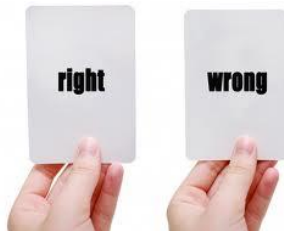


Ethical Dilemmas (Part 1)



Multiple choice - What should you do when your partner gives an explanation of your bid that doesn't match your hand?



1. Nothing
2. Call the Director
3. Go and talk to the Director away from the table
4. Tell your opponents
5. Sigh/Roll your eyes
6. Leave

While #6 may be an attractive alternative, the correct answer is actually #1. Option #3 is obviously the one that feels right, because when I'm directing that's what most people seem to do. While I am sure that most players think that they are trying to be "ethical", the Laws specifically require that, at least for the time being, you should do nothing.

So, when do you say that something has gone wrong? Well, that depends....

Case 1: Your partner has described your agreement correctly, but you don't have that hand – for instance, you forgot the system, you missorted your hand, or you miscounted your points. In this case, you have no responsibility to tell your opponents and, in fact, you shouldn't say anything. (BUT you must be absolutely sure that your partner has described your agreement correctly.)

Case 2: Your partner has misdescribed your agreement, and you become declarer or dummy. In this case, you should call the director and tell the opponents after the auction is finished and before the opening lead is made. The reason for calling the director is that he may be able to take some action which could reduce the problems caused by the misexplanation.

Case 3: Your partner has misdescribed your agreement, and you become a defender. In this case, you must not say anything until the play of the hand is completely finished. Now fess up. If the opponents ended up with a poor score and may have done something different with the right information, the director may adjust the score. (Note that just because the opponents got the wrong explanation, that doesn't mean that the director will improve their score. Each situation is considered on a case by case basis.) The reason you don't do anything until the end of the hand is that as a defender, your partner is still very much involved in the hand. You cannot "wake him up" that you don't have the hand he thinks you have by pointing out his error.

The absolute worst thing that you can do is say nothing when you know that partner has – however innocently – misled the opponents. That is unethical.

This article looks at the player's responsibility in relation to what the opponents need to be told. There are further issues relating to what action you might take in the auction when you know because of the explanation that you and partner are not on the same wavelength. I will consider those in the next issue.