

What's the Director There For?

by Gary Morgan

1. The Director is there to see that a smooth, on-time game is played. S/he selects the movement most likely to provide the maximum opportunity to play as many opponents and boards as possible.
2. The Director is also there to enforce the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge and to insure that equity is restored when an irregularity occurs.
3. Here is the protocol when calling the Director:
 - a. Whenever an irregularity occurs, call the Director and hold up a hand for a visual guide.
 - b. If you aren't sure if an irregularity has occurred, call the Director.
 - c. Yes, the dummy may call the Director, but only after another player has called attention to an irregularity or after play ceases. Remember that every player has an obligation to prevent irregularities.
 - d. When the Director arrives, the person who called should explain why the Director was called. ALL DETAILS MUST BE INCLUDED for an accurate ruling to be made. As soon as the Director arrives, s/he will be in charge of the discussion. S/he will ask for an explanation of the problem, then will listen to both pairs in order. S/he will often ask the other players if the circumstances as recounted are correct. Waiting your turn, rather than interrupting, will usually speed up the process.
 - e. Once the Director determines all facts to the best of her/his ability, s/he will make the ruling required by law. Players may not like the ruling, but they need to remember that the law must be enforced. Players will be advised of their right to appeal.
4. Just because you call the Director does not mean you are entitled to an adjustment.

The Proprieties

1. Ruling on the Proprieties and on hesitations are the two hardest parts of the Director's job. In many such cases, the Director will ask for play to proceed and will monitor the bidding and play or return later to see if a "normal" result has been achieved.
2. Everyone is entitled to think, but everyone has an obligation to try to bid and play in tempo. The onus falls on the PARTNER of the player who hesitated to bend over backwards to avoid acting on any inferences that s/he might draw from partner's hesitation in the bidding. If the Director determines that the partner of the hesitator has taken action that could reasonably have been suggested by partner's hesitation, s/he may assign an adjusted score, but is not required to.
3. Bridge bidding is like a foreign language. We want to know what others are talking about when they converse in Spanish, German, or other languages. Likewise, in bridge, your opponents have a right to know what "language" you're speaking, i.e., what your bids mean. That is why ACBL regulations require that each member of a partnership have an identical convention card. If an opponent asks for an explanation at her/his turn to call, you must explain accurately and fully.
4. When asking about the meaning of a bid, the proper method is to ask, "What is your agreement?" To ask, "Is that a weak two?" or "Is that a strong bid?" runs the risk of conveying unauthorized information.

5. Sometimes we explain incorrectly. Then what? If the DECLARING side has erred in explaining, declarer or dummy must correct the explanation prior to the opening lead. If the DEFENDING side has erred, the defenders must wait until the completion of the hand and must then correct the explanation. The Director may adjust the score to restore equity if s/he determines that the incorrect explanation by the defenders materially affected the line of play declarer chose.
6. Bluffing via mannerisms and apparent indecision are part of poker, not bridge. Deliberate, unnecessary hesitations in the play (and even in the bidding), commonly called “coffee-housing,” are unethical and are subject to procedural penalties for repeated infractions. Examples of “coffee-housing” include:
 - a. Deliberating with all small cards when declarer leads toward a tenace in dummy,
 - b. Hesitating or fumbling with your cards when not having a “cover” card in an obvious cover situation, such as a ruffing finesse,
 - c. Huddling after partner raises your 1 Heart bid to 2 Hearts when you have no intention of bidding further — an attempt to preclude a reopening bid.

Planning ahead and bidding/playing in tempo eliminates these possible infractions. If you think you have been “coffee-housed,” call the Director to go “on record.” And remember, report events/facts, not interpretations.

Mechanics

1. Don’t reach for the bidding box until you know what call you’re going to put on the table. Players can be penalized for fondling bid cards. Place your thumb on the bid you intend to make, then take that card and all the cards behind it. Calls should be placed facing away from the bidder as a courtesy to the other players at the table.
2. If a player accidentally places the wrong bidding card on the table (as in reaching for 1♠ and pulling out 1♥ instead), that bid may be corrected before PARTNER of the mis-bidder has called. Intervening calls may be corrected with no penalty. This change of bid must be due to a mechanical error in picking the card from the bidding box, not suddenly noticing a bid (including a double), a misplaced card (say, a diamond in with your hearts), or a hidden card.
3. Players can be penalized for delaying the timely completion of the hand. This normally comes after one or two warnings, but remember that bridge is a timed event.
4. Players are subject to penalty for looking at a traveler before playing a board.
5. All players at a table MAY be penalized, at the Director’s discretion, if wrong boards are passed. The North-South pair receiving the wrong boards may also be penalized.
6. Players should not use the STOP card to “warn” partner that a jump bid is coming. The STOP card was created to minimize insufficient bids following a jump. When a STOP card is placed on the table, the next player is obliged to wait about 10 seconds before making a call. Consistency is also key: if you choose to use the STOP card, you must use it for ALL bids — weak and strong alike — that skip a level (or more) of bidding. Also, both partners must consistently use the STOP card.
7. Players are advised to use the “Alert” card, in addition to saying “Alert” as a courtesy to hearing impaired players at the table.
8. Cell phones MUST be turned off during the game. It is the policy of Unit 547 and the ACBL.