

Subject of Appeal:	Tempo/Unauthorized Information	Case:	R3
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Event	Monday AXY Pairs	Event DIC	Doug Rankin
Date	11/30/2015	Session	First

Auction

West	North	East	South
	Pass	3♣	3♠
4♥	4♠	5♥	5♠
6♥	Dbl ¹	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Explanation of Special Calls and Points of Contention

1: Break in Tempo

Hand Record

Board	21	N	5000 MPS		
Dealer	N	♠ K865	♥ 86		
Vul	N/S	♦ KQ6532	♣ 4		
W	8500 MPS			E	5200 MPS
♠ 3	♥ KQJ107432			♠ J	♥ A95
♦ 8	♣ A108			♦ 10	♣ QJ976532
		S	4300 MPS		
		♠ AQ109742	(void)		
		♥ AJ974	♣ K		

Final Contract	Result of Play	Score	Opening Lead
6♠ by S	Made 6	N/S +1430	♣ A

Facts Determined at the Table

The director was called to the table at the end of play. The director determined that, before North's double of 6♥, there was a break in tempo. The North player confirmed that he thought for about 15 seconds before doubling.

Additional Factors Determined Away from the Table

Eight players of approximately equal level as the South player were polled, and, after North's double (but with no mention of a break in tempo), six of the eight polled would pass. The other two would bid 6♠.

Director Ruling

According to Law 16B1a, "After a player makes available to partner extraneous information that may suggest a call or play, as for example ... by unmistakable hesitation ... the partner may not choose from logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information." The Director ruled that the break in tempo may have demonstrably suggested bidding on rather than passing, and that pass was a logical alternative. The score was adjusted, therefore, to 6♥ doubled by West, down 1, for N/S +100.

Director's Ruling	6♥X by W, Down 1, N/S +100
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The Appeal

The Reviewer met with all four players, and confirmed that the hesitation was approximately 15 seconds. Furthermore, while North/South claimed they bid slowly, all agreed that this was a longer time than the remaining bids in the auction.

N/S argued that, in a high-level competitive auction such as this one, a 15-second pause was normal tempo, that any player in such a position was entitled to consider carefully, and that the break therefore was not "out of tempo" for the auction. North stated that he was reviewing his system and what his bids meant in this situation, and this should not suggest any particular option to his partner. They claimed (but were unable to produce system notes supporting their claim) that at the 5 or 6 level, when their side was bidding to make their contract, then when the opponents compete, a pass would show that earlier bids were based on shape, while double would imply that they were based on values. They averred that a pass would not be forcing here - if both North and South were bidding based on shape, they were not required to double the opponents.

Panel Findings

The Panel recognized that, as an auction reached high levels, particularly in competition, players do tend to bid more slowly. However, in an auction such as this one, while a break of 8-10 seconds might not convey information, fifteen seconds is a rather long time, and certainly expressed doubt. For example, if North's high cards had included a trump trick, then he would likely have been able to double significantly faster. North's actual tempo suggested that all of his values were outside of hearts, which made a 6♠ bid more attractive.

The Panel determined that the 15 second pause did constitute an unmistakable hesitation, and made South's 6♠ bid more attractive. The Director's poll established that Pass was a logical alternative, so the ruling of 6♥X by West, down 1, for a score of N/S +100, was upheld per Laws 16B1 and 12C1e.

Some consideration was given as to whether the appeal had merit: did the appellants bring to the appeal an argument not encompassed by the Director's initial decision? It was felt that the length of the break in a high-level auction was sufficient cause for the situation deserving a second look, so the appeal was found to have some merit

Panel Decision	6♥X by W, Down 1, N/S +100
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Panel Members

Reviewer	David Metcalf
Member	Matt Smith
Member	Gary Zeiger