

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

by MATTHEW MCMANUS



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Last time, I looked at what happens when a player deliberately bids something which is not in accordance with the agreed system. This time, I will consider the situation where a bid is described as such and such, but the player who bid it has accidentally made a mistake. There could be any number of reasons why this happens:

- 1 points miscounted
- 2 hand wrongly sorted
- 3 system forgotten
- 4 wrong bid inadvertently written on the bidding pad/pulled from the bidding box, and the player fails to realise in time

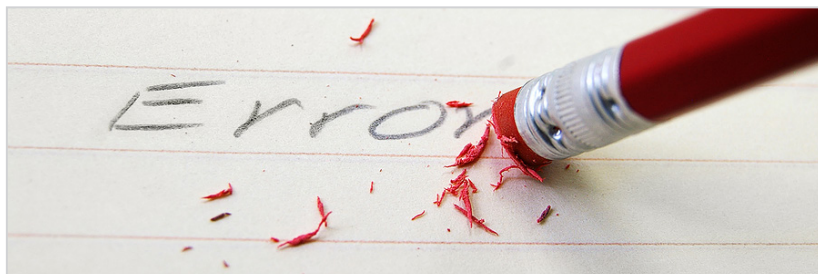
If you ever find yourself in the unfortunate position of having made one of these mistakes, the most important thing to do – although it is often very hard – is to give absolutely no indication at all that something is wrong. The exception is #4 – if partner has not yet made a call after your error, get the director immediately. It may be possible to correct your bid. The director will allow this if he is convinced that you never intended to make the call you did. Note that this does not allow for changes of mind; if there is any chance that you could have been considering the call you did make, it is unlikely you will be allowed to change.

Assuming that any of the above four scenarios has arisen, what are your responsibilities? Should you fess up to the opponents? No. If they have asked no questions, you have nothing to say. As long as your partner, if asked, has given them the correct systemic meaning, there is nothing more to be done. As an example, you think you have this hand...

- ♠ A64
- ♥ QJ542
- ♦ K
- ♣ AQ75

As Dealer, you bid 1H, partner responds 4H and that ends the auction. The opening leader asks, “Do you open five card majors?”, to which partner correctly responds, “Yes”. While this is going on, you suddenly discover that the ♥2 is actually the ♦2 and you should have opened the bidding with 1NT. You should say nothing. Partner has correctly described your agreement. He doesn't know that you only have four hearts...and until just a minute ago, neither did you! The opponents are not entitled to know about your mistake.

If you find yourself accidentally make a mistake in bidding, the most important thing to do is to give no indication at all that something is wrong.



If the opponents go wrong because of your error, will the director come to their rescue? In general, the answer is “No”. As long as the opponents have received the correct information, then there is no infraction at law, and the result obtained at the table will stand.

I will make some caveats here, in relation to #3, where the player has forgotten the system:

- 1 If you make a bid which does not match the system, and you are woken up to your error because of your partner’s alert or what he says in response to a question from the opponents, then you may not use that information in deciding on your future actions.
- 2 If you make a bid which does not match the system, you must be certain that your understanding of what your bid means is not the correct one and that it is definitely you that has made the mistake – not partner in giving his explanation. If you have any doubt as all about what your agreement is, you should tell the opponents at the appropriate time – at the end of the auction if you are declarer or dummy, or at the end of the hand if you are a defender.
- 3 If it is claimed that a player has forgotten the system, then the director will look to see whether his partner has done anything which suggests he was making allowances for the error. (If your partner regularly forgets an agreement, then the opponents need to know about this as well.) If there is some suggestion that you have allowed for your partner’s mistake, there is a high possibility that the director will award an adjusted score.
- 4 If a partnership is regularly forgetting the system, the director is well within his rights to stop the pair playing their current system and to require them to play a more natural system. And for the enjoyment of all the players in the game, he should do so.

So far, in Parts 1 and 2 of this topic, I have offered little joy to the “non-offending” side. They have been stuck with what has happened when the correct explanation has been given. However, relief is at hand in Part 3, when the opponents incorrectly describe their agreements – stay tuned. ❤️