

## **Principle of Full Disclosure (vs the Alert Procedure)**

While the following may not be of particular interest to you, it is fundamental to duplicate bridge and something you should know and understand. I'd wager that most of you won't read this entire article, but I think it's something you should put into practice; hence, this article. It has to do with the Principle of Full Disclosure and, alas, the Alert Procedure.

The documentation on the ACBL website ([www.acbl.org](http://www.acbl.org)) as it relates to these two subjects is excellent. I suggest that you read about both before continuing.

In my humble opinion we as a bridge playing group have been largely unsuccessful in remembering that the Alert Procedure is intended to be a means of putting Full Disclosure into practice.....and not the other way around. I hasten to add that this is generally not a problem at the higher levels of bridge. Most expert types want to win fairly and are aware of their responsibilities. They understand that Full Disclosure is at the core of good bridge practices and encompasses Active Ethics.....also discussed on ACBL's website.

Ok. So first of all Full Disclosure is the practice of letting your opponents know about your partnership agreements. If you have an agreement with your partner, the opponents are entitled to know what it is. There are no secrets at the bridge table. Bridge is a wonderful game but winners need to be determined by their skill along with the possibility of some playing luck, not by taking advantage of opponents who perhaps know much less about the conventions you play or about your style of bidding. The fact is that your opponents may just be considerably less experienced and thus need to be enlightened of your agreed-upon partnership tactics. That is why it's everyone's responsibility to go out of their way to ensure that their opponents have some understanding of what is transpiring at the table.

It is my personal belief (based upon lots of experience) that the bridge playing community fails to keep this in mind and instead concerns itself with attempting to follow the Alert Procedure to the nth degree.

The Alert Procedure provides detailed instructions as to what is alertable or announceable during the auction. It is the method that is to be used to inform the opponents (but not partner!!) that something other than natural

bidding is occurring and provides them with the opportunity to ask so that they can more fully understand. Unfortunately, it seems to be impossible to put the philosophy of Full Disclosure into such a set of step-by-step instructions.

Perhaps an example will help. Recently the auction at our table went as follows:

<u>Opp</u>	<u>Me</u>	<u>Opp</u>	<u>My Partner</u>
1♦	2♣	X*	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠*	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	Pass

\*100% forcing but neither alerted

There were no alerts during the auction. Since I was on lead, I asked about my opponent's double of 2♣ and got some response like "negative". Now I knew, but my partner did not, that these opponents played Negative Free Bids which means that a new suit by my LHO would not be forcing as is normal but would instead show a decent suit without a lot of values. Most other times they have to start with a double in order to show values. This double may be a perfectly ordinary 'negative' double or it may just be vehicle to set up a forcing auction. Therefore it actually says nothing about the length of their major suits, but instead implies that their hand does not merit a Negative Free Bid.

To me if you practice Full Disclosure you will alert your opponents to this conventional treatment even though according to the Alert Procedure it is usually interpreted as being non-alertable. To make matters worse, directors seem to enforce this by saying that 'negative' doubles according to the alert chart are not alertable.

A second example:

<u>Me</u>	<u>Opp</u>	<u>Pard</u>	<u>Opp</u>
1♦	2♦	Pass	3♣

all pass

Again there were no alerts in this auction since everybody "knows" that cuebids aren't alertable, right? Well, what if the 2♦ is a Top and Bottom Cuebid instead of the expected Michaels Cuebid. Isn't there an ethical obligation to bring this to the opponents' attention? I believe that there is but the Alert Procedure would indicate otherwise.

So what can you do about this? That's easy. Be sure that you are informed about both the principles of Full Disclosure and rules of the Alert System and then put BOTH into practice but with the emphasis on Full Disclosure.

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