

MINUTES

ACBL National Laws Commission
2014 Spring Meeting in Dallas, Texas
Saturday, March 22, 2014

Members Present (*by telephone):

Chip Martel, Chairman
Adam Wildavsky, Vice Chairman
Peter Boyd
Chris Compton
Allan Falk
*Ron Gerard
*Robb Gordon
Matt Koltnow
Al Levy
Eric Rodwell
Becky Rogers
Aaron Silverstein
Matt Smith
*Roger Stern
Howard Weinstein

Also Present:

Dan Plato, Tournament Operations

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m.

1. The minutes from Phoenix, Fall 2013 were corrected and approved (with the correction of Becky Rogers being in attendance and noting that Ron Gerard and Ms. Rogers were present via conference call; on the last page #5 should be #4). It was suggested and agreed that future minutes should reflect those actually in attendance and those via telephone.
2. Al Levy shared the work he has done with Roger Stern and in conjunction with the Portland Card Club in finishing the rewrites to the Laws of Contract Bridge.
 - a. The ACBL version will be published after final approval from the Laws Commission and WBF, and copyright and publishing issues have been handled. Main updates were included with the agenda as a handout.
 - b. The main goal was to bring these laws more in line with the Laws of Duplicate Bridge.
 - c. The committee thanked Mr. Levy for a job well done.
3. Suggestions for changes in the next draft of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge were discussed.
 - a. Allan Falk, previously acting Chairman of the subcommittee, has agreed to serve as Chairman.

- b. Handouts were provided and attached to the agenda for items to be considered at this meeting.
- c. The full Commission considered expansion of definitions to make the Laws more manageable and understandable. A general problem of seeking precision vs. general purposes of the Laws was noted, with special emphasis on suggestions #2, #3, and #4 (see handout) about the Introduction. Defense of these suggestions is in trying to help players and directors understand the hierarchical nature of the laws. Ron Gerard expressed his opinion concerning #3 and #4 that these typically are not part of the definitions section. #4 is in the current version of the Laws. Others felt that inclusion of a rewritten #3 can do no harm and may assist some readers.
- d. Law 8.A was discussed as to culpability for playing/passing the wrong boards. Matt Smith's opinion is there is no need to fix what isn't broken in relation to this law. Suggestion of changing "North player" to "stationary pair." Chris Compton and Eric Rodwell expressed dissent with the general consensus, stating that all players have equal culpability for making sure they are playing the correct boards.
- e. Law 12 was discussed next. Roger Stern expressed concern about the term "contestant." Such definition already exists because there needs to be clarity whether "contestant" is an individual, pair, or team when applying the Law. No change is recommended here. Chris Compton brought up the 2nd paragraph including the topic of "to discourage directors and committees from avoiding their responsibility of determining, to the extent feasible, what would likely have occurred but for the infraction." The Chair asked that this discussion be saved for later in the meeting. Aaron Silverstein noted that the "Law should be the Law, and not a recommendation on how to apply the Law." Matt Koltnow suggested moving 12.C.1(d) to be included totally within 12.C.1(a) to assist with clarity of the director's function and the hierarchy of procedure. Al Levy and Chip Martel argued that (d) should only apply to (c) here but Chip recommended rewriting and clarifying this.
- f. Roger Stern expressed strong objections to the use of the term "must" as applied to the directors rather than "shall" since in his view verb usages were not meant to apply in the same way to directors as to contestants.
- g. Law 13 was discussed next. Suggested revision in the wording of #1: "that if the unauthorized information is unlikely to interfere with normal bidding or play the Director allows the board to be played and scored. If he *later judges* the information *may well have* affected the outcome of the hand. . ." Matt Koltnow asked that Law 17.D be considered in relation to Law 13, asking that both Laws give directors greater discretion to allow pairs to play boards where an infraction has occurred but it still may be possible to achieve a normal result. Matt Smith asked for consideration to renumber Laws pulling Law 17 closer to 13. The Commission is reluctant to renumber Laws, but recognized that Law 16 interrupts what are otherwise technical laws. Thus a compromise was suggested that earlier Laws such as 13 and 15 make reference to Law 17. The WBF is examining a similar change to allow directors more flexibility. Aaron Silverstein also felt that allowing the auction to proceed should be aggressively allowed, with the standard proviso that the director can still adjust the score if the outcome suggests the infraction affected the result.

- h. A general philosophy was agreed that face-to-face meetings be used to agree on “meaning,” while e-mail and on-line meetings can be used to settle exact wording.
- i. In regards to Law 16 there is a general consensus that the Law is correct, but that wording changes are needed. “Demonstrably have been suggested” feels awkward to some, but arguments were made that changing words may be interpreted as changing the meaning or standards. There was consensus that better definitions of “authorized” and “unauthorized information” should be included, but later discussion suggested that addressing this in example format may also be helpful. Eric Rodwell suggested that perhaps the best approach is to develop examples made available to players and directors to help them understand outcomes when this Law is applied. Dan noted that there is such a resource at Rulings: FAQ on the ACBL website. (<http://www.acbl.org/play/rulingsFAQ.html>) Finally, it was suggested that the footnote on page 24 of the current Laws be cut as no one is certain what it means.
- j. The final discussion involved Law 12.C.1(c) and whether or not the ACBL should use this portion of the Law. The following topics were touched on:
 - i. Example 3 from the handout was looked at first. In this case “weighted” scores would not apply. “Weighted” scores should not be used where Logical Alternative is the consideration at hand.
 - ii. Examples 1 and 2 from the handout where weighting outcomes could be helpful were next considered.
 - iii. After discussion, a straw poll revealed a 10-3 vote in favor of adopting 12.C.1(c). Several points in favor and against were discussed (below).
 - iv. Does this reward and provide windfalls for offenders?
 - v. “Likely” and “at all probable” have cut-offs. With this implementation it would be rare to find two directors who come to the same percentages.
 - vi. Based on experience Matt Smith and Aaron Silverstein shared that more players from both sides go away happy following weighted rulings, rather than black and white, 0% and 100% situations.
 - vii. Adam Wildavsky, the strongest opponent of this implementation, asked for actual case examples so we can better understand outcomes. Matt Smith explained these are rarely published as the customers have gone away happy and the cases then do not reach appeals levels and the need to write them up.
 - viii. Eric Rodwell shared that this will clearly be harder to implement. If implemented and then applied by directors, committees should not have the power to make slight changes in percentages of weighting.
 - ix. Adam Wildavsky continued to argue that he fears this change will lessen incentives to follow the law..
 - x. The LC agreed to look for better examples to show weighted results in action and fairly applied.
 - xi. Chris Compton made a motion to accept 12.C.1(c) for ACBL usage with the goal of forwarding to the full Board. The motion was tabled. Adam Wildavsky stated he would forward his objections to the full Commission. Agreement to seek a vote via e-mail was agreed upon.

Meeting adjourned at 12:05.