaped one, seems excessive.
Side issue: If I, with my 2000 masterpoints, had conducted the same auction with my 1200 mp partner, would we have lost our slam because "they aren't good enough to reach slam without the tempo assist?" Just wondering.