

Claim by Defender

Question

At a recent club session the following occurred:

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| ♠ – | |
| ♥ A | |
| ♦ A,6,4 | |
| ♣ – | |
| ♠ – | ♠ – |
| ♥ Q,J,9,7 | ♥ 10,6,5,2 |
| ♦ – | ♦ – |
| ♣ – | ♣ – |
| ♠ Q | |
| ♥ 8,4 | |
| ♦ – | |
| ♣ J | |

East is declarer in 3NT, South wins the 9th trick and leads the Spade Q a small heart is thrown from dummy (W). North lays down her hand and claims the last 4 tricks. East maintains that North's hand becomes penalty cards and demands the Ace of hearts be played. Is this correct? I believe that North's cards are not penalty cards and by revealing them they do not convey any line of play to her partner. North is a strong player who does count cards and would know what cards remain.

Answer

North's action constitutes a claim under Law 68. Specifically Law 68D says that after any claim or concession, play ceases. Therefore, with the exception noted in Law 68B (which does not apply here), there can be no "penalty cards" after a claim. The director will adjudicate the claim. The director should ask the question: is there any normal line of play by North which would result in the opponent's winning any more tricks? On the actual hand, the answer I think is clearly no. Even if South next cashed the jack of clubs, North will still retain her two aces for tricks 12 and 13. If the situation had been somewhat different and it was not clear which cards North should keep, or if South had a losing option as to what to lead, the claim would have been on far less solid ground.

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