

# The Gazette

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## ACBL settles out of court Katz-Cohen scandal case

Five years ago the North American Bermuda Bowl Team Trials were held in Houston. The 128-board final was cut short after 96 deals when Dr. Richard Katz and Larry Cohen of the Rosenkranz team withdrew from the Trials for unexplained reasons, leaving their squad with only three players and forcing a default. Soon thereafter, Katz-Cohen also resigned from the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL).

At the time, Katz-Cohen were the most successful pair in the league but their place in the sun was clouded with innuendo and an almost constant barrage of accusations with respect to their ethics. More bluntly, a substantial cross-section of the expert community thought they were cheating but had no idea how they were doing it.

In Houston, it all exploded. Katz-Cohen were confronted with evidence that they had been communicating through a system of coughs and sneezes and certain ACBL officials on the scene believed that they had them "dead to rights." Whether there was any truth to the allegations, a "bargain" of sorts was struck. Katz-Cohen essentially traded their resignations for silence by the league.

The league soon leaked news of the proceedings to the public (the news might well have slipped out anyway) and soon Katz-Cohen launched a serious suit against the ACBL, Lew Mathe, Don Oakie and Lew Gurvich (Houston Committee members) for antitrust violation, interference with business prospects, coercion, defamatory statements, infliction of emotional distress. The total sum sued for was in the \$40 million to \$100 million dollar range. In addition Katz-Cohen were demanding reinstatement in the ACBL.

Since then the case has dragged around the California courts amassing depositions, attracting detailed analyses of results and undergoing revisions. ACBL legal fees have been awesome but all along the membership has been assured that the league had an excellent case and would ultimately vindicate its stand, if not its procedure, in Houston. Incidentally, the Houston hand records pro-

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vided the league with lots of very strange results but nothing to suggest that the coughs and sneezes were anything more than that.

And now, apparently, the whole sordid affair has been concluded. The matter was settled out of court

with the ACBL covering some \$75,000 of Katz-Cohen's legal fees and allowing them to re-enter the league. They must, however, agree not to play together for two years, at which point they might apply to the Board of Directors for permission to revitalize their partnership.

What sort of settlement is this? How can the membership and indeed the rest of the bridge-playing world accept this farcical result? In accepting the two-year restriction on their freedom to "associate," Katz-Cohen do not emerge from the rubble as "innocent" by any stretch of the imagination.

If they are not guilty of any-

thing, why can they not play together? In settling, what does the ACBL mean to say that they know Katz-Cohen were guilty but that they just couldn't prove it?

From where we sit, this seems like justice for none, but there may be a clear statement forthcoming from the league to explain the outcome. Certainly the members have a right to know what's happening. Now we'll wait patiently for some illumination. But not too patiently.

The diagrammed deal was the 96th and final board played in Houston in 1977. It caused a mild uproar in the Vu-Graph room but in retrospect it probably meant very little. When Kantar-Eisenberg overbid badly to 3NT with the North-South cards, they succumbed to good obstructive bidding that showed off the advantages of Katz-Cohen's Breakthrough Club system.

The system featured opening bids on bad 4-card majors and the inability to bid clubs naturally without specific requirements. That, as much as anything, prompted Cohen (West) to lead a club after his side had bid and raised spaces and reraised them through the three-level. In fact, the club lead was not particularly intelligent. It saved a trick this time and led to +150 rather than +100. This deal so irred some committee members that they proceeded to level accusations when they weren't on particularly firm ground.

**OTHER NEWS:** The rejuvenated **European Bridge Club** announces three club tournaments in March: Monday, March 8, at 12:45 p.m., Saturday, March 20, at 1 p.m., Wednesday, March 31, at 12:45 p.m. The **Grand Bridge Club** (4940 Macdonald Ave., St. Matthews Church) announces the grand opening of a new Open game, Wednesday, March 10, at 1 p.m., with special prizes. Call 486-6073 or 486-0852.

There's an Ottawa Sectional on tap next weekend at the RA Centre, Riverside Drive, March 11 to 14. Master/Non-Master Pairs Thursday at 8 p.m., normal schedule otherwise (2 and 8 p.m. Friday, 1:30 and 7:30 p.m. (two Pair games) on Saturday, noon and TBA on Sunday).

#### NORTH-SOUTH VULNERABLE EAST DEALS

NORTH		EAST	
♠ Q 8		♠ J 7 5 4	
♥ K J 6 4		♥ Q 8	
♦ K 10 9 8 6 4		♦ A 3	
♣ 8		♠ A K J 10 5	
WEST		SOUTH	
♠ K 10 9 3		♠ A 6 2	
♥ 10 9 3		♥ A 7 5 2	
♦ J 5		♦ Q 7 2	
♣ Q 9 6 4		♣ 7 3 2	

THE BIDDING:			
NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
3D	1S	P	2S
P	3S	3NT	P
P	P		
OPENING LEAD: ?? (see within)			