

Why Do I Feel So Rushed? – A Director’s Guide to Avoiding Slow Play

A question I am often asked as Director is “Why do you have to rush us so much?” There should be plenty of time to play the boards and so it is usually a matter of being organised at the table. How do you manage to find thinking time without slowing down the whole evening?

The accepted rate of play for duplicate bridge is 8 boards per hour or 7½ minutes per board. We need to stick to this rate to complete our 24-board evening by around 10-30pm and clear up by 11-00pm. By adopting the following simple guidelines, 7½ minutes per board should be ample time to enjoy our bridge and have sufficient thinking time:

- **When arriving at a table at the start of the round, greet your opponents politely, check you have the correct opponents and tell them what system you are playing especially if it is unusual.** This only requires a phrase such as “Benji weak” or “5-card majors and strong no trump”, further explanations can be given when questions are asked in the auction. Similarly, if you

wish to inquire after your opponents’ bunions or their new car, please leave it until the boards are finished.

- **Remove your cards from the board, count them and sort your hand.** Do not fill in your score card with the opponents number, this can be done when the first board is scored – **the golden rule for filling in your scorecard is that you should never do paperwork while the table is waiting for you to do something else.**
- **Once the auction is complete, if you are on lead, select your lead and place it face down on the table before you fill in your scorecard with the contract** – you can do your paperwork while dummy is being arranged and declarer is planning his play.
- **Once play of the hand is complete, count and shuffle your cards and replace them in the board, then fill in your scorecard.** North should also complete the traveller or bridge-mate and show it to the rest of the table for East to check. Do not delay the next hand with examination of any hand or

discussion of what might have been. If there is time, this can be done once the round is completed but is better left to the end of the evening.

- **Finally, if you wish to collect refreshments or visit the toilets, do so when you are dummy or sitting out.** Rushing to do these things between rounds often catches people out as the director may call the end of the round just as you leave the room.

By following these guidelines you should find you have far more time

for the important business – the bidding and playing of the cards. As director, I regularly see tables sit down at the same time yet one table is playing trick 6 of the first board before the other table has pulled the cards from the board! 7½ minutes per board is not quick but if we waste 5 of these minutes chatting, doing paperwork and making coffee, then it becomes impossible even for the quickest players!

With thanks to Gary Conrad and Alan Hudson