

Climate Control

by Reg Busch

I've read many texts on bridge directing, but none have paid any attention to what is probably the most difficult task for a director: organising what one might call the micro-climate of the convention room to satisfy all players. Let me recount a recent experience.

The convention site was the host clubs clubroom at one of our beautiful seaside resorts. There had been much unseasonal rain, but this day dawned as a perfect balmy day, warm with not a leaf stirring - more like a spring day than the middle of winter. The organisers decided not to use the airconditioning but to rely on some natural ventilation on this perfect day. Very soon after the start, I was called by one table who complained about a draught coming in via the rear door. I stood in the doorway but could feel nothing. I didn't have a feather to drop, but I'm sure that, if I had, it would have dropped like a stone to the floor and lain there immobile. But, after 20 years of directing at all sorts of venues, I am convinced of this. Just as birds have superhuman sight and animals a superhuman sense of smell, there are some people blest with an ability to detect draughts far superior to that of most of us. This conviction was borne out here, because the complainants were about 10 metres away (at right angles) from the line of flight of this perceived draught. By the time we had met the needs of these various super-tactile people, most of the windows and doors were now closed. Sneakily, we tried to surreptitiously half open some louvers set up near the quite high ceiling, with the blades pointing up so that any intruding draft was directed straight at the ceiling. But our super gifted players soon discovered this. I have often wondered how these people manage at home. One can only presume that they have their doors and windows hermetically sealed to keep out any intruding draughts.

By this time, most of the rest of the players were (understandably)complaining about the room becoming stuffy. So we decided to turn on the overhead fans at a minimal rate to help the air circulation. Immediately I was called by a player who becomes ill when sitting under an overhead fan, even though it is 6 feet above the head, and turning at a very leisurely rate. I've explored the scientific literature on this. I can't find any evidence that such an experience has any harmful effect (unless of course the fan falls down on your head). However, we turned the fans off. Again I wondered about the life of these people outside of the bridge environment. I presume that they don't venture outdoors if the breeze is more than 1-2 km per hour in case the wind blowing overhead causes an acute illness.

Ultimately in desperation, we turned on the airconditioning. After lunch, the floor outside the kitchen had to be washed, and the rear door left open to encourage drying. Nobody wanted a player to slip on the wet floor and sue the club for a million dollars. When this was explained to our original complainant, she was heard to mutter to nobody in particular that 'the floors are more important than the players.'

This congress was a concentrated example of one's experiences at many congresses over the years. Airconditioning doesn't remove the complaints. We are always getting requests

to turn it up or down (often from different people at the same time). We all know that airconditioning often produces the odd cold spot. At our week long Gold Coast Congress held in a first class airconditioned hotel we take lots of extra table cloths to cope with water/coffee/wine spills, but often they double up as shawls for players who have come ill-equipped for airconditioning.

Of course there is nothing as effective in dividing a club as a proposal to install airconditioning. The club immediately divides into two hostile groups, with intense lobbying and canvassing for proxies, and numerous threats never to return to the club once airconditioning is a fact. Historically the pro camp win the battle, but the expected mass exodus from the anti camp never materialises.

One of my more amusing memories is of a congress I played in Brisbane many years ago. It was in October, usually a quite hot month in Brisbane. However, this day was unusually cool. At the lunch break, the harassed Director was obliged to announce "Would players please desist from coming up and asking me to adjust the airconditioning. We don't have any airconditioning!"

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