

They haven't got what they said they did – Will the Director help us?

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So far we have looked at situations where a player has deviated from the agreed system, either deliberately or accidentally. In the final article in the series, I will consider the times when the player who made the bid has followed the system, but their partner has wrongly explained the agreement to the opponents.

In this case, there is a clear infraction at law. The laws require that the opponents are given a full and accurate description of your agreements.

Let's look at this simple auction in a number of different scenarios:

W	N	E	S
1NT	2D		

East's hand
 ♠ 864
 ♥ AJT75
 ♦ 642
 ♣ Q7

- 1 South alerts 2♦. East asks and South says, "diamonds and hearts". East was about to bid 2♥, but, finding out about North's hearts now decides to pass. 2♦ becomes the final contract. The hand is played out and NS make 2♦. It turns out that North did not have hearts at all. The NS agreement is that 2♦ is just natural.

Director's Response: The Director will consider how the auction may have been different had NS been given the correct information. Assume that he decides that North would have bid 2♥ and that this bid would have concluded the auction. He next determines how EW would have fared in 2♥. If they would have got a better score than they did against 2♦, he will adjust the score to this. Note that if EW would not have done better, there is no adjustment. There has been an infraction but no damage has arisen from it. There is no automatic penalty for giving the wrong information.

- 2 South alerts 2♦. East asks and South says, "diamonds and hearts". East was about to bid 2H, but, finding out about North's hearts, now decides to pass as do South and West. This is the same scenario as in #1, but this time North follows the correct procedure and calls the director AT THE END OF THE AUCTION. He does this because he believes that his partner has given a wrong explanation and he has become either declarer or dummy.

Director's Response: The laws allow only West to change their final pass should they so wish to do so, given the new information. In this particular scenario that is unlikely, although there are other circumstances when it may happen. Although East doesn't get to have another go, EW are still protected in relation to anything that happened earlier in the auction. The director may take East away from the table and ask what they would have done had they known what the agreement really was. The contract is still played out in 2♦. At the end, the director rules as in #1, but in this instance he has more information about how the auction might have proceeded without the mistaken explanation.

- 3 There no alerts. East bids 2♥ which ends the auction. The hand is played and turns out to be a bit of a disaster for EW because North also has five hearts. Following enquiries at the end of the hand, North reveals that his 2♦ bid showed diamonds and hearts. Note that in this instance, because North ended up as a defender, he MUST NOT reveal partner's misexplanation until after the play of the hand is finished.

Director's Response: The director will make a judgement as to what would likely have happened had 2♦ been alerted and correctly explained. Here, it seems probably that East would have passed. If EW would have received a better score, the director will adjust accordingly.

- 4 East asks South about the meaning of 2♦. South says, "natural", East bids 2♥ and everything is the same as in #3.

Director's Response: This will also be identical to #3. The failure to alert and the incorrect explanation by South are treated in exactly the same manner. The fact that the NS system card may have been correctly completed (with 2♦ being described as diamonds and hearts) is completely irrelevant.

Points to remember:

- 1 If your partner give the wrong explanation of your bid, it is in your interest to correct it as early as you possibly can. If you become declarer or dummy, this is at the end of the auction. If you are a defender, you must not do anything until the play of the hand is over. You must not take any action at all before this time. That includes calling the director or excusing yourself from the table to go to speak to the director.
- 2 When there has been a wrong explanation, and the opponents end up with a worse score because of it, the director will probably award them a better score than they got at the table – and, as a consequence, you with a worse one. Because you and your partner caused the problem, you should accept this gracefully.
- 3 If it is not clear whether one partner has made the wrong bid or if the other partner has given a wrong explanation, the laws require that the director assume that there has been a wrong explanation. This means that he will rule that there is an infraction, and may award an adjusted score.
- 4 Just because there has been an incorrect explanation, it does NOT mean that the director will adjust the score. A pair needs to be able to demonstrate how they have been damaged by their opponents' mistake. ❏