

CONGRESS DIRECTOR COURSE
By REG BUSCH

LESSON 2C

I repeat here the second problem from Lesson 2A, and offer my comments.

Board 2

NS Vul

Dealer East

	♠KQ65		
	♥J10842		
	♦AK		
	♣Q2		
♠10			♠A9842
♥Q			♥63
♦Q1082			♦7543
♣KJ87643			♣A9
	♠J72		
	♥AK975		
	♦J96		
	♣106		

	W	N	E	S
The Bidding	4♣*	P	4♠	P
	5♣	P	5♦	P
	6♣	All pass**		

*Alerted and described as Gerber.

** At the end of the auction, West informed NS of the mistaken explanation.

NS get a plus score, but claim that they would have doubled had they known the correct explanation.

How would you rule and why? As you can see, 4♥ can go off on not very brilliant defence.

Comment: A very complex situation. Following our catechism, decide first of all: Was there MI? You need to question the EW players and check their system card. They were not a regular partnership, so it is likely that there was MI. Remember, where there is doubt, opt for MI rather than misbid. So assume for the moment that there was MI.

Remembering our earlier tip when there is MI, ask yourself also was there UI? Yes, West knows that East has interpreted her 4♣ as ace asking. She is not entitled to take any further action based on this knowledge.

Our next step is to decide whether EW were damaged, and, if so, what score to adjust to. This is another of those ‘what if’ situations – we have to decide what would probably have occurred without the infractions. This is sometimes easy, often difficult, and sometimes almost impossible. What we can’t do is accede to NS’s request to allow them to have doubled 5♣, as though they suddenly became aware of the situation near the end of the auction. We have to decide what may have happened had the correct info been available at the start of the auction.

CONGRESS DIRECTOR COURSE
By REG BUSCH

Tip: Directors and committees are sometimes disadvantaged by knowing all the hands and the likely results before making their judgments. In assessing what a particular player may do, ignore this info. Look only at the hand and the bidding to this point.

Tip: In assessing these what - if situations, always use the following little trick. Imagine that all four players are sitting at computers where, every time opponents make a call, the full meaning of this call comes up on the screen but of course not the opponents' screen. In this way, there is never any need to ask questions or receive explanations, so there is no UI and no MI. If the opponents have their wires crossed, they will carry on oblivious to the fact until, perhaps, at some stage the actual bidding may wake them up to their error.

So let's apply this trick to our current problem. West bids 4♣ (to play) and NS know this. But East thinks this is ace asking. North will take some action: with both majors double for takeout is probably best. East will obediently show her aces. It seems unlikely that EW have any sophisticated understanding such as ROPI in this situation, so East will probably bid 4♠. South's best action, with her flattish hand, would be double.

Round to West. What is her correct action? She has bid 4♣ to play, and has heard West suggest she wants to play in 4♠, despite North's takeout double. There is no reason why East could not have a spade suit as good or better than West's club suit. So West's correct action is to pass. Pass by North and back to East, no doubt very puzzled at this point. West has asked for aces, I've shown her two, and she is content to settle in 4♠ doubled! East is no doubt puzzled, but I'm not sure that there is sufficient information from the bidding to suggest strongly that EW have had a misunderstanding, and for East to run to 5♣.

So one (very generous) adjusted score could be NS + 800 (in 4♠ X). This is contingent on so many things happening when there are all sorts of other possibilities. Perhaps NS find their heart fit and go off in 4♥ or 5♥. However the TD in this sort of situation has to make his best judgment of what might have happened without the infractions. You might need to discuss with NS their methods over 4♣. If North says that she would have bid 4♥ over the 4♣, then you proceed on that assumption, in which case NS may finish in 5♥ going off, and their plus score means that they were not damaged.

We assumed at the start that there was MI. But suppose that 4♣ systemically was always for aces, so there was no MI but a misbid. Does this mean no adjustment? No, because there has been UI. East's explanation has woken West up to her misbid, and she must ignore this. Again she should pass 4♠ – as far as West is concerned, East has indicated that she wants to play in 4S.

Some might suggest that, in the actual auction, North should have realized before her final pass that there has been some misunderstanding between EW and should have doubled 6♣. This is true. But, after MI or UI, the non-offending side do not lose their rights to adjustment by subsequent poor bidding or play. It is only if their actions are wild, gambling or irrational that they lose such rights.

One further piece of advice: where possible, always consult in trying to reach such judgments. With fellow directors if available. But, if not, you could consult with experienced players as to might have happened in these what – if situations.