

APPEAL NABC+ THREE

Subject: Tempo

DIC: Roger Putnam

Event: Vanderbilt KO

Session: Round of 32, April 4, 2006

Board # 20                      Piotr Tuszynski  
Vul: Both                        ♠ 6 5 2  
Dlr: West                        ♥ 5 4 2  
                                      ♦ 5  
                                      ♣ A T 9 8 5 2

John Fout	Jeff Roman
♠ K Q 8	♠ T 7 3
♥ K Q 9 6	♥ J T 8
♦ 8 7	♦ K Q J T 9 2
♣ K 7 6 3	♣ 4

Apolinary Kowalski  
♠ AJ94  
♥ A73  
♦ A643  
♣ QJ

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

**The Facts:** 4♣ failed by one trick for a score of E/W +100. The 1♣ opening bid was alerted as “may be short” (not a strong club). The 1♠ response was alerted as showing no four-card major and a non-game forcing hand. The 1NT overcall by South was strong and natural. North’s 2♠ was a transfer to clubs and alerted as such. The double of 3♦ was for take-out. The director determined that the 3NT bid was made after a hesitation of a few seconds. The players agreed that the hesitation was about 8-10 seconds.

**The Ruling:** The director ruled that if South had made an immediate\* call of 3NT after the double of 3♦, it would tend to confirm a good club fit and that the pause break in tempo (BIT) suggested some doubt about the playability of 3N. Applying Law 16, the director found that there was a logical alternative to bidding 4♣, which was to pass. Accordingly, the director adjusted the score to 3NT down four, E/W +400.

*\*In doing the write-up of this case, the director was asked what was meant by immediate. The director intended to say that if South had made an in tempo call of 3NT.....*

**The Appeal:** N/S contended that since they had never encountered methods like these before (where 1♠ had such a meaning); they would always need a bit of extra time to digest the meanings of the bids. They also contended that South could have bid 3NT over the 3♦ call directly if his hand was a ‘perfecto’ opposite a six-card club suit, knowing that partner was free to pull it when he was utterly broke. Accordingly, North already knew that his partner did not hold the perfecto (presumably three Aces and good club support or something near that). E/W presented arguments along the same lines as the director’s ruling

**The Decision:** The first issue for the Committee to confront was whether there was a break in tempo which demonstrably suggested a line of action. A rapid (or “immediate”) call of 3NT would clearly indicate that South’s cards were ideal for the bid. As such, that might constitute unwonted speed which could also lead to a violation of Law 16. South’s pause of 8-10 seconds was the normal result of his being confronted with very unusual methods which required him to review the meaning of all North’s and East’s bids. Therefore, the Committee decided that the pause of 8-10 seconds to process that information does not generate such a break in tempo as to call into play Law 16. The committee restored the table result of 4♣ down one for both sides, N/S -100, E/W +100.

**The Committee:** Michael Huston (Chair), Dick Budd and Gail Greenberg

## Commentary:

### Gerard

Big time whiff. Switch the minor suit threes and tell me how South would bid 3NT with his "perfecto". What about with king-third of clubs instead, don't you want to be in 3NT even when it doesn't make? East can't be void in clubs since he must have had some way to show a 7-card diamond suit over 1♣. If East's singleton isn't an honor, you gain IMPs for down one in 3NT against down two in 4♣. When East holds singleton quack, you gain many more IMPs for being in the right contract. One of the Committee members told me that when 3NT is wrong it's very wrong, but aside from the fact that nobody thinks like that these days it's clear that 3NT can only be wrong when South shouldn't have bid it. I mean, queen jack DOUBLETON, who would have thunk it? Plus some "perfecto" club holdings aren't so perfect after West has opened 1♣. Sure, sure, West has to open 1♣ on any 4=4=2=3, but South is going to be leery about his "ideal" clubs when even AKx won't run the suit against J10xxxx. How can N/S play the way they suggest when North doesn't know whether queen-sixth and out constitutes being "utterly broke"? (IMO, it shouldn't.) And why does South need to rush into 3NT over 3♦ when North is still there to compete with any hand that could tolerate 3NT, presuming he would have a way to cope with 6-3-2-2? No, N/S's arguments were bogus. Maybe the Committee should have polled the consultants from the previous case who would have passed 3NT in a similar situation with king-ten-eight sixth and out.

But the Committee didn't even do us the honor of misanalyzing the arguments, they copped out on procedural grounds. The time to review the meaning of all the bids was over 1♠ and 3♦; North's double didn't add any confusion to a known situation. And the auction wasn't that complicated: 1♠ was artificial, 2♠ showed clubs, 3♦ showed a bunch of diamonds and a weak hand, double was for takeout. Sure the 1♠ bid was unusual, but everything else was as it sounded. Processing the information had or should have already taken place, South's pause could only relate to the bidding decision he was now faced with. What the Committee did was like awarding average plus/average minus when the Laws scream out for a real adjustment. Not even a "We don't think there was a hesitation, but even if there had been a hesitation pass was not a logical alternative (LA)." If there was indeed no unmistakable hesitation, why was the first comment of the Committee member I mentioned previously related to how wrong it could be to pass 3NT? I guarantee you the players at the table knew what South was thinking about.

You notice that there was a Committee of three. That was not supposed to be the case, but there was one recusal for alleged bias and a further recusal because of prior knowledge and for symmetry. The Committee mishandled that issue also. Had the recusals not taken place, there would have been at the least one strongly-worded dissent.

- Goldsmith** Again, I don't buy it. Not only does the E/W bidding seem pretty transparent (long diamonds in a weakish hand); the time to assimilate E/W's bidding was on the first and second rounds. To argue that South had to think about his action due to weird methods after 3♦ was bid has some merit, but a round later, the problem is no longer the opponents' methods, but South's own bidding decision. If South had asked 15 questions about the E/W bidding prior to his 3NT call, then maybe I'd buy his claim.  
What a set of committees! K10xxxx was required to play in 3NT doubled (case 2), but A10xxxx was allowed to pull, in roughly similar situations (with UI suggesting that 3NT isn't the right spot).
- Polisner** I agree with the Committee. When opponents use unusual methods which must be digested and considered in light of decisions to be made, normal tempo is expanded. I think that 3 - 5 seconds would be appropriate tempo with no unusual methods and 5 - 8 seconds with unusual methods. Under my view, there was no BIT and the table result stands.
- Rigal** The committee's decision that there was no BIT was a controversial one; I'm not sure I agree, but I can understand where they were coming from. The issue about the complexity of the auction buying N/S a little more time seems a reasonable one... plus I suppose that I can't help being influenced by the fact that I would never have sat for 3NT anyway with the North cards after partner did not bid 3NT over 3♦ directly -- though that was certainly a minority opinion.
- Wildavsky** First of all I see no reason for a Vanderbilt committee to be composed of only three members. If it is too difficult to seat a committee between sessions then waiting 'till the end of the day is not the end of the world. Yes, the AC will know that the match hinges on their decision, but they won't know how.  
Second I see nothing especially unusual in the E/W methods. N/S are experienced internationalists. When South passed over 3♦ he knew that the auction was in all particulars identical to one that in Standard American would have started with: 1♣ - P - 1♦ - 1NT. Thus, South clearly broke tempo when bidding 3NT. We can see from his hand that he was considering passing or bidding 3♠.  
What did North hope to gain by doubling? A big penalty seems unlikely. In fact had South passed they'd have gone -670. It looks as though North was hoping his partner could bid 3NT, yet when it was bid he didn't sit for it! Passing 3NT was surely logical, so if North had UI he was not allowed to pull it. The AC judged that no UI was present, but I find their reasoning unconvincing and I prefer the tournament director's ruling.

**Wolff** Another impossible decision to make, having to do with strange bidding methods, which in this case (according to the committee) allowed N/S to hesitate their way to success. This one was allowed by the committee.

**Zeiger** When North doubled 3♦, for takeout we're told, where did he think the partnership was heading? Did he plan on passing three of a major? Was he afraid South might have a five carder? If the Committee asked these questions, received affirmative answers, and accepted their logic, I can accept the decision. This would mean the write up is sorely deficient. I can live with this possibility, but I certainly hope the Committee didn't just avoid these issues by deciding no tempo break. If North didn't have good reasons for his double, I'll bet at least HE thought South broke tempo.