

2025 Open United States Bridge Championship –USA2 Final

Board 14, Open Room, Segment 1 of the 2025 USBC USA2 Final match between Wolfson and Rosenthal

Table Director: Ken Horwedel

Table Result: Pass Out

Opening Lead: None

The screenshot shows a bridge game interface with the following details:

- Table:** OP 1, Round: 1
- North-South:** Wolfson (37 IMP)
- East-West:** Rosenthal (29 IMP)
- West Hand (Aaron Silverstein):** ♠ J 10 9 6 3, ♥ 6, ♦ K 7 5, ♣ 9 4 3 2
- North Hand (Jeff Meckstroth):** ♠ A 4 2, ♥ A K 7 3 2, ♦ J 9 3, ♣ Q 8
- East Hand (Andrew Rosenthal):** ♠ 8 7 5, ♥ 10 9 8 5, ♦ A 10 4, ♣ A K 5
- South Hand (David Berkowitz):** ♠ K Q, ♥ Q J 4, ♦ Q 8 6 2, ♣ J 10 7 6
- Result:** PASSED OUT, 2 IMP for Rosenthal
- Modified result by TD:** (Text box)
- Score:** 14
- Other Room:** S 3N = 400

USBC USA2 Final

West	North	East	South
<i>Aaron Silverstein</i>	<i>Jeff Meckstroth</i>	<i>Andrew Rosenthal</i>	<i>David Berkowitz</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Table Director's Ruling:

East summoned the Director in a manner that halted play on Board Fourteen after North made the final pass, but before the cards for Board Fifteen were visible to the North–East side of the screen. North asserted that he did not intend to pass and had somehow misclicked, although he was unable to provide a clear explanation as to how the misclick occurred.

In the interim, all four hands of Board Fourteen were exposed to all four players, rendering play of the board impossible—regardless of whether the final pass was attributable to a mechanical error, a reconsideration, or a change of mind. Unbenownst to the table Director, play resumed on the other side of the screen while the Director was in the North-East room trying to cancel North's final pass.

Applicable Law and Conditions

Law 25A of the *Laws of Duplicate Bridge* permits a player to change an unintended call if the call resulted from a mechanical error. However, this right does not extend to errors caused by a lapse in concentration or reconsideration of action. Furthermore, no change is permitted once a partner has taken a subsequent call or the auction period has ended (17D).

The *USBC Conditions of Contest* provide additional guidance:

Any player who accidentally clicks on the wrong bid or card (“misclick”) may ask for an undo and shall summon the director to rule on whether it should be allowed. The request must be made before the partner of the person requesting the undo has acted.

The assumption will be that calls and plays are intended, and the burden of proof is on the player. Non-adjacent actions will be very unlikely to be determined as unintended. If the player has entered an explanation inconsistent with the bid, that is strong evidence the bid was not intended.

Director's Investigation and Findings

The Director initially ruled that North had met the burden of proof for the call to be deemed unintended, and attempted to cancel the final Pass in the software. A subsequent investigation revealed several relevant facts that supported the Director’s ruling that the call was a mechanical (or possibly technological) error:

- North's LoveBridge settings allowed the player to cancel a call within five seconds.
- North's bid occurred exactly five seconds after West passed, suggesting the player clicked Pass instantaneously.
- The system log showed a “ResultPersistedEvent” simultaneous with North’s pass.
- In previous USBC events, “ResultPersistedEvents” have been associated with players viewing their scorecards and then accidentally misclicking during the opening round of the auction.

Given that the platform's constraints made it impossible to proceed with play, the Director determined that an artificial adjusted score was required. Law 86B1 states the Director must assign an *assigned adjusted score* rather than an artificial one if the result at the other table is clearly favorable to one side.

At the other table, the contract was 3NT making. The Director judged this result to be clearly favorable to the Rosenthal team and conducted a poll of five expert pairs to assess a likely result had play been possible. Of the five:

- Four pairs bid 3NT, which would have resulted in making three.
- One pair reached 4♥, which would have resulted in one down.

Based on this polling, the Director assigned an adjusted score weighted as follows:

- 80%: Push
- 20%: Lose 10 IMPs

This yielded a net adjustment of +2 IMPs to the Rosenthal team.

Appeal:

The appellant raised multiple reasons for appealing the Director's ruling:

- **Timing of the Subsequent Call:** He argued that under Law 25A4, once a player's partner has made a subsequent call, no substitution of the original call is permitted. The appellant asserted that South made a bid on Board 15 before the director officially ruled, which should have negated North's right to change his bid on Board 14.
- **Uncertainty in the Definition of the End of the Auction Period on Tablets:** The appellant pointed out the ambiguity of when the auction period ends on electronic devices, as the players never physically return cards to the board. He argued that revealing of all four hands at the end of Board 14 should constitute the end of the auction under Law 17D.
- **Nature of the Alleged Mislick:** The appellant questioned whether the call was truly a mechanical error. While the Director viewed it as a mislick, the appellant suggested it could have resulted from distraction or reviewing the previous board. He emphasized that such lapses are not protected under Law 25.
- **Consistency of Interpretation:** The appellant insisted that regardless of practical limitations, the laws should be applied strictly and not adjusted by committees due to situational ambiguity. He acknowledged the situation's complexity but maintained that legal standards must prevail.
- **Methodology for Adjusted Score:** The appellant expressed concern about the small sample size of five pairs used to determine the likely contract had the board been played, noting the volatility of such polls and suggesting that a broader or probabilistic assessment might be more reliable.

Committee decision:

The Appeals Committee was asked to review the Director's ruling, specifically addressing whether North's final Pass was eligible to be changed under Law 25A, and whether the Director's assigned adjusted score was appropriate. The appellant raised several issues concerning the timing of subsequent calls, the interpretation of the laws in the LoveBridge environment, and the scoring methodology used.

The committee began by examining when the auction period ends in a pass-out situation on LoveBridge, which is relevant to the application of Law 25A5. Under Law 17D, the auction period ends when all four hands have been returned to the board. While this is clear in face-to-face play, it is less so on tablets, where no such physical action occurs. The committee concluded that the display of all four hands to the players serves as the functional equivalent and likely marks the end of the auction period in this environment. It was noted, however, that the Conditions of Contest should be amended to address this ambiguity explicitly.

With respect to Law 25A, the committee unanimously agreed that North did not intend to pass with a good 14-count and that the action was the result of a mislick, not a reconsideration of action or lapse in concentration. The committee accepted that the error may have occurred while viewing the previous board's scorecard, a known risk in the LoveBridge interface. The explanation, in combination with platform behavior, was deemed to meet the burden of proof for a mechanical error.

The appellant argued that South's bid on the subsequent board invalidated North's right to change his call under Law 25A4. The committee rejected this interpretation. Law 25A4 refers to a partner's subsequent call on the same board. The bid in question occurred on Board 15, after a system failure allowed play to proceed despite a stop request. The committee agreed that had the platform worked as intended, South would not have had an opportunity to bid. The committee held that the law must be applied with regard to the real context, which includes recognizing the limitations of the software.

The committee also reviewed the methodology used by the Director to determine an assigned adjusted score. The Director polled five expert partnerships, giving one partner the North hand and the other the South hand. Four of the five partnerships reached 3NT, and one reached 4♥ (down one). The Director assigned a weighted score: 80% for a push, 20% for losing 10 IMPs, resulting in a net adjustment of +2 IMPs to the Rosenthal team.

The appellant expressed concern about the small sample size and suggested that a more probabilistic approach would have been more accurate. While the committee understood the concern, it found the Director's method to be consistent with best practices. The poll results, while perhaps imperfect, were deemed reasonable and provided a fair basis for the ruling. The committee noted that this sort of minor disagreement over poll weighting typically does not warrant overturning a Director's decision on appeal.

The committee also discussed Law 86B1 and Law 12C1. The result at the other table—3NT making—was clearly favorable to one side. Under Law 86B1, an assigned adjusted score was appropriate. Law 12C1C empowers the Director to weight such a score in a way that reflects the probable outcome had the irregularity not occurred. The committee agreed that the Director followed these provisions correctly.

In closing, the committee acknowledged that the Conditions of Contest were incomplete with respect to defining when the auction ends on tablets, and that the platform's limitations contributed to the confusion. These issues should be addressed in future events. Nonetheless, the committee concluded that the Director acted properly given the information available and the framework of the laws.

Ruling:

The Appeals Committee voted unanimously to rule as the TD had. The appeal was denied. The assigned adjusted score of +2 IMPs to the Rosenthal team stands.

Appeal Committee: Adam Wildavsky, Joanna Stansby, Steve Weinstein