

Law 21 - Misinformation

If it becomes clear before the auction period has ended (i.e., before the opening lead is faced) that a player has explained his partner's call incorrectly, then the opponent who made the last call for his side is allowed to change his call if the TD is convinced that he would not have made this call having received the correct information

This has led to a major change in the laws. Under the previous code, a player becoming aware of his own wrong explanation (or a missed or slow Alert) was obliged to call the TD immediately and correct it, he is now allowed to wait [Law 20F4(a)] until after the final pass of the auction (which is not the same as the end of the auction period). As before, a player may do this immediately. This diminishes for example the possibility of encountering a lucrative penalty double.

Example 18: WNES 2♥ Pass 4♥ Pass Pass

North has asked about the meaning of 2♥ and was told by East: 'strong'. With North on the brink of closing the auction with a final pass, East corrects his explanation to say that 2♥ shows a weak two. It does not take a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that East doesn't have much, only bidding 4♥ after the strong bid of 2♥. And now it appears that West is also weak. So North suddenly has an automatic double, including values he knows his partner must have. Assume North has something like ♠AQ7 ♥8 ♦K10984 ♣Q1052. The TD won't need to give North relief under Law 21; he will call at his second turn with full knowledge of the E/W accident.

If East however waits to correct his mistaken explanation until after the final pass by North the TD might not necessarily now give North the option of changing his final call. For N/S to receive redress, they would need to show that they would have changed one or more of their calls with the proper information. This is a more challenging argument to make since neither North nor South are entitled to double just because they know E/W have had a bidding misunderstanding.

This is another situation where the TD has to decide whether he will allow a player to change a call [Law 21B1(a)]. When the TD uses his judgement he needs to be very careful not to provide extraneous information to the other players at the table and he must not reveal anything about a player's hand by the way he delivers his decision.

The correct procedure is to first explain to the player under what conditions he is allowed to change his call. In some situations the Director might then have to investigate further before informing the table that the change either will or will not be allowed. If the TD later decides otherwise, he applies Law 21B3 and awards an adjusted score.

While the player does not automatically get to change his call, he is not held to the same standard as with a UI case. After all, the player who was misinformed is the non-offender. In fact, he should be allowed the change if the second call fulfills the conditions for a logical alternative: i.e., if a significant proportion of the players would seriously consider the call and some would actually choose it.

The wording in Law 21B2 has been changed to reflect the normal UI standard for withdrawn calls by the offending side. Law 21B3 was not changed. While it only refers specifically to the taking away of any advantage gained by the offenders, TDs are reminded that Law 12B1 empowers the TD to also redress the non-offenders for any damaged caused by an irregularity.