

APPEAL NABC+ TEN
 Subject: Misinformation (MI)
 DIC: Roger Putnam
 Event: Vanderbilt Teams
 Session: Round of 8, April 6, 2006

Board # 14 Vul: None Dir: East	Ishmael Delmonte ♠ 8 7 ♥ A K Q 6 4 3 ♦ K Q J 9 ♣ 2	Nicolas L'Ecuyer ♠ J T 5 ♥ J T 8 ♦ 8 3 2 ♣ T 9 6 3
Zygmunt Marcinski ♠ A 9 6 4 2 ♥ ♦ A 7 ♣ A K Q J 6 4	George Mittelman ♠ K Q 3 ♥ 9 7 5 2 ♦ T 6 5 4 ♣ 8 7	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♣ ¹	4♦ ²	Pass ³	Pass
Dbl ⁴	All Pass		

- (1) Artificial and forcing.
- (2) North to East: either hearts or both black suits.
 South to West: No Alert. Both players thought 4♦ was natural.
- (3) Negative.
- (4) Intended as takeout of natural 4♦.

The Facts: The table result was 4♦, doubled, making four, N/S +510. N/S system notes show that East received correct information and West received misinformation.

The Ruling: Absent the misinformation (Law 75), West would likely not double. With correct information, it was judged that the “most favorable result that was likely” and the “most unfavorable result that was at all probable” was 4♠ making five, E/W +450, which is the score to which the table result was adjusted.

The Appeal: N/S asserted that their result was a “rub of the green,” caused by good luck rather than misinformation. Their misunderstanding got them to play an inferior trump suit at a dangerously high level, where they could easily have been going for a large number instead of making the contract. They noted that West had doubled 4♦ with a highly skewed hand and suggested that he would have done the same with the correct information. They thought that the result stemmed from West’s unusual decision rather than from the misinformation. North also contended that had West bid 4♠ or 5♣, he would have sacrificed at 5♦ and achieved down one doubled.

Upon questioning, North said that he did not remove himself to 4♥ (over the double) for ethical reasons, although there was no evidence of a tempo problem on the S/W side of the screen. He knew from his diamond holding that his side might be having a misunderstanding.

N/S had agreed to play “Suction” over 5 the strong 1♣ opening. North said that it applied at any level. South did not realize that the agreement extended as high as the four level.

West, before acting over the presumed natural 4♦, attempted to place the missing 13 hearts. North, the preemptor, would not have a lot of hearts, and South, who was a passed hand and had not preempted earlier, would have at most five hearts, or perhaps six. The same inference was available about his partner, who was also a passed hand, but all plausible distributions of the heart suit showed East with four to six hearts, most likely five. West knew that his “offense/defense ratio” was strongly tilted toward offense, but his placement of the missing hearts meant that East would almost certainly have enough hearts to bid 4♥ over his takeout double. West then planned to bid 4♠, suggesting more than one place to play and giving his side the best chance to choose intelligently between 4♠ and 5♣. While there was some danger of reaching the wrong strain with the two-step auction, West thought that an immediate guess of 4♠ or 5♣ would have been even more dangerous.

West noted further that had he known that North was likely to have a lot of hearts, he would no longer have had the same inference about his partner’s removal of the double, which was the cornerstone of his plan. Therefore, with correct information he would have been more likely to bid one of his suits than to risk his partner’s passing a takeout double.

East, who had the correct information about North’s bid, was reluctant to remove the double to a three-card major or to raise the level by bidding a weak four-card suit. Also, he wasn’t sure what suits anybody had and preferred to hope he could beat 4♦.

The Decision: The committee found West's argument lucid and compelling. While other actions were possible with either incorrect information (what West actually had) or correct information (what West should have had), the differences in the two situations were significant enough to convince the committee that West might well have acted differently with the correct information. (Note that West was not entitled to know with certainty that his opponents were having a misunderstanding, but he was entitled to know their agreement. Just suppose that North had been West's screenmate instead of South.) Therefore, the AC determined that West would have bid one of his suits instead of doubling. Also, North, for the same "reasons" that prevented him from bidding 4♥ over the double, would have refrained from bidding 5♦ despite his great "support" for the suit that his partner had "shown".

If West had bid 4♠, he could make eleven tricks by playing all out, which would require crossing to dummy to start spades. However, the committee judged that the best play by far for ten tricks is Ace and another spade, which guarantees the contract when trumps are 3-2. On a heart lead a 3-2 trump break is necessary, and even with a diamond lead declarer's best chance to cope with a 4-1 break is to lay down the Ace and hope to catch an honor. (Playing for the singleton 8 or 7 is more problematic.) Meanwhile, leading a club at trick two could be fatal if North has a club void and two small spades, a significant danger on the bidding. Thus, the committee assigned a result of 4♠ making four, +420 to E/W and -420 to N/S.

Note that twelve tricks are easy on a heart lead against 5♣, for the same score of +420.

The Committee: Ron Gerard (Chair), Bart Bramley, Bruce Rogoff and Steve Weinstein.

Commentary:

Gerard Hands down, the best argument I have ever heard in Committee. Several Committee members said that until they listened to West's explanation, they wondered what his case was. And he wasn't faking it either, after hearing him out we all thought "How could anyone do anything other than double?" This is why knee jerk reactions against "bridge lawyering" are wrong.

Goldsmith I agree with the AC that West was damaged by the failure to alert and explain. There's no way, however, that North would fail to bid diamonds thereafter below the 7-level. If he thinks his partner knows their methods, he expects about seven diamonds from partner. If the opponents bid a lot, given all his high card strength, they probably have some shape, too, so maybe South actually has diamonds. If worse comes to worst, it's not as if 6♥ doubled is likely to be a disaster. So he'll save.

I think it's likely that West, knowing what's going on, will bid more than 4♣. Partner's negative double (where was it, BTW?) suggests he'll catch a fit in one of the black suits. It is reasonable, therefore, for him to bid 5♦, getting them to 6♣ from the West. North will surely lead a heart against 6♣, so it's making. But North won't let him play there. North will bid 6♦ and play there doubled down two. After East's double, it seems to me that the problem is not getting to 6♣, but avoiding getting to 7♣.

Some likely auctions:

1♣	4♦	Dbl	Pass
5♦	5♥	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	All Pass

or

1♣	4♦	Dbl	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♠	Pass
6♣	6♦	Dbl	All Pass

or

1♣	4♦	Dbl	Pass
5♦	5♥	Dbl	Pass
5♠	6♦	Dbl	All Pass

or

1♣	4♦	Dbl	Pass
5♦	5♥	Dbl	Pass
5♠	Pass	6♣	Pass
Pass	6♦	Dbl	All Pass

Since I think 6♦ doubled is likely and also the worst result at all probable for N/S, I'd award E/W +300 and N/S -300. What do you know?...par.

Polisner Simple case, correct result.

Rigal Well judged ruling. In a complex case where MI has been established, the non-offenders are due the best of it. And here the case that E/W made was a very sensible one. No AWMW here; a difficult case.

- Wildavsky** Good work all around.
I don't understand North's comment about "ethical reasons." He had no unauthorized info and could do as he pleased.
I won't quarrel with an IMP either way, but the AC might have considered another line on a heart lead: a low spade towards the dummy. After losing to either opponent declarer can ruff the heart return, play a club to dummy, and play a spade to the 9. If it loses he has 10 tricks whether or not he loses a club ruff. If it wins and trump are 4-1 he can switch back to clubs and still make the hand.
- Wolff** Another convoluted convention disruption (CD) case where the CDers obviously got very lucky. When this has happened in the past the committee has said "Yes CD is present, but there is no causal connection between the CD and the end result, hence the table result stands." In this case the committee went much further than I would have gone against the CD. This wasn't a match point (MP) game, but in a MP game the committee should lean overboard not to give a windfall to the opponents, unless they were taken out of the chance of being able to "play bridge". Since this was a KO, event that didn't apply. The other goal is to try and stop CD by penalizing (procedural penalty, if necessary) so that players will feel the responsibility to learn their offbeat conventions.
- Zeiger** Superb write up. I wonder though, if North hung himself during the hearing when he gave his reasons for passing 4♦ doubled. If he had said "My partner's pass showed extreme length in diamonds, despite his original pass.," I suspect the Committee might have allowed him to bid 5♦, and projected an auction from there. That would have been fun.
A shame the Committee correctly adjusted to +420 E/W, otherwise I would have loved to see the AWMW they would surely have assessed.
N/S's arguments about West's reopening double were absurd. With West's understanding of the auction, a reopening double was eminently sensible.