

APPEAL	NABC+ SIX
Subject	Misinformation
DIC	Gary Zeiger
Event	Roth Swiss Teams
Session	Second Qualifying
Date	July 31, 2010

BD#	3
VUL	EW
DLR	S

Jorgen Moelberg	
♠	AK943
♥	A
♦	J84
♣	J943

Mike Marlin		Summer 2010 New Orleans, Louisiana	Sandra Marlin	
♠	Q87		♠	JT5
♥	KQT		♥	J3
♦	KQ63		♦	A972
♣	KQ7		♣	AT52

Terje Aa	
♠	62
♥	9876542
♦	T5
♣	86

West	North	East	South
			P
1♣ ¹	1♥ ²	2♥ ³	P
2NT	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Final Contract	3NT by West
Opening Lead	♣4
Table Result	Made 4, EW +630
Director Ruling	3NT down 1, EW -100
Committee Ruling	3NT made 4, EW +630

(1)	Alerted as strong, artificial, and forcing
(2)	Alerted as Spades or Minors
(3)	Alerted as showing 5 Spades

The Facts: North asked West about the 2♥ bid before the opening lead. West informed North that “It shows 5 spades, but don’t be surprised if there are not 5 spades in the dummy. Unfamiliar territory.” North-South both understood West to say, “I’d be surprised if there are not five spades in dummy.” East did not clarify that East-West have no experience versus this convention and they had no agreement about 2♥.

The Ruling: North asserted that he would have led a small spade given accurate information. Declarer has eight winners and must play clubs correctly for a ninth trick. Since the drop and finesse are both reasonable lines of play, the director adjusted the result to 3NT down 1, North-South +100. This was the most favorable result likely for the non-offenders, pursuant to Laws 40B4 and 12C1(e).

The Appeal: East-West appealed and all four players attended the committee hearing. In committee, West stated that he had explained the 2♥ bid as showing spades. Following the conclusion of the auction and further questions by North, West again stated that the bid showed five spades, but said something to the effect of “I would not be surprised if the dummy does not contain five spades.” North asked East whether she had spades before the opening lead was made, but East did not answer, feeling that she did not have an obligation to answer that question. She stated that her partner had correctly stated the meaning of her bids. East-West have been playing bridge together for ten years, but have been playing precision for only about one year. They produced system notes which showed that they play transfer responses to one club for positive response hands, including over interference where there is a known suit. They stated that they generally play in a small club in Kentucky, and nobody in their club plays Suction or similar defenses to their one club bid. Accordingly, they had not encountered this defense before. West agreed that if he had to declare 3NT on a low spade lead, he would not have worked out how to make it. West also agreed that he has a strong Kentucky accent, which might make it difficult for others to understand him.

North stated that he would have led a low spade if he had known that the 2♥ bid did not show spades, and that with that lead, 3NT might go down. North thought that West had said, “I would be surprised if the dummy does not contain five spades.” North testified that he is a school teacher in Norway, and this includes teaching English. North’s English was readily understandable by the Committee.

The Decision: The Committee examined the East-West bidding notes. The notes indicated that East-West ignored competition when possible, and generally played positive responses as transfers. The notes were not explicit as to what East-West played when no suit was known, and apparently East-West had never encountered this situation before. East and West each had about 4000 master points. The notes showed that double would be a balanced hand of 5 plus high card points or an unbalanced hand with 5 to 8 points, so this was an alternative bid that East might have chosen.

After analysis of the bidding notes, the Committee concluded that East had simply misbid, and that West had provided a correct explanation of East’s bidding. There was no allegation of any break in tempo or any other type of unauthorized information, so West was clearly entitled to bid 2NT with his hand. The committee also noted that West had gone out of his way to try to alert North that East might have misbid in this situation. The Committee felt it was unfortunate that North had misunderstood West’s statements, but that since English is the language of the tournament and that West had made an accurate statement about the agreements, there was no misinformation, and so no infraction. Accordingly, the table result of 3NT making 4 was restored.

The Committee: Richard Popper (Chairman), Jim Thurtell, Ellen Kent, Aaron Silverstein, and Bob White.

Commentary:

Bramley: Tough one. The decision is well-reasoned and well-written, but the whole thing leaves a bad taste. In theory, the decision would be the same even without West's attempted disclaimer.

Since the system notes are not explicit about what to do over "suitless" interference, an argument could be made that there was no agreement and therefore West's explanation was MI. I'm also uncomfortable with East's dodgy response to a direct question about whether she had what her partner said she had. She had to know that her answer, or lack thereof, would directly affect the choice of lead. My preference is for players to admit to a misunderstanding when questioned, EVEN WHEN LEGALLY PERMITTED TO EVADE ANSWERING. Doing so will nearly always obviate a ruling (or a Committee) and allow for a valid table result; evasion nearly always has the opposite effect.

Goldsmith: I don't get to see the notes, but...if they really say that transfers are on if there is one known suit, then they do not apply over Suction, and therefore, the correct explanation is "no agreement." Furthermore, if the agreement applied assuming the known suit was spades, then a transfer to spades is unlikely to be natural, so there was MI. Even if West (who, to his credit, was trying to be helpful) had simply explained their agreements in detail, North would probably have worked out that East was unlikely to have spades. So I am pretty confident that there was MI, and that MI damaged the NOS. Again, the actual text of the notes could convince me otherwise.

On a spade lead, however, West would have made nine tricks. What is North to discard on four rounds of diamonds? If a spade, West just knocks out the HA. If a club, he no longer has to guess clubs. Since his stated plan was to figure out how to play clubs, running diamonds is completely natural, and players with 4000 MPs will do it just as a matter of course. There is no need to think of the triple squeeze; it just happens. So I'd rule reciprocal 600s. It is reasonable to rule -100 for E/W, judging that getting the play wrong was at all probable, but I think it is not. It's certainly not likely that West will go down, so N/S get -600.

I'd also give E/W a 1/4 board PP for East's failing to state before the opening lead that there was a mis-explanation. There is no way that she was certain that partner's explanation was correct, so she has to speak up.

Kooijman: I don't understand the facts. Does it say that East should have told NS that they had no agreement about the 2♥ bid? If so, I do not understand the decision and to be honest I tend not to understand it anyway. Why don't I find the question to East why he bid 2♥? All signs lead to my conclusion that EW did not know what they were doing, West NOT giving a right statement about the agreements. So I support the TD, 3NT minus 1, allowing North to lead a spade after hearing that EW do not have an agreement about 2♥.

Rigal: This is an unfortunate case; nobody really did anything wrong but it seems to me as if it was indeed a misbid not misinformation thanks to the system notes. Good ruling.

Wildavsky: I do not understand the basis of the TD's ruling, since it appears that, although North misunderstood, he was provided with accurate information. The AC seems to have been more thorough.

Yes, West ought to have explained the exact agreement, that they play transfers when there is one known suit. Then North would have known exactly as much as West did, and could draw his own conclusions. In my judgment, though, West's actual explanation ought to have been as informative. North still has to guess what East's long suit is.

Kudos to Jeff for noticing that declarer was likely to score up 3N even on a spade lead.

Wolff: Again CD is committed by NS so another Zero to them with probably only an average to EW, at best Average +. Again when CD occurs bridge, as we know it, stops and speculation reigns. At last reports it is impossible to then look into everyone's mind and accurately (or even close to) determine what would have happened. Stop CD by penalizing it out of existence and presto changeo partnerships will suddenly stop having these bridge breaking mixups and either learn their conventions or cross them off their convention cards.