

ACBL National Laws Commission

2017 Spring Meeting in Kansas City, MO

Saturday, March 11, 2017

Members Present:

Chip Martel Chairman

Adam Wildavsky, Vice-Chairman

Peter Boyd

Allan Falk (by phone)

Ron Gerard (by phone)

Robb Gordon

Matt Koltnow

Eric Rodwell

Rebecca Rogers

Aaron Silverstein

Matt Smith

Roger Stern (by phone)

Howard Weinstein

Also Present:

Linda Dunn

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. The chair introduced Linda Dunn, ACBL In-House Counsel, who is acting as the National Recorder at this meeting.

1. The minutes of the Fall 2016 meeting were approved.
2. Adam Wildavsky reviewed with the Commission members the highlights only of the WBF Laws Committee changes to the draft of the 2017 Laws which were felt to merit discussion (a summary of the changes to the Laws had previously been provided to Commission members via email). A copy of the current Laws of Duplicate Bridge was provided to each in-person attendee.

Wildavsky explained that slightly half of the current Laws were unchanged. Perhaps 20 Laws had significant wording changes that will have no effect on how rulings were happening at the tables.<sup>1</sup> These changes are reflective of the penultimate draft which was

---

<sup>1</sup> See Laws 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 34, 35, 37, 38, 41, 42, 46, 47, 49, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 63, 69, 70, 78, 80, 81, 87, 90, 91, and 93.

distributed in January and a summary of changes had been emailed to Commission members (the final draft of the Laws was approved the day before this Saturday meeting):

- a. Law 1 – the Regulating Authority may require the face of each card be symmetrical; the back of cards should be identical and symmetrical. The Commission members felt this was more of an ACBL policy rather than a law. It was suggested that the ACBL default be symmetrical cards but that non-symmetrical cards be allowed in other special circumstances (since we do not want to force clubs to replace all their cards) with some deadline established when all must adhere to the requirement. A Commission action item would be to make a motion for the Board of Directors or ACBL management effectuate the ACBL requirement.
- b. Law 4 – adds an exception that a partnership may change during a session if it is authorized by the director. The Commission members briefly discussed this change but had no issues with it.
- c. Law 6 – adds a requirement that two consecutive cards may not be dealt to the same hand (e.g. during shuffle for team play). The Commission members had no substantive comment.
- d. Law 7 – makes it legal for defenders to play dummy's cards if requested by the declarer. The Commission members had no substantive comment.
- e. Law 12 – substantial changes to the wording regarding adjusted scores. These changes engendered significant discussion.
- f. Law 13 – changes regarding the incorrect number of cards in a hand. If a player has made a call, the board may be played and scored even if one player has seen cards in another player's hand. If the director judges that extraneous information may have been passed, he can adjust the board. It was felt that there was a trend in the new Laws to allow play to continue more often and adjust scores afterwards if harm seems to have been done. The Commission members approved of this trend.
- g. Law 16 – substantial wording changes, many suggested by this Commission, the most interesting of which is 16B regarding Authorized Information (AI) and Unauthorized Information (UI). For 16B1(a) A player may not choose a call or play that is demonstrably suggested over another by unauthorized information if the other call or play is a logical alternative.
- h. Law 20 – substantial wording changes regarding explanations of calls. The Commission members discussed the meaning of the changes and how the Law could be practically applied. It was explained that the WBF Laws Committee would provide commentary and examples of the Laws prior to their use in September.
- i. Law 23 – changes allow for replacing a withdrawn call with a "comparable" call, including providing the definition of a comparable call. Former Law 23 has been

replaced by this “comparable call” regulation and Law 23 has been moved elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

- j. Law 26 – changes re-write the rule governing lead restrictions after a call has been withdrawn (incorporates "comparable call" language from Law 23). The Commission members commented favorably, including recent examples and reaching an understanding of the meaning of the “subset of available calls”, regarding these changes.
- k. Law 30 - substantial wording changes governing a pass out of rotation (incorporates "comparable call" language from Law 23).
- l. Law 31 – the Law regarding a bid out of rotation rewritten to use the "comparable call" language to provide no rectification for a comparable call.
- m. Law 32 – the Law regarding a double or redouble call out of rotation rewritten to use the "comparable call" language.
- n. Law 36 – language added to cover an inadmissible double or redouble that is discovered during the play. There has been some online discussion of these changes but otherwise they elicited no comment.
- o. Law 40 – changes re-write the terms under which a Regulating Authority may regulate special partnership understandings, these changes removed some options available in the current Laws. Law 40A.4. may require some clarification in the commentary. Wildavsky noted approvingly the requirement (which may be in the current Laws) that repeated failure to explain partnership understandings be penalized.
- p. Law 43 – clarifies that a dummy may call the director after another player has drawn attention to an irregularity; a defender may not show dummy his hand; if a violation occurs (i.e. dummy looks at another player’s hand) he loses his dummy rights; and adjustment of the results possible if dummy commits an infraction that benefits declarer. It also includes a clarification of declarer’s ability to change the designation of a card played from dummy based on a slip of the tongue versus a change after a loss of concentration or reconsideration of action. After discussion, the Commission members thought that this was a reasonable clarification.
- q. Law 50 – changes and clarifies issues of AI and UI regarding penalty cards. Wildavsky opined that this Law will be clarified in the examples to be provided. There was some discussion of the adjusting clause at the end of this Law which gives the director the discretion to award an adjusted score under certain circumstances.
- r. Law 51 – changes add further clarification to declarer's options when an opponent has multiple penalty cards. This provision merely adds clarification.
- s. Law 53 – the changes add a new rule that a lead out of turn at the 13th trick is never accepted.

---

<sup>2</sup> Some discussion ensued regarding the desire to renumber the Laws which is disfavored since directors (and some players) know commonly used Laws by number.

- t. Law 61 – changes expressly provides the right of a defender to ask partner if he failed to follow suit and removes the Regulatory Authority's power to disallow this; changes also clarify that a claim of a revoke (during the play) does not create any right to immediately examine quitted tricks.
- u. Law 64 – changes to director's discretion regarding revoke penalties, including repeated revokes by the same offender.
- v. Law 65 – declarer's right to ask for a played card to be properly pointed toward the winning side expires at the lead to the next trick (placing cards in a pile is disallowed).
- w. Law 66 – changes the interval during which a player may inspect his own card from the prior trick.
- x. Law 67 – changes regarding defective tricks to provide a clarification.
- y. Law 68 – changes regarding claims and concessions, including allowing play to continue after a claim or concession if it is requested by the non-claiming or non-conceding side and all four players agree.
- z. Law 72 – Law 23 was revised and moved to Law 72; a clause was added regarding "awareness of potential damage" (by an offender).
- aa. Law 73 – changes add additional clarification about tempo and deceptive plays. Paragraph D.1. was only recently changed by the drafters. The current Law seeks to prevent players from drawing inferences, which is impossible; rather the intent is to keep them from acting on such inferences (or force partners into drawing such inferences so that they do not act on UI). In addition, abnormal tempo that enhances deception is prohibited.
- bb. Law 75 – changes regarding mistaken explanations and mistaken calls which can result in an adjusted score, including the ability to call the director.
- cc. Law 86 – changes the procedure for scoring fouled boards in team play where only one table has a result or two results but the board was fouled. Under certain circumstances, the director will have the ability to award an assigned adjusted score. (Law 87 addresses the same topic for individual or pair games.) A consensus emerged that this Law may be still open for discussion and that more thought may improve the wording.

There was a general consensus that it was valuable to have placed the proposed changes on the internet for comment so that the information in such comments was available to the drafters. The volume of comments did not overwhelm the reviewers.

3. Having no further business, the Commission adjourned at noon.