

MINUTES

ACBL National Laws Commission
2015 Fall Meeting in Denver, Colorado
Saturday, November 28, 2015

Members Present:

Chip Martel, Chairman
Adam Wildavsky, Vice-Chairman
Peter Boyd
Chris Compton
Allan Falk
Ron Gerard
Matt Koltnow
Al Levy
Eric Rodwell
Rebecca Rogers
Aaron Silverstein
Matt Smith
Howard Weinstein

Also Present:

Dan Plato

Meeting called to order at 10:00 a.m.

1. The minutes from the New Orleans meeting, Spring 2015, were approved.
2. The Laws Commission discussed Law 43A.2(c): “Dummy may not, on his own initiative, look at the face of a card in either Defender’s hand.” The Commission discussed various methods of restricting Dummy from looking at a Defender’s hand. Adam Wildavsky volunteered to write a short note for the NABC Daily Bulletin regarding this issue.:
The recent spate of accusations of high level cheating has rocked the bridge world. In several of these cases a player, as dummy, is alleged to have asked to look at a defender’s hand and then signaled the location of a key card to the declarer. The relevant law is this one:

43A2(c) Dummy may not, on his own initiative, look at the face of a card in either defender’s hand.

At its meeting here in Denver, the ACBL Laws Commission voted to request the WBF Laws Committee to strengthen this provision in the next version of the laws as follows:

43A2(c) Dummy may not look at the face of a card in either defender’s hand. A defender may not show dummy his hand.

The Commission passed unanimously a motion to request the WBF Laws Commission to remove the phrase “on his initiative” from Law 43A.2(c) in the new version of the Laws.

While this change does not yet have the force of law, the ACBL LC requests players to act as though it did. There is no reason for a defender to show dummy his hand, and it can lead to a trace of suspicion when, for instance, declarer subsequently makes an inspired guess.

3 Adam Wildavsky gave a report on the WBF Laws Commission meeting in Chennai. Adam reported that the WBF LC continued its progress through the existing lawbook in numerical order, addressing suggestions it has received. The meeting in Chennai covered Laws 40-73. As in previous meetings, decisions were postponed on especially difficult or contentious issues.

Adam reported that the WBF LC has not reached a consensus about a method to improve Law 45C.4(b). Players and Directors have indicated a certain amount of confusion regarding this law. The ACBL LC discussed ways that the wording on this law could be improved. While the Laws Commission agreed that the wording could be improved, no consensus was reached. The ACBL Laws Commission discussed the question, “What is a demonstrable bridge reason under Law 73F”. Various methods of defining a demonstrable bridge reason were discussed but no consensus was reached.

The ACBL Laws Commission also discussed the following passage from the Scope of the Laws, “An offending player should be ready to pay any penalty or rectification graciously or to accept any adjusted score awarded by the tournament director.” Several different ideas were presented to improve this passage. It was decided to work on improved wording before the next meeting. Subsequent email discussions resulted in the following proposal, which was forwarded to the WBF LC:

"Players should accept graciously any rectification, penalty, or ruling by a tournament director or appeals committee."

We considered and rejected replacing "should" with "shall" or "must" and also removing the word "graciously". There were a few reasons we pursued this:

- Appeals committees should be mentioned -- that seemed an oversight.
- Players who request but do not receive an adjusted score should also accept the decision graciously.
- The teammates of the offending player should also accept the ruling graciously.

The new version is shorter and hopefully clearer.

4. The Laws Commission discussed under what circumstances a Declarer may ask about the defenders' lead agreements. There was extensive discussion about whether a specific question is acceptable when Declarer already knows the holding led from. For example, may the Declarer ask about the meaning of a King lead while holding the Ace? After extensive discussion, the Laws Commission reached a consensus that a general inquiry was acceptable, whereas a specific question could be a violation of Law 73F. The Laws Commission unanimously approved the following question at all times: “Please explain your leads and carding.”

5. The Laws Commission considered two recent claims situations involving blocked suits that led to Appeals Committees. The Commission also discussed whether the likelihood of the Defender making a specific play should be considered by the Director. No consensus was reached.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00.