

THE WAITING GAME



What NOT to do while waiting for the Director

Sometimes the director might be busy with another call, and at other times it may take them anything up to 10 seconds to arrive.

What do you do while you're waiting? This article is not going to answer that – instead it will provide some advice on what NOT to do in various situations:

1) You've revoked (or so the opponents claim – *as if!*)

The important thing is that should never try to prove whether there has or has not been a revoke by looking in the tricks that have already been played. The Laws strictly prohibit players from looking at quitted tricks...and the absolute very worst thing you can do is to start turning over other players' cards. What inevitably happens is that someone will claim that another player moved their cards, etc, etc, and the facts will never be able to be determined.

So, leave the cards alone! When the director arrives at the table to investigate the accusation of revoke, he is only interested in whether it has allegedly happened on the most recent trick, or in a few circumstances, on the trick immediately preceding. If the revoke may have happened any earlier, the director will not care – there is nothing that can be done until the hand is over. He will tell you to play it out. And there is no point anyone saying, "But, but, but, the play would have been completely different." The director is aware of this and the Laws exist to ensure that the non-offenders are not damaged in any way. At the end of the hand, with the director in attendance, the played cards can be turned over in an orderly manner; and the truth will be revealed. If a revoke has occurred the director will rule accordingly as per the Laws.

2) You've made an insufficient bid

Keep quiet. The worst thing you can do is to try to explain yourself...for example, "I didn't see you opened" or "I thought you bid 1D". In the great majority of cases, the laws provide some way for insufficient bids to be fixed without having any effect on the auction. However, once you open your mouth and start broadcasting to everyone (in particular partner) what you were thinking, you may find that you have blown any protection that the laws give you.

3) You've made a claim and the opponents don't like – or an opponent has made a claim and you don't like it

The Laws specifically state that once a claim is made there can be no further play. What normally happens is that someone says, "Play it out." This is contrary to the Laws of the game. At present, whatever happens after the claim will usually be discounted by the director, but it can be used in evidence against you! So be careful and just wait.

4) You've forgotten what your partner's bid means

You don't have to have a guess and tell everyone, and you definitely don't have to tell the opponents how you are going to take it. They are not entitled to know that. When the director comes, the common procedure is that he will ask you to go away from the table momentarily. While you are away, he will check with your partner as to whether they believe that you have some agreement, and if so he will get your partner to explain it to the opponents (as they are entitled under the Laws) while you cannot hear what is being said. You then return to the table and the auction continues.

5) There is a "dispute"

The dispute may arise for any number of reasons: a player's hand didn't match the explanation given, a player may have called for one card and another player thought they said something else, someone doesn't like the call a player made after their partner's hesitation...Bridge players can think up any number of reasons to engage in "competitive banter". If there is a dispute which requires mediation, call the director and leave it at that. There is seldom anything more frustrating and difficult for the director than to arrive at a table where the players are squabbling with one another. Then, when the director tries to find out what the problem is, the players just continue arguing with each other. Can you blame the director just walking away thinking that the players didn't really want him?

6) Someone is slow

To have to raise this last scenario is a bit embarrassing, and you would think that it wouldn't happen, but it does! This is the situation – one of the players is taking a long time on a hand, and the opponents are getting fractious. Eventually frustration boils over and the director is called. In my experience, when this happens, it always seems that the director is making a ruling at another table at the time and so there is a minor delay. Eventually the director arrives and the players are waiting "patiently", in the middle of the hand. One player will say, "He is taking too long." The director will look bemused and enquire as to why the play isn't continuing when the table is running so late. The reply: "We were waiting for you!" It is true that a player taking more than their share of time is discourteous and may be subject to sanction under the Laws. However, if you call the director on an opponent's slow play and then do not continue play until the director arrives just to make a point, then I am afraid you are even more guilty of delaying the game. If you were to do this on more than one occasion, you shouldn't be surprised if it is you who is penalised!

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