

Making a Claim - Part Two

"I'm never going to make a claim," you say to yourself. "Why should I worry about all this?" Even if you don't want to learn to claim - a mistake, in my opinion - your opponents won't feel the same way. Claims will become more frequent when you graduate from the EZ Game, and they can be confusing - even a little intimidating. What do you do when you don't understand a claim, or don't agree with a claim? **You call the director.** Let's look at some common situations.

- ♣ With six tricks left to play, declarer puts his hand down and says, "The rest are mine." This is **not** a correct claim. Declarer has not stated his line of play, and it's not your responsibility to state it for him. Your first option is simply to ask declarer to state his line of play. If declarer says, "All right, let's play it out," you should immediately call the director. Once a claim has been made, **all play ceases.**
- ♣ If you're uncomfortable asking declarer to state a line of play, call the director. Here's what the director will do.
 - The director will ask declarer to restate his claim statement, and the director will not accept the statement, "The rest are mine." Declarer will be required to state how he planned to play the hand. (Reminder: **Dummy must remain silent.**)
 - Next, the director will ask you and your partner to face your cards. If there is any way you or your partner can get an extra trick, given declarer's statement, the director will help you find it.
- ♣ Until the director is at the table, do not make any "declarer-helpful" statements, such as, "How are you going to get rid of your losing spade?" or "I still have a trump." And don't show declarer your hand!

A Few Good Tips

What if declarer makes a claim statement that you find confusing, or that doesn't mention cards you think might be good? Call the director, of course. Here are some red flags that suggest you might want to contest a claim.

- ♣ You still hold a trump, and declarer's claim didn't include anything about pulling that trump.
- ♣ You hold a card that you think should take a trick, and declarer's claim didn't mention that card.
- ♣ Your partner is on lead, and you think that partner could make a play that would earn your side another trick.
- ♣ Declarer talked so quickly that you simply couldn't follow what he meant.

An Example

Let's look at an actual claim from the Wednesday night 49er game.

♠K9	
♥---	
♦---	
♣543	
♠4	♠865
♥QT6	♥7
♦K	♦---
♣---	♣9
♠---	
♥---	
♦AJ987	
♣---	

Declarer, South, was in a diamond contract. Trick eight was won by the East player with the ♠A. South then put her hand down and said, "My hand is good." As you can see, West still has a trump, the ♦K. She looked very puzzled, and called me to the table. Is there any way she can take a trick with her ♦K?

Remember, her partner is on lead. If her partner leads the ♣9, declarer will trump and West can overtrump! If declarer trumps with the ♦A, West's ♦K will take a later trick. Given this situation, the East-West pair was awarded a trick with the ♦K.

Take another look at this situation. Suppose declarer had won trick eight in the dummy? Will West still take a trick with the ♦K? Yes, if declarer makes a claim stating that she will trump a card from dummy, and then her hand is good. Can you make a better claim statement?

Finally, what if declarer had won trick eight in her hand? Now she claims, stating, "My hand is good." West, holding a trump, should call the director. Will West still get a trick with her ♦K? In this instance, the director's ruling is, "No." One always assumes that a suit is played from the top down. When South plays the ♦A, the ♦K will fall.

Remember, when declarer makes a claim that is incomplete, that ignores an outstanding trump or high card, or is simply confusing, **call the director**.

Can a Defender Claim?

Sometimes a defender will make a claim, perhaps stating, "I'm going to pull your last trump and then my ace and king of clubs are good." A defender can make a claim; but if that claim is incorrect, the defense may lose a few extra tricks. Not only does the director need to look at possible tricks for the declarer, she also needs to consider the fact the defenders now have unauthorized information. You should probably postpone defensive claims until you're comfortable making claims when declaring a hand.