



Other Tempo Problems (Part 2)

Last month (items 1,2,3), we examined some unethical fast actions (which gave partner unauthorized information). This month our Bodacious Bridge Babe actresses are back to show us some more wicked behavior.

Here are some more poor tempo situations:

4) Slow signoffs

Nobody is vulnerable and RHO opens 3♥. You hold:

♠ KQJ1076 ♥ A2 ♦ Q32 ♣ K2.

You overcall 3♠. Partner cuebids 4♥ to show a big (slam-invitational) spade raise. Try not to give away the show with a SLOW 4♠. Either move towards slam (Blackwood or control bid)--or try to signoff within 5-6 seconds. If you sit for 30 seconds and then bid 4♠, you have told your partner that you had borderline slam interest (a 4 1/2 ♠ bid). Is it "unethical" to think and then signoff? That depends on who you ask. But, you are putting your partner under a lot of ethical pressure if you habitually huddle in these tempo-sensitive situations. A very fast 4♠ (last month's "error") conveys a dead minimum overcall. A very slow pass conveys a super maximum overcall. An in-tempo 4♠ is what is called for so as to not convey to your partner your hand-strength.

5) Slow "non-decisions"

Vulnerable against not, you hold:

♠ J762 ♥ Q7654 ♦ J54 ♣ 2

RHO opens 1♠, you pass, LHO raises to 2♠. Partner bids 3♣. Oh-oh. Could be trouble.

RHO passes, that's good. And you? Surely, you plan to pass. You wouldn't dare bid 3♥ or 3NT with this garbage. You can hope for "no double, no trouble." But, maybe if you think and think, the opponents will be afraid to double. They won't want to chase you into a better spot (that you appear to



be thinking about). Maybe they will think you have a decent hand. Is any of this running through your mind? We won't report you to the thought police, but please don't take more than 4-5 seconds to pass. If you intentionally (unethically) take 25 seconds (nefariously using the above thoughts), shame on you. How will your conscience let you sleep at night? This is bridge--not poker. No coffee-housing.

Don't put on an act as shown here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxAJV_3uYLk

Speaking of which, with neither side vulnerable, you hold:

♠ 76 ♥ KQ1087 ♦ A65 ♣ K32

You open 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. RHO passes. Surely, you are going to pass. But, please don't do it with a song and a dance. Yes, you (and I) know that you want to buy it in 2♥. You don't want LHO to balance. You don't want to have to defend against 2♠. You don't want to get pushed to 3♥. So, does that mean you can sit for 20 seconds and pretend you are thinking of bidding? Maybe you can slow-pass and "scare" LHO into not balancing. He will think you have extras and be afraid of getting doubled or pushing you into game. You are not allowed to do this. You have nothing to think about. So, pass partner's raise to 2♥ in tempo, please.

Don't put on this act: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwFAw9OF414>

Here's another no-no: At favorable vulnerability, partner opens 3♣ and RHO passes. You hold:

♠ 97654 ♥ 876 ♦ A43 ♣ Q3 You would like to buy it in 3♣ but that doesn't allow you to do a song and dance before passing. This isn't poker where bluffing is allowed. If you sit and think for 20 seconds, you are trying to convince your opponents that you have something. You don't. Pass in proper tempo (5 seconds or so).



6) Taking advantage of a slow duck on defense.

Declarer leads a low club in this position:

	♣ KQJ10	
♣ 9874		♣ A32
	♣ 65	

West plays low and East thinks. And thinks. And lets dummy win the trick.

Later, West gets the lead (in some other suit) and needs to reach his partner. He is "not allowed" to know that his partner has the ♣A. True, everyone at the table knows East has it (he thought forever about taking it). But, that is not authorized information to his partner. West must ignore what he saw and defend without knowledge as to who has the ♣A. As in #4, you could blame the player who took the long time, but he is allowed to think when he has a legitimate problem. It is the partner of the hesitator who really has to bend over backwards to do the right thing.

7) Slow signals on defense.

Against 4♥, West leads the ♠A (from ace-king) in this situation:

	♠ 765	
♠ AK102		♠ Q3
	♠ J984	

East thinks and thinks. He doesn't want to drop the ♠Q (since that is not the correct play unless it is a singleton Q or QJ doubleton). He finally plays the 3. East-West use standard signals. So, the 3 is discouraging. West ethically should *not* continue the suit! For all he knows, his partner has ♠J83



(where he would have played the 3 without thought) and declarer has ♠Q94. Continuing the suit would cost a trick. Sure, with the slow 3, West "knows" East probably has something like his actual holding, but he is not ethically entitled to take advantage. Is he "barred" from continuing spades? No. If it is 100% clear-cut to continue (maybe the contract is 6♥, or no other play makes any sense) then he can legally and ethically do so. Again, as in #4 and #6 it is the partner of the perpetrator who needs to be ethical. However, with experience, the "slow" actor in #4, 6 and 7 might learn to avoid such tempo-sensitive actions when possible.

Summary: Try to play/bid in tempo. If you have a legitimate problem, you are entitled to think. If you do think, your partner should not take advantage.

New Year's Resolution: I will try to bid/play in tempo. If my partner plays in bad tempo, I am ethically bound not to take advantage.

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