

APPEAL	NABC+ EIGHT
Subject	Unauthorized Information (UI) - Tempo
DIC	Terry Lavender
Event	Vanderbilt KO Teams
Session	Round of 32
Date	March 17, 2010

BD#	23
VUL	Both
DLR	South

Louk Verhees	
♠	7 5 4
♥	Q 8 7 5
♦	A T 8 4 3
♣	7

Dennis Clerkin		Spring 2010 Reno, NV	Harry Tudor	
♠	K Q 9 6		♠	A J 2
♥	A T 9 6 2		♥	K
♦	7		♦	K J 5
♣	T 9 6		♣	A Q J 8 5 2

Jan Jansma	
♠	T 8 3
♥	J 4 3
♦	Q 9 6 2
♣	K 4 3

West	North	East	South
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2NT ¹	Pass
3♠	Pass	3NT ²	Pass
4♣ ³	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Final Contract	5♣ by East
Opening Lead	♦ 2
Table Result	Made 5, N/S + 600
Director Ruling	3NT E down 1, E/W -100
Committee Ruling	3NT E down 1, E/W -100

(1)	Slow.
(2)	Slow but faster than 2NT
(3)	Keycard for clubs, 4♠ shows 2 keycards without the queen.

The Facts: The director was called when the dummy was faced and again after the play of the hand was completed. A neutral kibitzer stated that the break in tempo (BIT) before bidding 2NT was 15 seconds. East said this was 4 ½ seconds. The BIT before bidding 3NT was thought to be slow by N/S and 8-10 seconds by the aforementioned kibitzer. East thought this break was about 2 ½ seconds.

The Ruling: The director judged that there were BITs and that the BITs demonstrably suggested that pass of 3NT may be less successful than other actions. Five players were polled on the West hand over 3NT - four passed. Therefore pass was determined to be a logical alternative to 4♣. Based on Law 12C, the contract was changed to 3NT by East. The most likely favorable result (and the least favorable at all probable) was determined to be down one on a diamond lead. So, the result was changed to minus 100 E/W and plus 100 N/S.

The Appeal: E/W and the team captain (Bob Jones) appealed the director's ruling. The four players at the table were present at the hearing.

Jones, speaking for his pair, argued that 4♣ was the correct bridge bid and had no logical alternative. He noted that West had already shown four spades and five hearts, so that East could be placed with at most three spades and two hearts. Also, this pair normally opens 1♦ with 4-4 in the minors. Thus, East was marked with at least five clubs and usually no more than three diamonds. Furthermore, East's 3NT bid would be predicated solely on his shape and not on the quality of his minor suit stoppers, so West's singleton diamond was a clear danger signal for notrump opposite East's probable three-card holding of indeterminate strength. 5♣ was more likely to make when 3NT was failing than vice versa. Also, 4♥ might be viable if East had weakish clubs and a strong doubleton heart. Finally, if East had good clubs and well-placed controls, 6♣ would be a good contract. For example, opposite Axx-Kx-Axx-AKxxx, 6♣, which needs only 3-2 clubs, is better than 3NT, which usually needs four spade tricks.

The appellants also disputed the exact length of the huddles, although they agreed that the 2NT bid took longer than the 3NT bid. They claimed that all bidding by both pairs had bogged down by this stage of the match.

North and South both said that East's huddle before 2NT was substantial, and clearly indicated that his 2NT rebid was not classic, so he most likely held long clubs. West's 4♣ bid was more strongly suggested opposite a six-card suit than opposite a more normal five-card suit.

The Decision: First, the committee determined that there had been a noticeable break in tempo before the 2NT bid. N/S and a neutral kibitzer all estimated that the bid took at least 15 seconds, and even E/W acknowledged that 2NT had taken longer than other bids in the auction.

The break in tempo clearly implied that the 2NT bid was defective in some way. While lack of a stopper in an unbid suit was possible, by far the more likely reason was that the bidder was off-shape. The leading possibilities were 2=2=4=5, 3=1=4=5, 3=2=2=6 and 3=1=3=6. The latter two especially suggested that a club contract might be superior, while the former two might also be better for suit play than a classic 3=2=3=5 would be. Therefore, the break in tempo demonstrably suggested bidding 4♣ over 3NT.

Finally, the committee reached the crux of the matter: Was passing 3NT a logical alternative? The appellants' argument in favor of bidding was compelling, but the directors' poll found 4 of 5 players passing. Numerous constructions with "classic" 3=2=3=5 shape revealed no clear-cut "right" answer. The combined hands had at most 28 HCP and (in theory) only an 8-card club fit. For these reasons the committee decided that pass was a logical alternative.

Therefore, the committee changed the contract to 3NT and assigned a result of down one, minus 100 for E/W and plus 100 for N/S.

The potency of the appellants' argument in favor of bidding 4♣ gave their case substantial merit.

Note from the Chairman:

The committee was distressed by the possibility that we were preventing a player from taking the “correct” bridge bid, the one that would score 100 in the Master Solvers Club. However, our judgment of pass as a logical alternative was vindicated by my own poll of at least 10 expert players, all of whom passed 3NT without much of a problem, and most of whom passed just as easily after being presented with appellants’ arguments in favor. A player who opens with a one-bid should not often have a problem over a one-level response. In particular, a 2NT jump rebid should already be part of a planned auction, so it is a bid that should always be made in normal tempo. Failure to do so can compromise the bidder’s side. *If you want your partner to be able to make finely judged calls, you must bid in a consistent tempo so as not to restrict his options.*

The Committee: Bart Bramley (Chairman), Jeff Aker, Dick Budd, Ed Lazarus and Steve Robinson.

Commentary:

Goldsmith Well done, committee

Polisner Excellent ruling and decision, especially the Chairman’s note. With a player of E’s experience, the BIT is inexcusable.

Rigal I agree with the decision and do not feel as distressed as the Chairman at preventing West from finding a master-bid. Partner’s tempo prevents you from being a genius, but that is his problem not yours.

Wildavsky Fine work by the AC. This one was closer to having no merit than to being decided the other way.

Wolff There is little doubt that on this bidding, and after partner's slow 2NT and only slightly faster 3NT, that 4♣ is the right bridge bid, knowing partner has only 2 or 3 spades and 1 or 2 hearts, most of the time being 3 spades and 2 hearts. Playing IMPs, 5♣ can easily be the safest game and obviously 6♣ could be laydown or maybe only just a reasonable percentage contract. And so it turned out. If East had the AJx in diamonds and only a singleton lower heart, 6♣ is virtually laydown with a play for a club grand slam.

The above proves at least to me that Bart Bramley's discussion is right on, but why doesn't he try and do something about changing the law or at least bringing it to everyone's attention of how slothful we really are? It also proves beyond much doubt how ridiculous the polls taken are. Here we are playing the Vanderbilt and yet we take people's opinions on whether we should pass 3NT or bid 4♣. And now when a qualified player bids 4♣ we use the inaccurate, improperly thought out, and possibly biased result of the poll to determine judgment. Just how far do we have to fall before we realize how inappropriate our methods really are. How can a small dose of subjectivity, even with 100% transparency not be the answer? What bad can happen? If our commissioner continues to render improper decisions, we get a new commissioner. Granted being commissioner is a tall order but it is time we all grew up!!

Let's get involved in what can improve our game, by making it known that a certain tempo is required, not just on the hands where it makes a marked difference like this one, but in all hands where only something little or nothing at all is at stake.