

Oops! I Forgot!

Your partner is not the only one who occasionally forgets a bid. Once in a blue moon, you might forget a bid, too. In fact, it's likely that you will forget every new convention at least once in your bridge career. What happens if you do? An example will help.

You and your partner have decided to add a new convention - *Flannery* - a convention in which an opening bid of 2D shows 11 - 15 HCPs and four spades and five hearts. You're the dealer, and holding six diamonds and seven HCPs, you decide to open 2D. To your horror, you hear partner promptly announce, "Alert!" Oops! You forgot your new convention. What do you do now?

First, you must not give any indication that something has gone wrong - easier said than done, I know. Second, you must understand that the alert system is for the benefit of the opponents, not for the benefit of your partnership. In fact, in very high-level competition, you and your partner would be playing behind screens, unable to see or hear each other. Partner's alert is *unauthorized information* for you. You cannot take any action based on knowledge you gained from partner's alert. If you pretend that you can't hear your partner, you will find that the proper action becomes easier.

- Your hand: ♠xx ♥xx ♦KQTxxx ♣Qxx
- The auction, with explanations, opponents pass throughout:

2D! (Partner properly alerts and explains your agreement)

2H by partner, who is simply choosing the trump suit. If you remembered your system, you would pass this bid. However, this bid is a forcing bid after a weak two opening.

3D by you: Pretend partner hadn't alerted. What would you say? You would rebid your diamond suit, because you have no support for partner's heart suit and no second suit of your own.

3H by partner, who thinks you have a maximum hand and three diamonds, but partner still doesn't want to go to game.

Pass by you. As far as you're concerned, partner's **3H** bid simply says, "I'm disappointed that you can't help me out, so I'll settle for the major suit partial contract."

- ♣ Before the opening lead is made, are you required to tell the opponents what has happened? Surprisingly, the answer is, "No." Your partner correctly described your partnership agreement. You're not required to tell everyone you forgot. In this example, they'll all know as soon as they see dummy, but you're not required to say anything even if you're the declarer.

- ♣ Your partner may not make this contract, and the opponents may not call the director because they got a good board. What happens, though, if they discover they should be the ones playing the contract in hearts? In fact, they might have been able to bid and make **4H**, if they knew what was going on! If that's the case, you'll immediately hear a loud, "Director!" from the opponents.

The director must determine if the problem was *mistaken bid* or *misinformation*. In the case of mistaken bid, opponents are not entitled to redress if they get a bad board. In the case of misinformation, however, the director is entitled to award the opponents the *best likely result* and adjust your score to the *worst possible result*. In our example, you forgot your partnership agreement (*mistaken bid*), but partner gave the correct explanation. The opponents will not be awarded an adjustment; however, the director will probably make a record of the event. If you and your partner repeatedly forget the same convention and get good results by doing so, the director may have a talk with you.

By law, you and your partner are required to have a completed convention card at the table. This convention card is your proof of the system agreements you and your partner have. If you don't have a convention card, you can play only standard methods - and *Flannery* is not a standard method. If you don't have a completed convention card, the director may rule that your partner gave the opponents *misinformation*. Your score will be adjusted, and you and your partner will be warned to fill out a convention card.

- ♣ Remember, the alert system is for the opponents. You cannot use it as a reminder if you forget a convention.
- ♣ If you get a bad result when you forget your system, don't let it ruin your game. You probably won't forget that convention ever again!

As always, **call the director** when an irregularity occurs.

A Little Board Etiquette

- ♣ The North-South pair is responsible for all "board-handling." They should verify that they are playing the correct boards, in the correct order, in the correct orientation. The North-South pair flips the boards as played - and some Norths are very jealous of this task! North-South should promptly move the boards to the next table when the round is called.
- ♣ **Never, never, never** touch another player's cards without asking permission.
- ♣ If you finish a round early and simply must discuss one of the hands, **never remove more than one hand at a time from the played board**. I really don't recommend discussing hands at the table. If you foul the board, or if another pair hears your discussion, you will be penalized. Grab a hand record and discuss the hands after the game, instead.