

MINUTES OF THE ACBL LAWS COMMISSION
WESTIN HOTEL, BOSTON, MA
NOVEMBER 22, 2008

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chip Martel, Chairperson	Ron Gerard
Adam Wildavsky, Vice-Chair	Robb Gordon
Peter Boyd	Eric Rodwell
Chris Compton	Matt Smith
Allan Falk	John Solodar

ALSO PRESENT:

Gary Blaiss, ACBL Executive Administrative Officer
Mike Flader, ACBL Tournament Director
Olin Hubert, ACBL Tournament Director
Matt Koltnow, ACBL Tournament Director
Al Levy, ACBL District 24 Director

The meeting was called to order at approximately 10:00 AM.

The minutes of the Las Vegas meeting were approved.

The WBF Laws Committee minutes were discussed.

This Commission is in agreement with the WBF Committee that tournament directors should be reasonably flexible/liberal in allowing a replacement call without immediate rectification (penalty) when that replacement call is more precise or similar in meaning to an insufficient bid (Law 27B1). The director should always ensure, however, that the insufficient bid was not material to the “offending” side receiving a favorable outcome (27D).

The Commission concurs with the WBF Committee’s interpretation of 12C1(b) in that a player’s expertise be considered in determining whether that player’s error was a serious one that contributed to that player’s side receiving an unfavorable result.

The application of Law 27B1 by tournament directors was discussed. It was acknowledged that some written guidance with examples might be helpful. However, it was considered that, prior to creating such a document, examples from use would be good. Therefore, Matt Smith was volunteered to speak with some tournament directors from other countries in which these Laws have been in use longer than in ACBL to get information. The Commission will ask the ACBL tournament department and senior staff to create some written guidance on this point by the Commission's Spring 2009 meeting for the Commission to review.

Laws 12B1 and 12C1(e) – Definition of “Infraction” and “Irregularity” in adjudicating unauthorized information (UI) cases: relevance of transmittal of extraneous information versus acting on that information contrary to Law 16B1(a).

The Chair, Chip Martel, will communicate with the Chair of the WBF Laws Committee to directly request its interpretation of this point.

Adam Wildavsky presented a written form for committees and tournament directors to use in making unauthorized information rulings. The consensus was that use of such a form might improve rulings or improve a player's understanding of why a decision was made and, therefore, may decrease the number of such appeals.

Al Levy presented the issue of Law 20F1 as it concerns asking questions about calls that were not made but were relevant and alternative or from which inferences may have been drawn where these are matters of partnership understanding. The specific example considered was an auction where North bid 4N and South responded 5D. The partnership agreement was that 4N asked for better minor (so 5D showed longer diamonds by agreement). However, South took 4N as blackwood, so the issue was whether EW were entitled to know how many aces (or key cards) 5D showed. A particular point was that North would know what South was showing if he misinterpreted 4N as blackwood (and thus even if better minor was the agreement, showing aces was obviously at least a possible meaning of the response).

The clear majority view held that it was more important to be very liberal in allowing a question (e.g. what is a 5D response to Blackwood here) - especially when the answer will make understanding the information from the auction equally available to all players at the table. Whether or not the subject of the question was a matter of partnership understanding is secondary to the matter of relevancy. A minority view held that if the question did not relate to an actual agreement of the side to which the question was asked that it did not have to be answered. Allan Falk volunteered to create a proposal to be discussed by e-mail to reach a consensus.

Until a consensus is reached, tournament directors should be reasonably liberal in allowing questions without permitting inquisitions and as the practicality of time permits.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.