

Just because...

by MATTHEW MCMANUS



Matthew McManus has been the Chief Director of the NSWBA since 1995. He officiates at a number of events around the country and in New Zealand in his capacity as a National Director, and is a very occasional bridge player.

There are many situations in bridge where what is conventional wisdom is really not that wise. Quite often, someone says, “so and so told me that...”. And also quite often the “so and so” is a director, so therefore it must be true! A little more investigation usually shows that the person doing the quoting was relaying what they wanted to hear, not what they were actually told. So, in the interests of trying to shed a little more light, here are a range of “just because” situations....

Just because an opponent claims and there is a trump outstanding, it doesn't mean that you will get an extra trick. There are a range of tests that the director has to use before deciding what the appropriate ruling will be. In many cases, it will result in an extra trick or tricks to the non-claiming side, but it is not automatic.

Just because someone revokes, it does not mean that there will be an automatic 2 trick penalty. The rules for revoking are quite complex – call the Director – make him do his job!

Just because on the hand records Deep Finesse says that partner can make 7NT, it doesn't mean that she has misbid and misplayed when she only makes 9 tricks in 3NT. The Deep Finesse analysis can frequently be quite misleading. It is based on what you could do if you saw all the hands. Sometimes making the same number of tricks as Deep Finesse can be indicative of bad play, not good play. Suppose you find yourself in 7NT and have to make 4 tricks out of this suit combination:

J T 9 8 opposite A Q 7 6. Deep Finesse makes it by playing the ace on the first round to drop the singleton king. However, in real life that would be a very bad play. You would be taking a line with a 2.5% chance of success, as opposed to the 50% chance by finessing.

Just because the players take the cards from the wrong pocket of the board and look at them, it does not mean that you won't be able to play the board. One of two things may have occurred:

1 North took out South's cards and East took out West's cards, and vice versa. NS still have the NS cards and EW still have the EW cards. The board is played and scored normally.

2 The players take the cards out of the board, but the board is turned through 90 degrees. That is, West has South's cards, North has West's, East has North's and South has East's. This known as an arrowswitch board, and in most cases the director can allow the board to be played this way. NS and EW will get the score they get based on the cards they actually hold and play with. This is even though in normal circumstances they would have had the other ones. This leads to...

It may not be wise to take “so and so told me that” as truth.



Just because the hands are arrow-switched, it doesn't mean that the result will be unfair to your side. In fact, it will not be unfair at all. You will get the result you deserve. Some players are incensed and believe that they are hugely deprived by not getting the right cards. Such thoughts may be real though they are not rational. If one side is disadvantaged, then surely you would think that the other side must benefit. Very recently, I was confronted with the following arguments from both sides about the unfairness of the arrowswitch. According to the hand record, NS could make 6♠. But the board was arrowswitched, so the EW pair got to hold the good cards. NS were furious that they had missed out on a possible slam. (*"That's so unfair"*). Their actual matchpoint score on the board was rather good as the opponents who held the cards didn't bid the slam, but they were still unsatisfied. EW, on their part, were also unhappy – they played the hand in 3NT, which only just made, not a good score compared with the rest of the room. What was their complaint? If they had had the proper cards, they would not have had the opportunity to have the bidding mix up that they did.

Just because you think it is boiling hot, it doesn't mean everyone else does. Please remember!

Just because a special agreement is on the system card, it does not mean that you are excused from your responsibility to alert it. For example, the opponents open 1NT, your partner bids 2♥. You play DONT, so this shows hearts and spades. You fail to alert it and the opponents get into trouble when they end up in a spade contract and assume that she just has hearts. If the director is called, it will be no defence to say, *"But it is on the system card"*. You still have an obligation to alert an agreement which the opponents may not know about.

Just because an opponent claims without stating a line of play, it does not mean that you can tell them how to play the cards. With 5 cards to go, declarer has this club suit:

A K Q J 2 opposite 7 6 5 4 3

and just puts their hand face up on the table. You have T98. You cannot make them play a low club first, so you can make a trick. If you object to the claim, you must call the director. The Laws set out a procedure that the director follows in the event of a disputed claim. If there is a careless way that the claimer could lose a trick, then it will be awarded to the opponents. However, an irrational line of play will not be forced upon the claimer. Here to play ♣2 first is clearly irrational and ridiculous.

Just because you expect partner to pass your sign off, you can't write the contract on your personal score card before he has bid. Nothing more to say! ♥