

The return of Reese *by Derrick Browne*

Your right hand opponent opens 3S. What action do you take, vulnerable, with:

Kx
KTxx
K
AQxxxx

Last week's column outlined how Terence Reese and Boris Schapiro were found guilty by the World Bridge Federation (WBF) of signalling their heart length by the way they held their cards (two fingers showing meant two hearts, or five hearts if the fingers were spread apart, etc) at the 1965 world championships in Buenos Aires.

With the hand above, Reese made a takeout double of 3S. Partner had four hearts so the major suit fit was found. Reese's opponent, Dorothy Hayden, commented: "Surely a pass or even 4C is more normal. How did Reese have the nerve to double? What if his partner responded in diamonds?" If, however, you knew from illicit signals that partner had long hearts, the takeout double would be easy.

The WBF left it to the British Bridge League (BBL) to take disciplinary action against Reese and Schapiro. However the BBL decided to first conduct its own inquiry, chaired by prominent judge Sir John Foster and lasting over a year.

At the enquiry, British captain Ralph Swimer revealed that Schapiro had confessed, stating: "it was that evil man, he made me do it". Defence counsel put it to Swimer that he had recently concocted this story but the next day, Swimer produced an unopened letter he had written to himself before leaving South America, marked "only open after death", in which he had recorded Schapiro's confession at the time. The defence withdrew their allegations against Swimer to prevent this letter being used as evidence. (The letter was opened two years later during a libel case over the affair; it also quoted Schapiro as asking: "What to do, my life is finished, shall I commit suicide?", perhaps explaining why Swimer had been reluctant to reveal it earlier.)

On hand after hand, Reese and Schapiro had been witnessed showing their heart length. Yet the BBL report concluded: "the direct evidence as to the exchange of finger signals, strong as it is, cannot be accepted by us", largely because of doubts raised by "the indirect or technical evidence", i.e. there was no conclusive evidence that advantages were being gained, as would be expected if signals were being given. Verdict: "We find that Messrs Reese and Schapiro were not guilty of cheating at the Tournament in question."

They were still considered guilty by the WBF, and Reese focussed largely on his writing. Here is a typical offering. Cover the South and West hands. South opened 1S, West bid a non-vulnerable 3D, and North bid 3S which ended the auction. West leads the DK; how should East defend?

NORTH	
S A953	
H 64	
D 975	
C KJT9	
WEST	EAST
S 7	S 842
H T85	H KQJ72
D KQJT64	D A
C 653	C A874
SOUTH	
S KQJT6	
H A93	
D 832	
C Q2	

After winning the DA, it seems normal for East to switch to the HK. South can duck this and now there is no way for West to get the lead to cash the diamond winners.

Better is for East to lead a low heart, hoping to get West in with the H10. At worst this allows declarer an overtrick, if holding both the ace and ten of hearts. "With a holding like A-K-Q or K-Q-J you usually lead high to avoid giving away a trick. When, as above, you badly need to find a way to partner's hand, you should think of leading low instead."

PS: In 2005, journalist David Rex-Taylor announced that Reese had confessed to him that the signalling allegations were true; Rex-Taylor had promised to not make public this confession until 40 years after the event. Reese claimed that he and Schapiro took no benefit from the signals, which were for a book he planned to write on cheating at bridge.