

Claims and Concessions

This article should be combined with the one written for the TD-course in 2001. It gives some examples of the issues described in that article and it emphasizes some of the remarks.

1. The claiming side is the conceding side at the same time. What you don't claim you concede and visa versa. The sentence: '...if a defender attempts to concede....., no concession has occurred...' in L68B should be read in such way. So the words 'concede' and 'concession' can be replaced by 'claim'.
2. When judging a claim (concession) the TD has to use the criterion 'normal', not supposing that a player will play as an idiot (the laws say 'irrational' but nobody seems able to translate that word for practical use). It is important to make a distinction between an evaluation of what could happen and of an occurrence that already did happen. If a player makes a claim no TD should take into account the possibility that that player might revoke. But if a player makes a claim statement in which he describes a revoke going to occur that is reality.

Let us combine 1 and 2 in an example that was discussed on blml some years ago.

	♠--	
	♥--	
	♦T754	
	♣--	
♠84		♠J6
♥--		♥83
♦J9		♦--
♣--		♣--
	♠97	
	♥T5	
	♦--	
	♣--	

South is declarer in a diamond contract and East on lead plays ♥8. West, a good player, now concedes 3 tricks, showing the ♦J to win. East immediately objects and tells his partner that he always will make both J and 9 of course. According to 68B play has to be continued, with some apparently UI for West (East should be told that he is offending the laws severely by talking like this). Assuming that West now discards a spade he wins the obvious 2 tricks. Does the TD allow this? No he shouldn't. With this aberration shown it is not impossible that West will ruff with ♦J to curtail play; that is what his statement means. He does not deserve more than 1 trick.

Take the following now: in the same situation West claims 2 tricks without any statement. If south calls the TD asking for 3 tricks because West might ruff the ♥8 the TD should firmly deny this possibility. West can not be forced to play stupid bridge and his statement in itself shows that he understood the situation.

3. After a claim play ceases and any attempt to continue should be voided, says L 68D. We have the Maastricht case where declarer claimed on a double squeeze and was asked to continue play after which he wasn't able to execute the squeeze. It is a source for problems.

	♠--	
	♥8	
	♦J87	
	♣--	
♠--		♠83
♥--		♥T
♦A94		♦--
♣7		♣9
	♠A3	
	♥--	
	♦K3	
	♣--	

With West on lead declarer South claims 2 tricks. West wants to continue and plays ♣7 after which declarer makes 3 tricks by ruffing low in hand and playing ♦K thereafter. TD called and East telling that West should have played ♦A and small of course. The laws want us to award EW their 2 tricks, telling to forget what happened after the claim and applying L70A. There is a feeling among some of us that this is too generous to EW and those like the idea to introduce the possibility of a split score.

To give my opinion about the Maastricht decision (allowing claimer all tricks) I translate a sentence I wrote in a Dutch TD course book. Assuming a claim and play though to be continued: 'If claimer makes a trick less it is obvious for everybody that his claim was defective and he receives a trick less of course'. Formally spoken this is not true, it is the duty of the TD to apply L70A and with the sentence above I express my feeling that 'any doubtful points shall be resolved against the claimer' should lead to this conclusion.

4. The opponents of the claiming side are the (not) acquiescing side. Acquiescence occurs when that side makes a call on the next board. Up till that moment objections made should be ruled in favour of this side if they could win one or more extra tricks. A famous example appeared in a EBL TD course more than 20 years ago:

	♠KQJT	
	♥--	
	♦--	
	♣--	
♠52		♠A2
♥3		♥8
♦7		♦--
♣--		♣2
	♠5	
	♥A	
	♦A	
	♣A	

NT, South declarer, dummy to lead. If south now claims 3 tricks conceding one to the ♠A and the result is entered on the score sheet the opponents still might discover that upholding

the ♠A brings South in big problems. If they do the TD has to award them 3 tricks instead of 1. In fact opponents have the right to look at the case double dummy and to discover defensive play they never would have found at the table.

5. Once acquiescence occurs the position of claimer's opponents becomes really weak. L69B tells that they only receive a too late contested trick when they could not have lost it by any normal play. This in my opinion is a too lenient attitude towards the claimer who in such cases might get a trick he very well could have lost had play continued. Appeal committees seem to support this opinion. Let us take a case from the European Championships in Malta:

	♠KQJ5	
	♥KJ65	
	♦8	
	♣8653	
♠8632		♠A74
♥84		♥QT92
♦K5		♦Q76
♣AKQT4		♣J97
	♠T9	
	♥A73	
	♦AJT9432	
	♣2	

South played 4♦X. ♣A with East showing an odd number. Switch to ♥8 for 5, 9 and A. South played ♦A and J claiming for 1 off (conceding 1 club, 2 trump and 1 spade trick(s). EW acquiesced. Just within protest time they approached the TD telling that playing a heart now gives them an extra trick. The TD considered switching to spades or clubs to be normal play (which includes careless and inferior as you now!) and didn't give the trick. The AC decided that West knew South to have a singleton club, that East had encouraged in hearts and that anything else than continuing hearts would be exceeding the 'normal' range. Questionable but interesting. Probably partly based on the feeling that South shouldn't be rewarded for his clumsy claim. And possibly another example to allow split scores in claim cases?

It is worth to explain why EW agreed with the claim. Players normally trust their opponents so West assumed South to have a heart less and a spade more, in which case the claim is valid.

Let us take another example:

	♠--	
	♥T	
	♦	
	♣	
♠--		♠9
♥8		♥--
♦A7		♦9
♣--		♣5
	♠T	
	♥--	
	♦J6	

♣--

With West on lead South declarer in a diamond contract claims 2 tricks. EW acquiesce. Why? Because West deduces from the claim that declarer has all remaining trumps. And is playing ♦A now irrational? I don't think so, but I don't like South keeping these 2 tricks. A problem within the laws, in my opinion. When we look again at the case in 4 above I don't object against 3 tricks for South as soon as E or W has called on the next board.

6. Contested claims as described in L70 are the main contribution to the claim cases. Zillions of examples exist and it seems impossible to implement a clear approach for decisions. That probably explains why the opinion can be heard only to allow tricks which can't be lost by any legal play in case of an incomplete statement. That certainly is not the intention of the laws. If there is a no or an incomplete statement the claiming side still receives the tricks it claimed if it would have won those without any doubt had play be continued. We do not force the claimer to play irrational.

	♠J	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣87	
♠964		♠
♥		♥
♦		♦
♣		♣J96
	♠AK8	
	♥	
	♦	
	♣	

South play a spade contract and when East leads the ♣J he claims the last 3 tricks without any statement. West shows his 3 trumps and they call the TD. Is it irrational to ruff low? Not in my opinion. West gets a trick.

	♠T762	
	♥QJ5	
	♦JT8	
	♣J87	
♠J985		♠AKQ43
♥--		♥943
♦AK632		♦54
♣K654		♣AQ3
	♠--	
	♥AKT8762	
	♦Q97	
	♣T92	

European pairs in 2001. East declares 7♠ (well bid!). ♥A ruffed, small club to the Q and another heart ruff. Now the claim for 13 tricks. North asks an explanation and gets: I play a

spade to my hand, ruff the last heart and cross to ♣A. Now North shows him his 4 trumps and calls the TD. What do you decide?

Interesting case. When East plays a round of trumps he will discover the 4-0 break (players are supposed to see what will happen at the table, to see the fall of an honour, to count to 13; but if it appears they didn't that is a fact to include). And then it is not within the range of normal bridge to concede the contract by ruffing the 3rd heart and not to catch the ♠T. There is no normal way not to make 13 tricks in a European championship.

Another interesting case presented before:

	♠AKQ8	
	♥AQJ9	
	♦J6	
	♣874	
♠J974		♠2
♥K87643		♥52
♦AK4		♦QT987532
♣--		♣63
	♠T653	
	♥T	
	♦--	
	♣AKQJT952	

West has opened 1♥ and South plays 6♣. He ruffs the ♦A lead and claims 13 tricks without any statement.

Another South plays 7♣ after a 1♥ opening from West. He ruffs the ♦A lead and claims 13 tricks saying that he will draw the trumps and then will play the spades. Now West shows him his 4 - card.

The player in 7♣ aware of the problem with still ♥AQ on the table will always make his contract, he doesn't have to finesse even. But without any statement it is possible to play the ♥A from the table before discovering the bad ♠-break and though a reasonable bridge player will then still make 13 tricks it is too much to award him all of those.

7. This leaves us with L71 where the claimer/conceder himself discovers to have made a mistake. L 71 is by far the worst written law in the book. Given what it wants to say it is sufficient to describe that a concession will be cancelled if within the protest time it appears that the opponents were given too many tricks, either by a mistake in counting the tricks or by a concession of a trick that would not have been lost by any normal play.

The last full sentence of L71C has been removed in 1998.

An example from an ACBL-National:

	♠2	
	♥AQ53	
	♦AJ6542	
	♣76	
♠QJT64		♠953
♥K		♥J872
♦--		♦KQ97
♣AKQJ543		♣T8
	♠AK87	
	♥T964	
	♦T83	
	♣92	

West is declarer in 4♠X. North leads ♦A ruffed. Declarer crosses to dummy with ♣T and discards his ♥K on ♦K. Then he plays ♠9 winning the trick and ♠3 for ♠A. South plays ♥4 ruffed. West plays ♣A and K (North ♦5, East ♥7) after which South concedes the contract, mumbling: ‘making four’. The position at that moment:

	♠	
	♥AQ5	
	♦J65	
	♣	
♠Q		♠5
♥		♥J87
♦		♦Q9
♣KQJ54		♣
	♠K8	
	♥T96	
	♦T	
	♣	

Playing the next board South realized that 4♠ wasn’t making and he called the TD. What should the decision be?

Notice that it doesn’t make any difference at what moment a claimer discovers his mistake as long as the appeal time isn’t over yet.

The kern of the problem is the question whether it is within the range of normal to ruff this or a next club and not to draw trumps.

Let us make it more interesting:

Assume West did claim his contract when playing the ♣K and NS agreed (acquiesced). We seem to say now that, assuming South calls for a ruling later, it is irrational not to ruff in South and not to draw trumps, leading to the decision that the contract is 3 off. And that it is normal not to draw trumps in the case above. The behavior of South wasn’t that different was it?