

## ALERTS AND FAILURES TO ALERT, By Peter Morse

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We have all faced the situation where partner has failed to alert or announce a bid as required by the Laws. This could be a failure to say "Transfer" after a no - trump opening or to "Alert" such common bids as Bergen raises, Jacob y 2NT, Drury or any other simple or complex conventions which you and your partner play. What should you do if this happens to you? Let's start with a few things that you should not do. First, you should not make the Alert that partner should have made. Further, you should not do anything that would suggest to partner that she has "fallen asleep", such as saying "Wake up", or "Hello" or "Are you here?" As discussed below, it may be appropriate/required to say something at the end of the bidding or at the end of the hand, but now is not the time.

You may be thinking, 'But wasn't I told that the opponents are entitled to the same knowledge that I have?' Yes, this is true, but it is the timing of the delivery of this information that is important. You don't know whether partner has simply forgotten that your bid is alertable or whether he has forgotten that you play Bergen or Drury or whatever convention is involved. If it is the latter, you cannot serve as the alarm clock to wake partner up. Therefore you must say nothing for now, and this includes the quizzical or condescending facial expressions! So now the auction ends with the opponents (and perhaps partner) unaware that a conventional bid has been made.

**If your side is declaring**, whether it is you or partner as declarer, you now must, before the opening lead has been tabled, alert your opponents to what your partner should have alerted earlier. If your opponents think that they have been damaged in the bidding by the failure to alert, they may call the Director who will assess the situation and make an appropriate ruling.

In a recent game, I made a conventional 2NT bid which was intended to show a game try with spade shortness, where we had both been bidding hearts. Partner did not alert and raised to 3NT. While I suspected that the failure to alert implied that partner had forgotten our agreement, I felt that I must pass the 3NT bid as if partner knew what he was doing. And as discussed in the preceding paragraph, before the opening lead I advised the opponents that my bid showed a game try with a singleton or void in spades. Not surprisingly, left - hand opponent led a spade, and the hand did not end well.

**But what if the bidding ends and your opponents are declaring the contract?** In this case you should say **nothing**. Since partner did not alert your bid, it is quite possible/very likely that partner was unaware of what your alertable bid was showing and you should not now be waking her up. While the opposing declarer will play through the hand without full information, that is only during the play of the hand. Once the play of the hand is completed, it is now your obligation to inform the declarer of the earlier failure to alert. Your opponents may then call the Director if they feel that they may have been damaged by the failure to alert, either in the bidding or the play of the hand. The Director then will attempt to restore equity retroactively and will make a ruling.