



Charged Party(ies)   
 ACBL #   
 Hearing Date

Disciplinary Body  Hearing Location

Charging Party  ACBL#  Complainant  ACBL#

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO HEARD THE CHARGES**

Name	ACBL #	Name	ACBL #
Karen Walker, Chair	K090945		
Jordan Chodorow	Q498482		
Sylvia Moss	O104088		

**INDIVIDUALS THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE HEARING** (excluding committee members)

Name	ACBL#	Via	Capacity	Name	ACBL#	Via	Capacity
Ryan Connors	Q758913	web conf.	Advisor	Michael Innis	N491185	web conf.	Charged Party
Robb Gordon	K652927	web conf.	Adv-Charging P			Select One	Select One
Scott Humphrey	P781180	web conf.	Adv-Charging P			Select One	Select One
Gail Hanson	N227615	web conf.	Charged Party			Select One	Select One

**EVIDENCE AND ARGUMENTS PRESENTED** (Summarize evidence and arguments presented including testimony. If additional space is needed, continue on page 3 of this hearing report.) (Note: provide new documentary evidence introduced during the hearing to the Office of National Recorder)

See below

**COMMITTEE FINDINGS OF FACT** (based on the evidence, state the committee's conclusion as to what happened)

See below

**DECISION** (click on the box next to Not Guilty or Guilty of violating the CDR to add a check mark.)

Not guilty (check here and skip the remainder of this page)  Guilty (continue by selecting the Grounds for Discipline which led to the finding of guilty.  
Note: A party may only be found guilty of a violation originally stated in the Charge Letter.

**CDR GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINE** Type the section(s) and description(s) found in CDR 3 which led to the discipline).

CDR 3.1: Guilty  
CDR 3.2: Guilty  
CDR 3.20: Guilty

**DISCIPLINE** (Unless a discipline begins immediately, which requires you to complete a Notice of Immediate Discipline, all begin dates should start at least five days after you submit this hearing Report to the Office of National Recorder.

**Disciplined Party is convicted of premeditated or collusive cheating (or has admitted to such action), CDR 4.1.8 (a)** YES  NO

If yes, all masterpoints, titles and ACBL status ranks and other ACBL related awards earned by the disciplined party will be forfeited. These penalties also apply to the teammates and partners while playing with the disciplined party during the seven years preceding the date the Charges were brought through and including the date of this final decision.

	Start Date	End Date	Additional Requirements/Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> REPRIMAND		N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Letter of Reprimand Attached
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PROBATION	12/19/2020	12/18/2022	2 years
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUSPENSION	04/23/2020	12/18/2020	240 days retroactive to their BBO barring date of April 23, 2020

Is the disciplined party Suspended because of an Ethical Violation (CDR 4.1.8 (b))? YES  NO

If yes, the masterpoints and titles won in the event by the disciplined party, partners and teammates in which the offense occurred will be forfeited.

Is the Suspension imposed due to an Ethical Violation more than one year (CDR 4.1.8 (b))? YES  NO

If yes, the MPs, titles or other ACBL related award earned by the discipline party within twelve months preceding the date of the offense will be forfeited.

EXPULSION  N/A

SUSPENDED SENTENCE (only used in conjunction with an imposed Suspension from above that you have converted to Probation). State the condition of the sentence below

EXCLUSION from Events and Programs (list the exclusions and the dates of the events or activities). CDR 4.1.6

REDUCTION OR FORFEITURE of Masterpoints (MP) or Tournament Rank or Disqualification.

- Remove MPs earned in the event in which the offense occurred
- Remove MPs earned on BBO during March and April 2020.
- Reduction of rank in the event in which the offense occurred
- Disqualification in the tournament
- Disqualification in the event in which offense occurred

The teammates and partners will also receive these penalties in the event in which the offense occurred.

**STATE THE OFFENSE(S) FROM APPENDIX B, CHART 1 and/or CHART 2 OF THE CDR**

E19 Cheating and Other Ethical Violations not specifically cited by other sections of the Appendix.

The discipline imposed above is within the recommended guidelines of Appendix B, Chart 1 and/or Chart 2.  
If it is OUTSIDE the guidelines, a reason must be stated below.

See below.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED (CHAIR)**

/s/ Karen Walker

Electronic Signature (type name above)

Wet Signature (sign above)

Date: 8/18/20

# Hanson-Innis Hearing Report

## Overview

On August 11, 2020, the Online Ethical Oversight Committee (OEOC) held a virtual hearing in the matter of Gail Hanson and Michael Innis. Karen Walker presided over the panel, which also included Jordon Chodorow and Sylvia Moss. The charged pair attended the hearing. Also present were Robb Gordon and Scott Humphrey, co-advocates for the charging party, and Ryan Connors, advisor to the committee.

Walker provided opening remarks, which included introductions and Zoom instructions. She noted that there were no objections to the makeup of the panel or the proposed format for the hearing.

## Presentation of Evidence

Humphrey made an opening statement, explaining that Bridge Base Online (BBO) had investigated and suspended the charged parties for cheating. The ACBL and subsequently Humphrey independently reviewed the BBO report and conducted their own investigation, coming to the same conclusion.

Humphrey presented 16 hands before the committee that the charged parties played on April 2-3, 2020. He argued that the charged parties' precise opening leads were the greatest indicators of illegal communication. On other boards he focused on their successful bidding without accurately describing their hands or unusual defensive plays. The charged parties responded in writing to the allegations and made arguments during the hearing. Humphrey maintained that, in general, their rebuttals did not answer the real issues on the hands

As examples, Humphrey argued the following hands demonstrated illegal communication. The charged parties' response is included for clarity:

1. North opened a 15-17 1NT, and Dr. Innis overcalled 2H with 3 AQ976 Q764 A73. South used a Texas transfer to 4S. Dr. Innis lead the queen of diamonds. Dummy came down with AK9765 542 92 QT, and Ms. Hanson held 82 T83 K853 9654. Hand #2.

Humphrey argued that the diamond queen was an odd lead, as leading low is the standard approach. But it struck gold. It created an entry to partner's hand with her only defensive asset, the king of diamonds. Dr. Innis was later able to put her in for the necessary heart switch. Dr. Innis explained that he did not want to lead away from his aces, and the singleton trump seemed dangerous. He led the queen trying to promote partner's hand.

2. East opened 1D, and Dr. Innis bid 4H on AKT92 KT8654 void J8. West bid 4S, and Dr. Innis doubled to end the auction. Ms. Hanson led the two of diamonds from Q4 J932 T9742 Q5, and dummy tabled 7 AQ A8653 K9743. Dr. Innis trumped and returned a spade to Ms. Hanson's queen for a heart switch. Hand #6.

Humphrey had concerns on both the bidding and defense. Dr. Innis jumped in hearts and did not try to bring spades into the picture, perhaps with a Michaels cuebid. This was unnecessary as Ms. Hanson had only heart support. Ms. Hanson did not bid 5H over 4S with a fit and favorable vulnerability. On defense, she led a diamond for partner to ruff. Finally, Dr. Innis's trump return to her entry was extraordinary. The charged parties responded that it was a Lightner double, demanding a diamond lead.

3. In first chair, Dr. Innis opened 1C with J643 4 532 AQJ65. Ms. Hanson bid 1S holding AKQT9 K73 Q9 KT2. Dr. Innis jumped to 3S, and Ms. Hanson signed off in 4S. Hand #8.

Humphrey noted Dr. Innis's light opener and aggressive 3S bid. But the red flag was that Ms. Hanson simply signed off in game, holding a prime 17 HCP across from a partner who just showed extra values. They can only make ten tricks. The charged parties replied that they bid according to their number of cover cards and referred to lesson notes from Jade Barrett. This auction was typical for their system.

4. The opponents had a standard auction: 1NT – 2C – 2D – 3NT. Dr. Innis led his singleton club from Q9432 J843 763 8. This was a success with Ms. Hanson having 7 Q92 AT KJT9753 and dummy the singleton queen. Hand #15.

In his written remarks, Humphrey argued that this auction calls for a major-suit lead. A club is unsavory, especially since partner did not double the 2C call. The club lead is only logical if you can see partner's cards. The charged parties disagreed. As dummy would have major values, it was better to lead a minor. The club was a punt.

5. North opened 1C, and Dr. Innis overcalled 1S with JT952 KT A98 JT5. South made a negative double, and North's 1NT ended the auction. Dr. Innis led the king of hearts, finding partner with 74 QJ763 T75 A42. Hand #16.

In his written remarks, Humphrey argued that this is a miraculous lead. South has shown four hearts, so that is a dangerous suit and holding. Dr. Innis has a safe spade lead, but he makes the seemingly irrational lead that hits partner's suit. The charged parties replied that a spade lead may set up the suit for the opponents. North did not raise hearts, so they hoped to promote the ten.

Dr. Innis made an opening statement, stating that there was a bridge tactic for each of their bids and leads on these hands. As a partnership, they experimented with five or six systems

before settling on their current one, which emphasizes cover cards. They submitted system notes from a Barrett lesson as proof. Ms. Hanson added that some of their bids may look unusual, but it is consistent with their system. She would not ever use unauthorized information to cheat.

Dr. Innis is a bridge director and teacher, and together they have run bridge cruises. They only began playing on BBO in March, and he is a more aggressive player. He has no incentive to cheat, as he has reached all of his bridge goals: become a silver life master and use bridge as a means to sail on cruise ships.

Dr. Innis recounted a story at a club, where a teacher said it was acceptable for new players to speak on the phone while playing online. He strenuously objected. He believed that panelist Moss was involved, but they determined that it was a different person with a similar name.

Finally, Dr. Innis stated that they could not access their BBO session history, and that many of the links to hands did not work. He knows there were times they missed games and slams, and they once had a 30% game. Gordon replied his office does not automatically provide the records unless the charged parties request them.

The committee asked the charged parties to explain their rationale on several hands. The panelists also asked the advocates if they had any information about how long it took the charged pair to lead after the auction concluded or if they have any data on their scores in face-to-face play. The advocates did not have the information available.

### Deliberations and Findings of Fact

After brief closing remarks, Walker excused the parties, and the panel began its deliberations. The panel members discussed the hands in evidence, the arguments made by both parties, and the ACBL's Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR).

The committee agreed with the advocate that the opening leads stood out. The charged pair made numerous, non-standard leads that each hit the bullseye. Making opening leads is one of the most difficult plays in bridge, and the pair's double-dummy consistency was evidence of improper communication.

The same was true for defense and bidding. While the committee wished they had more than 16 hands to review, the ones that were submitted painted a clear image of cheating. The pairs made dangerous bids and plays that would normally be costly, but each time they turned out to be safe or successful. The committee found the charged parties' actions so extreme that they could not be reconciled with luck, aggressive tactics, or playing a unique system.

The committee found that the charged parties gave incomplete answers to their questions and those from the advocate. For example, they would justify why they led a suit but would not –

or could not – explain how they selected the successful pip or honor card. The burden of proof remained on the charging party to establish, but the panel scrutinized the answers the pair provided.

The panel was unanimous in deciding that the charging party had proven all three charges to their comfortable satisfaction.

### Sanctions

The OEOC advisor informed the panel that the charged parties had neither any prior disciplinary history nor player memos filed against them in the past 10 years. The CDR has two relevant sanction guidelines under E16 and E19 of Appendix B.

The panel agreed that expulsion and a total masterpoint penalty under section E16 would be excessive. The guidelines under section E19 recommending a suspension of at least 90 days were more consistent with the charged parties' conduct.

The committee recognized the seriousness of a cheating conviction. They also considered the strength of the evidence, tempered with the fact it only represented two days of play. The panel decided that an eight-month (240 days) suspension was appropriate given the facts. BBO has already barred Dr. Innis and Ms. Hanson, which is a de facto bridge suspension given the pandemic. Therefore, the suspension is effective retroactively to their April BBO disbarment. The panel also imposed two-years of probation and forfeiture of any masterpoints won on BBO in March or April of this year.