

“The Rest are Mine”

(How to Claim or Concede Tricks)

1. Introduction

Towards the end of the play of a hand, and very occasionally from the beginning, it may appear clear to the declarer or a defender which side will win each of the remaining tricks. In such circumstances, players frequently make a claim or concession in order to save time. Often this is correct, but once in a while it is not so clear to the opposing side - and may even be incorrect.

Please read on to discover how a claim or a concession of tricks should be made, what to do if it is disputed, and how to avoid those disputes in the first place.

2. What is a Claim or Concession?

A claim is made when a player states that he will win a specific number of tricks, and a concession is the opposite: that he will lose a specific number of tricks. Sometimes, a player will make a claim including a concession at the same time. If one defender makes a concession and his partner promptly objects, then no concession has been made, but the Director should be called immediately because Unauthorised Information may be available to the defenders.

The player making the claim or concession should make an immediate statement as to how he intends to play his remaining cards, including the sequence and line of play, and face all his cards. It is not sufficient just to say “The rest are mine” or “I’ll take three more tricks and give you one at the end”. If no statement is made, the other side should avoid asking the claimant about his line of play. Instead, they should either agree the claim or call the Director.

3. What happens when a Claim or Concession is made?

Following a claim or concession, further play of the hand must cease – even if the opposite side requests play to continue. It is best that everyone faces their cards to check the claim, and usually a claim by one side is agreed by a concession from the other, and the board is scored accordingly.

If there is any disagreement about the tricks to be won or lost, the claim or concession may be challenged at any time before the end of the round or before the first call to the following board in the same round. The challenge may be made by any of the four players, including dummy, by calling the Director and never by simply playing on.

In the case of a dispute, the Director will follow the line of play which accompanied the claim when it was made, ignoring any attempt to modify it, and rule as equitably as possible. However, if there is any doubt about the claim, the Director will rule against the claimant. For example, if a declarer omits to say that he will draw the defenders' last remaining trump and the defence could ruff one of the declarer's other winners, then the Director will award that trick to the defence, unless the declarer could over-ruff and not lose a different trick by doing so.

4. Best Practice

As declarer, even if you are clear from trick 1 as to how many tricks you will make, it is sensible to delay making your claim until it will also be equally clear to the defenders. If you claim too early, they may be unsure of their defensive prospects, refuse your claim and call the Director. Instead of saving time on the play of the hand, the opposite will be true. Equally, you need to be absolutely clear as to your line of play so that the other side can follow and agree to your claim or concession. If not, they might contest it, and the Director may rule against you. In both cases, it may be quicker simply to rattle off your tricks.

Since one of the aims of this series of “Ethics at the Club” is reduce the number of calls for the Director, you can help by making sure that your claims and concessions are such that they can be immediately agreed by the other side. If this is the first board of the round, then you will have gained time for your second board; and if it is the second board, then you will be ready for a prompt movement on to the next round.