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MINUTES

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ACBL National Laws Commission
2012 Spring Meeting in Memphis, Tennessee
Saturday, March 17, 2012 – 10 AM-12:00 PM

Members Present:

Chip Martel, Chairman
Peter Boyd
Chris Compton
Georgia Heth
Jeffrey Polisner
Eric Rodwell
Matt Smith
Howard Weinstein

Members Present via Conference Call:

Ron Gerard
Gary Blaiss
Robb Gordon

Also Present:

Mike Flader, Tournament Director
Matt Koltnow, Tournament Director
Sam Whitten, Assistant National Recorder

The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m.

1. The minutes from the Seattle meeting were discussed. The Laws Commission decided to remove Item 7 from the Seattle minutes and present their discussion in these minutes. As amended, the minutes from the Seattle meeting were moved, seconded and unanimously approved.
2. The Laws Commission discussed whether future versions of the Laws should limit the partner of the opening leader from asking questions. Matt Smith pointed out that allowing the partner of the opening leader to ask questions prevented leads out of turn and questions after a face down opening lead allowed the Director to correct misinformation. Jeffrey Polisner argued that allowing these questions provided opportunities for unauthorized information through appropriate and inappropriate questions (partly from questions after a face down opening lead, and partly by making it more likely players not on lead will illegally ask questions before a lead is made). Chip Martel pointed out that education could improve this situation by fixing the culture of the

game by reinforcing that the partner of the opening leader should not ask questions until the lead is made face down.

3. The Laws Commission discussed “How broadly may a regulating authority limit psyches?” Are psyches beneficial to the game? Is it allowable for a regulating authority to ban psyches? Should psyches be allowed in some events and not in others? Is there a rule against psyching against new players? There was a 1990s rule at NABCs that both sides were required to report a psyche. This rule was eventually repealed, because it was impossible to enforce. As a result, the ACBL Conditions of Contest were modified to regulate against frequent psyches. Chip Martel argued that we need better disclosure about bids that are not psyches but are actually illegal agreements, such as frequent opening bids with less than 8 HCP. Gary Blaiss argued that in the future the Regulating Authority should have the authority to regulate and restrict psychic actions.

4. The Laws Commission discussed the upcoming Philadelphia meeting. It was decided that because of the 10 & 3 start times that finding a meeting time would be difficult. Therefore, it was decided to try a teleconference meeting or cancel the meeting altogether [the ultimate decision made later was to cancel the summer meeting].

5. The Drafting Committee made a presentation regarding their work on the future revision of the Laws of the Duplicate Bridge. Chris Compton objected to the length of the current Laws and commented on the difficulty of simplifying the Laws. The Commission discussed the possibility of a simplified version of the Laws to cover most situations. The Drafting Committee has reviewed the first 16 Laws and presented their comments about these Laws. Chip Martel thanked the Committee for their hard work on this project.

6. The Commission discussed the situation where partner’s explanation does not match the actual hand held. Chris Compton argued that it was bad Law to allow a player to avoid explaining what his bid meant simply because you have a contrary reference in your notes. Several members of the Commission agreed with this sentiment. There was some sentiment on the Commission for making the new version of the Laws go further to protect against this inequity.

7. ACBL Board of Directors’ Item 121-25: Masterpoints from the Memphis NABC meeting was forwarded to the ACBL Laws Commission for an opinion about the legality of Bridge Base Online Robot Games under the Laws of Duplicate Bridge. Specifically, does a game with 3 robots and 1 human player violate the Laws of Duplicate Bridge when the hand with the most High Card Points (HCP) is given to the human player on each deal.

The Laws Commission decided that:

a. An event with one human player and three robot players where the human player is given the hand with the most HCP on each deal is not consistent with Law 6 of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge; and

b. Whether to sanction an event of this type is outside the authority of the Laws Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Whitten