

2025 Open United States Bridge Championship –USA2 Semifinal

Board 8, Open Room, Segment 1 of the 2025 USBC USA2 Semi Final match between Nickell and Rosenthal

Table Director: Ken Horwedel & Chris Wiegand

Table Result: 6♦ S = +920

Opening Lead: ♣8

The screenshot shows the LoveBridge interface for Board 8. On the left, a bidding table shows the sequence: West (PASS), North (1♠), East (3♣), South (3NT), West (PASS), North (4♣), East (PASS), South (4♦), West (PASS), North (5NT), East (PASS), South (6♦), West (PASS), North (PASS), East (PASS). Below this, the table information for 'Table: OP 2, Round: 1' shows N-S: Nickell (1 IMP) and E-W: Rosenthal (12 IMP). The main area displays the card holdings for the four players: Steve Weinstein (N) with ♠AQT7542, ♥K7, ♦A9, ♣A7; Aaron Silverstein (W) with ♠KJ83, ♥T9432, ♦Q76, ♣8; Andrew Rosenthal (E) with ♠6, ♥Q86, ♦84, ♣QT96532; and Bobby Levin (S) with ♠9, ♥AJ5, ♦KJT532, ♣KJ4. A 'DDS' button is visible at the bottom left. In the bottom right, the 'OTHER ROOM' status shows N 6♣ -1 -50, and the current room status shows SOUTH 6♦, NS 0, and EW 0.

USBC USA2 Semifinal

West	North	East	South
<i>Aaron Silverstein</i>	<i>Steve Weinstein</i>	<i>Andrew Rosenthal</i>	<i>Bobby Levin</i>
Pass	1 ♠	3 ♣	3 ♦ ¹
Pass	3 ♠	Pass	3 NT ²
Pass	4 ♣ ³	Pass	4 ♦ ⁴
Pass	4 ♥ ⁵	Pass	4 ♠ ⁶
Pass	5 NT	Pass	6 ♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	

1. Natural Game Force
2. Two or fewer spades. Probably not Honor x
3. Control bid
4. No Agreement

5. No Agreement
6. Break in Tempo (2' 32")

6 ♦ by South

Made 6 — NS +920

Table Director's Ruling:

The Director was summoned after the North–South pair bid and made 6♦ on Board 8. West explained that there had been a break in tempo before South's 4♠ bid.

The Director spoke to North and South separately about their partnership agreements for this auction. Both players agreed on the meanings of all calls through 3NT. However, their understandings diverged afterward:

- North described 4♠ as a forward-going bid showing spades.
- South believed 4♠ to be a general slam try, either with a forward-going bid showing spades OR a good raise of diamonds with a club control.

North and South also disagreed about the meanings of 4♦ and 4♥:

- North believed 4♦ was a forward-going bid, and he bid 4♥ in the hope that South would use Keycard for spades.
- South believed 4♦ was temporizing and interpreted 4♥ as Kickback. (80% of time Kickback for D; 20% might still be the good S hand.) He claimed to have deliberately given a false response to 4♥ (4S would show 1 or 4 KC for D and he has two and planned to bid 6♦ over 4NT).

The Director polled five experienced players using North's hand and auction context. Each was asked for their call at each decision point:

- After 4♦, three players chose 5NT, but accepted 4♥ as an alternative action.
- After 4♠, two of those three continued with 5NT, and one chose 4NT, intending to bid 6♦ over any response.

The other two pollees chose 4♥ over 4♦. One bid 4NT over 4♠; the other bid 6♦, both aiming to offer a choice of slams.

The polled players disagreed about the implication of the break in tempo:

- Three felt it conveyed no clear message, attributing it to the complexity of the auction.
- The other two believed it might suggest interest in a slam outside of spades.

All five players believed the auction context suggested that partner should choose between 6♦ and 6♠.

Ruling: The Director concluded that:

- No specific call was demonstrably suggested by the unauthorized information (Law 16B1(a)); and
- Pass was not a logical alternative to the action taken (Law 16B1(b)).
- Pursuant to Law 16B, an adjusted score may be awarded only if the Director determines that (1) unauthorized information demonstrably suggested a particular action, and (2) one or more logical alternatives were available. As the Director found that neither condition was satisfied, there was no basis for an adjustment.

Appeal:

The appellants argued that the hesitation before the 4♠ bid conveyed unauthorized information (UI) suggesting that the bidder was considering further action—potentially slam—instead of simply signing off. They contended that this break in tempo implied strength in either spades or diamonds and created an inference that continuing to slam was under active consideration. As such, the subsequent choice to bid 5NT could have been demonstrably suggested by the hesitation, violating Law 16B.

Furthermore, the appellants questioned the adequacy of the director's polling process. They asserted that the poll failed to explore whether peers would seriously *consider* passing 4♠, which is a necessary component in determining whether pass was a logical alternative. They emphasized that the poll focused too narrowly on what players would *do*, rather than what they would *consider*, which undercuts the integrity of the logical alternative analysis and the resulting ruling.

Committee decision:

It was agreed that the UI from the huddle suggested that some contract other than 4S might be a better contract. However, while some of their actions were different, all of the players polled took the same conceptual route that Weinstein took, driving to slam via a choice of slams sequence. From the results of the poll it appeared that this route was the only logical alternative with Weinstein's hand. For this reason, the committee unanimously upheld the director's decision to let the table result stand.

Appeal Committee: Kit Woolsey, Bart Bramley, Tom Carmichael