

## Towards Guidelines for Claims Adjudication of Contested Claims

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## Goal of This Lecture

TDs everywhere ask for guidelines for adjudicating contested claims. We will look at some of the questions that such guidelines should answer.

We are not concerned with ordinary two-way guesses. The claimer will always get those wrong. Instead, our main question is the following:

*How big mistakes are within the realm of "normal plays"?*

### **Disclaimer**

Some may walk away from this lecture with more questions than answers.

### **Requirements**

Good advance knowledge of Law 70 and Law 71 is assumed.

## Some Recurring Questions

... that we will consider are:

- Will a player always handle simple suit combinations correctly?
- Which orders of cashing tricks are considered "normal"?
- At which time would it be "normal" to concede a losing trick?
- How badly can declarer play when he has forgotten about a trump?

## About the Examples

In all examples in this presentation, South is declarer and makes a claim which is contested by the defenders.

Non-trivially resolved contested claims by defenders are rare, and we will not consider them here.

## Suit Combinations

A well-known suit combination consists of AK9xx opposite Q10xx (or similar). Declarer, needing 5 tricks from this suit, claims the rest of the tricks.

Of course, the suit is 4-0. Do we allow the claim?

Questions to consider:

- Would any reasonable player ever not be aware of the problem?
- Why would a good player claim without first saying, "I play the ace".
- Why did an elite player once claim holding AK8xx opposite Q10xx?

## Blockages

If declarer's only problem is to get four tricks from AQJx opposite Kx, blocking the suit by playing an honour from the wrong hand is not a "normal" play.

Some combinations involving small cards can be more tricky. For example, declarer may hold AKQ32 opposite 7654. Here it would be a "normal" play to squander a necessary entry before going about with the main suit.

## Cashing Order (1)

		♠ Q	
		♥ K98	
		♦ -	
		♣ -	
♠ -	N	♠ T	
♥ 6	W	♥ -	E
♦ -		♦ -	
♣ QJT	S	♣ 985	
		♠ J6	
		♥ 3	
		♦ -	
		♣ 3	

Spades are trumps. South claims the rest, making no statement.

East objects because he has a trump remaining.

Should we allow the claim?

No. If South believes there are no more trumps out, he might stop drawing trumps even if he can easily afford another round.

## Cashing Order (2)

		♠ -	
		♥ -	
		♦ 54	
		♣ 32	
♠ -	N	♠ -	
♥ -	W	♥ 9872	E
♦ A		♦ -	
♣ JT7	S	♣ -	
		♠ A3	
		♥ -	
		♦ KQ	
		♣ -	

Spades are trumps. South claims the rest, making no statement.

West objects because he has the ♦ A.

How many tricks for the defence?

Two. If South believes everything is good, he might as well draw his trumps first, even if he clearly can never gain by doing so, whichever cards are remaining.

## Cashing Order (3)

	♠	-	
	♥	A64	
	♦	-	
	♣	KJ62	
♠	-	N	♠9
♥	T87	W	♥9
♦	QT8		♦J
♣	7	S	♣T953
	♠	3	
	♥	QJ	
	♦	-	
	♣	AQ84	

Spades are trumps. South claims the rest, making no statement.

East objects because he has the ♠9.

How many tricks for E-W?

Four. If South believes everything is good, he might play his trump first.

Actual ruling: One. Would anyone really ever play such a low trump first? But if it were the ♠8, we would give E-W four tricks.

## Cashing Order (4)

	♠	-	
	♥	-	
	♦	KQT7	
	♣	J7	
♠	-	N	♠86
♥	-		♥97
♦	9865	W	♦A
♣	T9	S	♣4
	♠	K	
	♥	T8	
	♦	-	
	♣	A86	

Notrump. South claims the rest (he knows the ♥8 and ♦7 are not high).

East objects because he has the ♦A.

How many tricks for E-W?

Three. South might cash his major-suit winners, then cross to the ♣J to cash diamonds.

Actual ruling: Two. Cashing both major-suit winners is not normal.

## When to Concede (1)

	♠	KQ953	
	♥	K74	
	♦	QJ82	
	♣	8	
♠	-	N	♠
♥	-	W	♥
♦	-		♦
♣	J	S	♣
	♠	AJT4	
	♥	5	
	♦	AKT73	
	♣	AKQ	

South plays 6♣ and immediately claims 12 tricks. East wants South to state a plan. Now South says, "oh, I have 13 easy top tricks, as all of dummy's losers go away on clubs and diamonds."

How many tricks for South?

Twelve. When he thinks he must concede a heart, he might as well do so immediately, especially when he might try to slip it past West's ♥A.

## When to Concede (2)

	♠	AQ	
	♥	Q	
	♦	86	
	♣	J9765432	
♠	T864	N	♠K932
♥	J842		♥KT97653
♦	KQT94	W	♦J
♣	-	S	♣K
	♠	J75	
	♥	A	
	♦	A7532	
	♣	AQT8	

South plays 5♣. He wins the opening lead of the ♦K, plays the ♣A, and takes the spade finesse. When East produces the ♠K, South claims 11 tricks.

When discovering that East has no diamond to play, South wants 12 tricks.

Should we give South his trick?

Yes. South would not overlook the possibility of discarding.

## When to Concede (3)

	♠-	
	♥T7	
	♦7	
	♣7	
♠76	N	♠QT98
♥A9	W	♥-
♦-		♦-
♣-	S	♣-
	♠J3	
	♥-	
	♦-	
	♣T6	

South plays 3♣, needing another three tricks for his contract. West is on lead. South is aware that the ♦7 is good. Nevertheless, he says to West, "if you have the ♠Q, I make 10 tricks." West says that he doesn't, and 9 tricks are scored.

When discovering that there are no more trumps out, South wants an overtrick. Does he get it?

No. He would have let a spade shift run to his hand, for 9 tricks only.

## The Only (and Simple) Chance

	♠AK8	
	♥KQ	
	♦K97	
	♣JT983	
♠9652	N	♠QJ
♥JT985	W	♥72
♦A6		♦JT8532
♣A5	S	♣762
	♠T743	
	♥A643	
	♦Q4	
	♣KQ4	

3NT. Heart lead, ♣A knocked out, another heart, ♦A knocked out. South then claims 10 tricks.

When discovering that the ♠QJ are doubleton, South wants 11 tricks.

Should we give South his trick?

No. When not realizing the potential of the ♠10, discarding spades on clubs is a normal play.

## The Best Chance

	♠T65	
	♥T52	
	♦A987	
	♣Q75	
♠AKJ7	N	♠Q982
♥6	W	♥974
♦KJ6542		♦Q3
♣84	S	♠JT93
	♠43	
	♥AKQJ83	
	♦T	
	♣AK62	

4♥. West cashes the ♠AK and shifts to a diamond. South claims the rest, saying that he will ruff his last club with the ♥10. E-W object because neither hearts nor clubs are breaking, and the players agree to 10 tricks instead (TD not called).

When discovering that the club length is with the hearts, South wants 11 tricks.

Should we give South his trick?

Opinions are divided.

## Trumps Are Out (I)

	♠KJ975	
	♥Q87	
	♦3	
	♣K653	
♠63	N	♠T8
♥AK54	W	♥3
♦AKJ7		♦Q9542
♣A94	S	♠QJT82
	♠AQ42	
	♥JT962	
	♦T86	
	♣7	

4♣. ♥A, ♦A, ♥K, heart ruff. South then claims the rest minus the ♣A.

East objects because he has the ♠10.

Do we accept the claim?

Yes. Clearly South is aware of the risk of another heart ruff, and he knows that he can afford to ruff high and plans to do so.

## Trumps Are Out (2)

		♠975	
		♥Q	
		♦83	
		♣6	
♠—		N	♠J863
♥542	W		♥93
♦J7			♦Q
♣94		S	♣—
		♠AKQT42	
		♥8	
		♦—	
		♣—	

Spade contract. Declarer finally won a trick and claims the rest, making no statement.

East objects because he has the ♠J guarded.

Do we accept the claim?

Yes. South knows that trumps are out and will notice, to his surprise, that they are 4-0. He will enter dummy for a spade finesse.

## Trumps Are Out (3)

		♠975	
		♥Q42	
		♦K	
		♣7	
♠—		N	♠J863
♥52	W		♥987
♦J97			♦—
♣9642		S	♣3
		♠AKQT42	
		♥T	
		♦3	
		♣—	

Spade contract. West showed at least 5-5 in the minors in the bidding; East is marked with a diamond void at this point.

Declarer finally won a trick and claims the rest, making no statement.

East objects because he has the ♠J guarded.

Do we accept the claim?

As before, South will enter dummy. Might he play a diamond?

## Trumps Are Out (4)

		♠94	
		♥42	
		♦AKQ8643	
		♣83	
♠AT7		N	♠—
♥QT985	W		♥AKJ73
♦T95			♦J72
♣K6		S	♠QT742
		♠KQJ86532	
		♥6	
		♦—	
		♣AJ95	

Spade contract. E-W play the ♥AK. South ruffs and plays trumps. West wins the second and shifts to a diamond. South then faces his hand, claiming the rest.

West objects because he has the ♠10.

Do we accept the claim?

South must have forgotten the ♠10 for a claim to make sense. Might he cross with a diamond after cashing the ♦AKQ?

## Summary

Guidelines for claims should include examples of various kinds which illustrate how big errors we can imagine under "normal play".

Some recurring questions which should be answered are, given that declarer made no statement:

- Is *any* order of cashing supposed high cards "normal"?
- Is *any* time for conceding a trick "normal"?
- Is *any* way of crossing to draw trumps "normal"?

Final disclaimer: We cannot make guidelines that cover all possible cases.

Nevertheless, having collections of examples – also simple ones – is invaluable for TDs who want to make consistent rulings.