

MINUTES

ACBL National Laws Commission
2013 Fall Meeting in Phoenix, Arizona
Saturday, November 30, 2013

Members Present:

Chip Martel, Chairman
Adam Wildavsky, Vice Chairman
Peter Boyd
Allan Falk
Mike Flader
Ron Gerard*
Robb Gordon
Becky Rodgers*
Matt Koltnow
Al Levy
Jeffrey Polisner
Eric Rodwell
Matt Smith
Howard Weinstein

* by telephone

Also Present:

Dan Plato, Tournament Operations

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

1. The minutes from the St. Louis, Spring 2013 were corrected and approved (with the addition of Mike Flader to the list of those in attendance).
2. Al Levy reported on items addressed by the WBF in Bali, September 19, 2013. Minutes from that meeting were included with the agenda for this Commission. Items discussed:
 - A. Detailed discussions which are speculative will not appear on the WBF website, but can be found in a separate set of minutes for the NBO.
 - B. The Laws Committee agreed that in the next version of the Laws, a lead out of turn at trick 13 will not be allowed. (under current Law, it is possible to lead out of turn at trick 13).
 - C. Anticipate there will be few changes in the next edition of the WBF Laws.
 - D. By ACBL motion the ACBL pays expenses for one Laws Commission member (selected by the ACBL Laws Commission) to attend the WBF Laws Committee meeting(s) at world championships. Adam Wildavsky, a member of the WBF Laws Committee, was selected for this purpose, and attended the meeting in Bali.

- E. The WBF Executive Council voted to eliminate Appeals Committees, starting in 2014. There was a discussion on the form of appeals in WBF events. In the WBF the main consideration for an appeal is whether the proper process has been followed.
- F. Adam Wildavsky, now also a member of the WBF LC, has agreed to act as liaison between the ACBL LC sub-committee considering changes for the 2017 laws and the WBF LC.

3. Designation by Declarer of card to be played (Laws 45 and 46).

If after 1C-2C-3N Declarer leads a diamond when Dummy is void and says “ruff it.”

- 1. What is Dummy to say?
- 2. Has Declarer called a low club?
 - A. The call to “ruff it” brings into question the concept of “Declarer’s Incontrovertible Intent.” Dummy is Declarer’s agent—if Dummy was absent at the time it is clear that Declarer would reach for a club to play to the trick.
 - B. Dummy should endeavor not to announce the contract should it become clear that Declarer has “lost his way.”
 - C. In private conversations with Declarers, most would admit that they had intended to call a small club and that they had indeed forgotten the contract.
 - D. Even if clubs were not put in the trump slot it may still be an Incontrovertible Intent to play a card from the trump slot. (Such as situations where dummy has put Declarer’s long suit in the trump slot.)
 - E. In rare cases Declarers are making a glib statement. Here it should be obvious that it is not Declarer’s Incontrovertible Intent to call for a non-existent trump card.
 - F. We should not allow Dummy to claim he is “preventing an irregularity” by trying to point out he can’t play a card that doesn’t exist. He may try to prevent a subsequent lead from the wrong hand.

In a diamond contract Declarer leads a club loser from Dummy and says “playing the 9 of diamonds” as he faces the 9 of hearts (Laws 45C2 and 45C4). The Commission considered the following:

- A. Does whichever comes first rule?
- B. If simultaneous does the tie go to the non-offending side? Or do words supercede the action of playing a card?

Ultimately the Commission agreed it is up to the Director’s interpretation, and application of this Law is dependent upon trying to discover Declarer’s intent. If other play at the table may have influenced Declarer to possibly change the play of a card, such change should not be allowed. (Small club led from Dummy and Declarer says “I’m ruffing with the 9 of diamonds.” He sees the 10 of diamonds played by RHO and now plays the 9 of hearts. In this case we would require the play of the 9 of diamonds if he holds that card.)

- 4. Authorized and Unauthorized Information for the offenders after an infraction (Law 50).
 - A. Referenced a memo from Allan Falk attached to the agenda.

- B. Is a defender allowed to know that partner must play “a” penalty card or “the” penalty card?
- C. If offender has a penalty card, say the K of spades, if the auction suggests that partner only had 3 points and the card is withdrawn and replaced in the hand, the problem lies in that it may lead the partner to draw inferences about his partner’s hand.
- D. 50.E.3 remains available to adjust scores in favor of the non-offending declaring side.
- E. If the penalty card is still seen, partner can make use of that knowledge. (No requirement to crash honors, for instance)
- F. Clarity does not exist as to what is authorized and unauthorized information relative to penalty cards, both those still exposed and those withdrawn.
- G. Straw poll of points of view:
 - 2 Votes—Allan’s view, “all offender's partner is allowed to know is that a penalty card exists—all other information is 100% unauthorized.” (most restrictive)
 - 11 Votes—Ton and Matt’s point of view—“ offender's partner is allowed to know that this specific card exists, but is not allowed to draw an inference as to the rest of the offender’s holding”
 - 1 Vote—Peter’s view, “offender's partner can use all information available from the knowledge that his partner must play that card (for example, he can underlead to it.) And, he can draw any inferences he wishes from the knowledge that partner was dealt that card. For example, he can "count points" and draw conclusions about what other cards declarer or partner might hold. However, he may not draw inferences from the fact that partner led that card (e.g. if the King led, that partner has the Q).
- H. Deferred discussion on whether Declarer’s choice on what to do with the penalty card (prohibit, require, allow any lead) is UI.
- I. Final decision by the Commission was to recommend changing the word “a” to “the” penalty card for 50.E.1.

5. Clarification of Law 12.C.1.b which states “If, subsequent to the irregularity, the non-offending side has contributed to its own damage by a serious error (unrelated to the infraction) or by a wild or gambling action, it does not receive relief in the adjustment for such part of the damage as is self-inflicted. The offending side should be awarded the score that it would have been allotted as the consequence of its infraction only.”

- A. Referenced an email from Ton Kooijman, Chairman of the WBF Laws Committee including examples.
- B. Because of lack of clarity the committee recommended drafting a better version of 12.C.1.b and to defer action at this time. A new draft would consider previous law versions and current practice. Phrases to consider rewriting include “such part of the damage” and “serious error.” “Unrelated to the infraction” should be considered “subsequent not consequent.” Goal is to make this relatively simple to apply.

- C. ACBL has no official position at this time in reference to Ton Kooijman's opinion. ACBL has no official procedure to apply in this situation.
6. Laws of Contract Bridge (for rubber bridge) rewrites are completed and ready to be published according to Al Levy.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00.