

## Law 20F – Explanation of Calls

This law provides generally that, upon enquiry, players have a duty to explain their partnership agreements in relation to calls made and alternatives available. This obligation is not varied where a player's hand diverges from the partnership agreement. Let us take the following:

Example 16: WNES

1♥ 3♣\* Pass 3♠\*\*

North has ♠Q6 ♥6 ♦953 ♣AQJ8652 and thought he showed a weak hand with long clubs. But the agreement is that it shows ♦ + ♠, so 3♣ is a mistaken bid. This is not an infraction. South alerts 3♣ and bids 3♠. Without having seen the alert it is likely that North will interpret 3♠ in accordance with his own understanding of his 3♣ bid: it shows long spades. But having seen the alert he realizes his mistake and knows that 3♠ shows preference for spades over diamonds. It is his obligation to alert the 3♠-bid and to explain it as such. This means that he has put himself in the awkward position that he has received unauthorized information which then limits his side's choices in the subsequent auction, but which also helps him to give the correct information about the partnership agreements. In that respect the knowledge about his mistake is not considered to be unauthorized.

We take the same start of the auction but now North has ♠KJ874 ♥94 ♦AQ1083 ♣6. This time it is South who appears to have forgotten—he does not alert 3♣. That is an infraction, but North must not draw attention to it explicitly. In particular he must not tell the opponents that partner should have alerted 3♣. It might be unavoidable that his partner discovers his mistake implicitly, in which case the opponents will also become aware of it.

Example 17:

Suppose the auction continues:

WNES 1♥ 3♣ 3♥ 4♣\*

Given the non-alert of 3♣ North may assume that South supports his supposed club holding, but according to the agreements 4♣ shows a strong hand with trump support in either ♦ or ♠. So he should alert it and if asked explain it as such. This obligation supersedes the requirement described in Law 20F5(a) not to indicate in any manner that a mistake has been made. That sentence tells the player to conform

to Law 73A1: ‘communication between partners during the auction and play shall be effected only by means of calls and plays’.

Providing alerts and answering questions is not considered to be a legal way of communicating with partner but solely with the opponents. Shaking one’s head or frowning one’s brow does tell partner that something strange has happened and is not allowed. It would create a situation where both partners had UI. Nonetheless partner hears the explanation of 4♣ and then has the obligation to call the TD and to tell him that he failed to alert the 3♣ bid, after which he must bid as if he had not heard his partner’s alert and explanation. To be more precise, he has UI so may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by UI if the other call or play is a logical alternative

### **Requesting an Explanation**

There are some common misconceptions about the restrictions associated with the act of asking for explanations of calls made. It should be obvious that asking such questions should not automatically be related to a decision about one’s own action, though the answer of course might influence that decision. Discouraging a player from requesting an explanation simply because that player intends to pass anyway cannot be right. Such an approach creates unauthorized information by definition. Players do however need to be aware that the content and manner of their questions may potentially create UI, even when the questions themselves are legal.

A player may not ask about a call if his intention is to induce a mistaken explanation. The laws also prohibit asking for the benefit of partner. Therefore a player should not ask about a call if he already knows the opponent’s agreement