


APPEAL	NABC+ TWO
Subject	Claim
DIC	Nancy Boyd
Event	IMP Pairs
Session	2 nd Final
Date	March 14, 2015

BD#	3
VUL	E-W
DLR	S

Cheri Bjerkan	
♠	A10752
♥	874
♦	Q92
♣	AK

Dennis Kasle	
♠	KJ8
♥	Q63
♦	KJ63
♣	952

	
Pam Wittes	
♠	Q4
♥	AK10
♦	854
♣	QJ1084

Roger Bates	
♠	963
♥	J952
♦	A107
♣	763

West	North	East	South
			1♣
P	1♠	P	1NT
P	2♦⁽¹⁾	P	3♣
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Final Contract	3NT by South
Opening Lead	♦3
Table Result	Down 1, N/S -50
Director Ruling	3NT by S, Down 2, N/S -100
Screening Ruling	3NT by S, Down 3, N/S -150
Comm. Decision	3NT by S, Down 1, N/S -50

(1) New minor forcing; not alerted

The Facts: East called the Director to question South's claim before Board 4 started. The play had proceeded with four rounds of diamonds. On the fourth diamond there was a heart pitch from the North hand, a club by East and a spade by South. West switched to a club. Declarer played a heart toward the ten and then claimed when West won the queen.

The Ruling: Given that declarer failed to unblock the clubs, caused the blockage with the heart pitch from the North hand and did not mention the club blockage in her claim, she was not given credit for pitching the ♠K on the ♥K. The play was projected that after West wins, he would lead a heart to the ace, followed by a club to the K after which the declarer would 'wake up'. A low spade from the North hand (the

♠A followed by another was deemed too unlikely), would result in the E/W getting a spade trick. The result was adjusted to 3N by South, down 2, N/S -100.

The Appeal: Initially, E/W appealed the ruling of down two, presenting an argument for down three. Though the appeal was made in a timely manner, N/S had already left the tournament site. The screening director, after considering E/W's argument, changed the result to down 3, alleviating the immediate need for a committee. The following day, N/S were informed of the decision. N/S chose to appeal the later ruling of down 3.

South, East and West appeared at the hearing.

Statements made by the Appealing Side:

This was the first board of the session. When interviewed later in the session, South said she would have made the unblocking ♣K discard on the third heart. Because of the ambiguity in the original claim, she reluctantly accepted the initial ruling of down 2, but she rejected the hypothetical play of ♠A and another spade as being farfetched. She said that she pitched a heart from dummy (rather than a safer spade) to try to deflect the defense from a more damaging spade shift.

Statements made by the Non-Appealing Side:

East asked South to state a line. She did not elaborate, so he asked her specifically what she would do on a heart return. Instead of answering, someone (South or East – disputed) called the Director. Later, East said that on the hypothetical line on which South fails to find the unblocking discard and instead leads a second club to dummy, ace and a spade is a valid alternative, which he asserted was mathematically superior to the posited line of a low spade to the queen. Moreover, East contended that a player who had played poorly enough to reach that position should not be given the benefit of finding the winning play at the end.

The Decision: The Committee rejected the premise of the initial ruling. They thought that declarer, faced with the club blockage after a heart return would surely find the unblocking discard. Furthermore, they judged that the heart return itself was extremely unlikely. West had already played a club instead of a more obvious high spade, so he would not be returning the suit that Declarer was playing herself. Accordingly, the result was changed back to the original claim of 3NT by South, Down 1, N/S -50.

The debate between down 2 and down 3 was no longer relevant. However, the AC determined that a low spade (as in the original ruling) is the superior percentage play versus ace and another spade (as in the amended ruling) by a ratio of 5 to 2.

The Committee: Ron Gerard (Chair), Bart Bramley (Scribe), Aaron Silverstein, Jan Jansma and Ish Delmonte

Commentary:

Wildavsky – The AC decision is well reasoned. While I can understand the contrary point of view I believe the AC made the right decision here. This was a controversial case, in part because it was believed at the time that it could change the winner of the event. This turned out to not be the case.

Martel – I don't think the committee's considering the likelihood of W leading a heart is relevant (or at any rate, only relevant knowing S hand).

Marques – This case is very different from the typical bad claim. South didn't state all possible lines of play, but this doesn't mean that she has gone astray to the point of forgetting to unblock the club King if needed. Even with the benefit of the doubt to the opponents, the sequence of events seems to indicate that South was operating in a normal frame of mind when she claimed. Good decision by the AC.

Kooijman – I think it to be enough to decide that declarer will unblock the ♣K in case of a heart return, leading to one off. That is the vital issue. No need, nor recommended, to expose the superior bridge knowledge of the committee.

Goldsmith – Contested claims are hard. This time, the AC gave declarer too much credit. She didn't foresee the club blockage problem before she claimed, and she didn't mention the unblocking play in her claim statement, so for a player who had played the hand as she did, failing to unblock is a careless play, not an irrational one. East even gave declarer a chance to say, "if you return a heart, I can pitch the ♣K on the high heart," but she didn't. Yes, this declarer is good enough to see the unblocking play when she's playing normally; when she's playing carelessly, however, which is how claimers must, then she might not.

The laws say to resolve any doubtful points against the claimer, and whether declarer would take six or seven tricks after a heart return and a club continuation is definitely doubtful. Down three.

Woolsey – This is a difficult case. The problem is that it is clear that declarer didn't see the entry problem, since if she had she certainly would have discarded a spade rather than a heart on the fourth diamond. On her line of play she could have gone down 2 with 8 top tricks if the clubs had been 5-1. Of course she should see the unblocking discard after West returns a heart, but she might not. She did not state the unblock in her claim.

On the other hand, how likely is it that West would find a heart return? He has already attacked clubs, he has seen declarer attack hearts, and he failed to make an obvious spade shift earlier. Yes, in theory he could work out declarer's exact hand at this point, but in practice that just wasn't going to happen. It is proper to make the adjustment on the assumption of what is likely to happen, not on an extremely unlikely defense. For this reason, I agree with the committee's decision.

I'm concerned about the statement that E/W filed the appeal in a timely manner but N/S had already left the playing site. What is a timely manner? If a pair is permitted to file an appeal after the session is complete, that allows them to wait until the opponents have left the site so the opponents will not know about the appeal and be able

to present their side. If the appeal was filed before the session was over, as should be required, why weren't N/S told during the session?

At any rate, E/W got what they deserved. They had already received a favorable ruling because the director was not a good enough bridge player to realize that West would never be returning a heart. They tried for more on a ridiculous technicality, and got less. Sometimes there is justice.