

Subject of Appeal:	Disputed Claim	Case:	N5
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Event	Spingold Knockout Teams	Event DIC	Matt Smith
Date	08/09/2015	Session	Day One, First Session

Auction

West	North	East	South
			1NT ¹
Pass	2NT ²	Pass	3♦ ³
Pass	3♠ ⁴	Pass	4♥ ⁵
Pass	5♦	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Explanation of Special Calls and Points of Contention

1: 15 -17 HCP
2: Transfer to ♦
3: 3+ ♦
4: Control cuebid
5: ♥ Control, denied ♣

Hand Record

Board	19	N	Andy Kaufman		
Dealer	S	♠	AQ7		
		♥	9		
		♦	KJ10643		
Vul	E/W	♣	J85		
W	Peter Gill			E	Sartaj Hans
♠	984			♠	K1062
♥	J107			♥	8654
♦	7			♦	952
♣	AQ10432			♣	K6
		S	Michael Cassel		
		♠	J53		
		♥	AKQ32		
		♦	AQ8		
		♣	97		

Final Contract	Result of Play	Score	Opening Lead
5♦ by S			♣ A

Facts Determined at the Table

South claimed following the ♣A lead before East had played to the trick, and the Director was summoned. His initial claim statement was that he would pitch two spades on the hearts. When the cards were tabled, he added that he would ruff a heart. The Director left the table to confer with colleagues about the ruling. When they returned, South changed his statement to pitching two spades on hearts and then trumping a club before playing trumps.

Director Ruling

Under the guidelines established by the ACBL Laws Commission in 1998 with regard to Law 70B3, "When a claim occurs, both opponents have the right to inspect the [claimant]'s cards and confer before they acquiesce. If the non-claiming side can show a line of play, consistent with the claim statement but not irrational, that produces more tricks for their side, the director should award them those tricks. The director should not raise objections on behalf of the players involved."

South's changes to his claim statement showed that there were doubtful aspects to the claim. Per Law 70A, "any doubtful point as to a claim shall be resolved against the claimer." South had not taken into account with his statement how he would play if the defense switched to a spade following the opening club lead. While there was a line of play consistent with the claim statement that would allow him to still come to eleven tricks, there were others that would only allow ten tricks. Based upon this doubt, the director assigned the result of 5♦ by South, down 1, E/W +50.

Director's Ruling	5♦ by S, Down 1, E/W +50
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The Appeal

North/South appealed the ruling and all four players attended the hearing. The screening director seemed to favor the appellants' case. They did not explain why they had not changed the ruling, given that they had the power to do so.

South was the only one to speak for the appellants. He noted that play had been going slowly and they had received a warning. East went into a huddle after the opening lead. South presumed he held ♠Kx and was deciding whether to unblock. South became impatient so finally claimed before East had played to the first trick.

East/West countered with the argument that after a spade switch at trick two, declarer would have two more club losers if he pitched spades on hearts per his claim statement and he had not specified how he would deal with them. Were he to draw trump and pitch his spade losers, he would go down.

Declarer and the defenders had engaged in several rounds of questions and answers before the director was called. The two sides did not agree as to some aspects of declarer's claim statement and the subsequent discussion.

Committee Findings

Law 70D and its explanatory footnote reads, "The director shall not accept from claimer any successful line of play not embraced in the original clarification statement if there is an alternative normal line of play that would be less successful. For the purposes of Laws 70 and 71, 'normal' includes play that would be careless or inferior for the class of player involved." Several lines of play were available to declarer.

After a club continuation at trick two:

Declarer could ruff a club high and throw spades on the hearts per his claim statement. He would be successful on the lie of the cards no matter in which order he did things.

After a spade switch at trick two:

Declarer could win the spade ace, draw trump, pitch two clubs on the hearts, and give up a spade. While this looks like the best line the committee rejected it as inconsistent with declarer's claim statement.

Declarer could duck the spade in dummy and go down on the lie of the cards. The committee also rejected this line as inconsistent with declarer's claim statement.

Declarer could win the spade ace, pitch spades on hearts per his claim statement and then either ruff a heart to set up his 11th winner or duck a club, planning to ruff the third club in his hand. Either would be successful.

Declarer could win the spade ace, draw three rounds of trump, pitch two spades on the hearts, and lose more two club tricks to go down one.

The committee judged that drawing trump and leaving Declarer with two more club losers would not be a normal line of play per Law 70 and so changed the result for both sides to 5♦ by South, making 5, N/S +400.

Committee Decision	5♦ by S, Made 5, N/S +400
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Committee Members

Chair	Aaron Silverstein
Member	Curtis Cheek
Member	Mitch Dunitz