

## **BUSCH BASCH**

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### **When to accept an opponent's infraction...**

Many laws governing infractions first allow the infractor's left hand opponent (LHO) the option of accepting the infraction, and if LHO doesn't accept it, then the various rectifications apply.

This happens with insufficient bids, bids and calls out of turn, leads from the wrong hand and others.

When offered this choice by the director, do not accept the infraction just to be nice. By accepting an infraction, no further rectification is awarded, and you can be giving the opponents a benefit they would not normally be entitled to. Accepting an infraction in many cases can actually work against you. You don't want to be that nice!

However, players are specifically entitled under the laws to select the alternative most beneficial to them, and there are some occasions when accepting the infraction can be to your advantage.

Here are a few examples:

#### **Lead out of turn by declarer**

Either defender can accept it, not just LHO. If you see that declarer is probably going to take a losing finesse, accept it. (Once you accept it, declarer can't correct it.) Conversely, if you can see that the lead might give declarer a finesse that is going to work, don't accept it, and make declarer set up the finesse themselves.

#### **Lead out of turn by defender**

As declarer is playing both hands, they have the option of accepting it no matter which defender led out of turn. Declarer should accept it, for example, if it will give them a ruff and discard, or will be playing around to a tenace<sup>1</sup> in fourth seat.

They should also be aware that if they don't accept it, the incorrectly led card will be a major penalty card and when the infractor's partner gets on lead (which is immediately if they led at their partner's turn), declarer can demand or deny that suit, and this may allow for a free finesse or a safety play around to an unprotected King in fourth seat.

#### **Opening lead out of turn**

This is more complicated because (a) the presumed declarer won't know what partner is holding and (b) there are further options once the lead is accepted or rejected.



If the auction has resulted in the weak hand being declarer (e.g. after 1D – 1NT auction), you should probably accept the lead and let partner be declarer. If accepting the lead will play through your Kx, then don't accept it and protect your holding by demanding that lead from their partner. Likewise, if the lead was a suit that you've got losers in, don't accept the lead and deny partner from leading that suit.

### **Insufficient bid**

This can be perhaps the most complicated because it requires some understanding of the laws to help you make the right decision.

As a general rule, you should not accept the insufficient bid, because it allows the opponents to have bid their hand at a lower level than normal, and that may work to your disadvantage.

Further, in some circumstances, after you don't accept the insufficient bid, corrective action taken by the insufficient bidder could bar their partner from further bidding, and this could well work in your favour.

However, there are two occasions when you should consider accepting an insufficient bid:

- (a) Accept the insufficient bid if it will allow you to make a bid that you could not make if the bid was corrected to a sufficient level. For example, consider the auction (1D) – 1S – (1H) <sup>2</sup>. If you have a minimal hand and support for spades, accept the 1H bid and bid 1S yourself. Your partner will recognise this as showing a fit, but with insufficient points to bid 2S over a corrected bid by the opponents. Knowing about the fit may let them revalue their hand, and may also assist your side with defence. Similarly, if you can't support spades but hold a heart stopper and 8-10 HCP, you might accept the 1H bid and bid 1NT, thus showing a hand you couldn't show after a 2H bid by RHO.
- (b) Accept the insufficient bid if the offender will be allowed to make a cost-free correction, where the meaning of the insufficient bid might be inconclusive to their partner. Insufficient bidders are allowed a cost-free correction to a bid which means the same as the insufficient bid. However, if you accept the insufficient bid, their partner won't know what the correct bid should be. A common example is 4NT – 4H. Were they intending to show 2 aces and should have bid 5H, or did they think they were answering 4C and were showing 1 ace? By not accepting it, the insufficient bid will be replaced with the correct answer to a 4NT ask, and bidding will continue, but by your accepting it, bidding will still continue but the ace asker will not know how many aces are being shown. (Of course, the 4NT bidder could bid 4NT

again and hope for the right answer this time, but no harm has been done by your acceptance of the insufficient bid.) Or you might have a lead-directing double of the artificial 4H, but might be denied this opportunity if the correction to a bid that means the same is to a different suit.

If you're not au fait with the laws, ask the director to explain all the consequences if you don't accept the insufficient bid. This may involve the player being taken away from the table, but only then will you know the implications of accepting and not accepting.

### **Bid or call out of turn**

There are very few occasions where accepting a bid out of turn can work to your advantage, because depending on the circumstances, the rectifications range from mild (repeat bid made at correct turn) to severe (partner is barred from further bidding).

A final word – make sure you call the director when an infraction occurs. Players cannot make their own rulings at the table. Also, be sure to have the director fully explain to your satisfaction all of the options available to you.

<sup>1</sup> A tenace is a holding of two non-consecutive high cards in a suit, like the AQ or KJ.

<sup>2</sup> Opponent's' bids are shown in brackets..