

**ACBL Laws Commission Minutes
San Francisco**

Date: November 30, 2019

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chip Martel at 10:04 PST.

Present telephonically were Peter Boyd, Becky Rogers and Matt Smith.

Present in person were Chairman Chip Martel, Vice Chairman Adam Wildavsky, Allan Falk, Lynne Feldman, Ron Gerard, Jeff Goldsmith, Robb Gordon, Matt Koltnow, Al Levy, Eric Rodwell, Aaron Silverstein and Howard Weinstein.

The spring minutes were approved by email and are posted on the website.

The LC noted with sadness the recent passing of long time member Roger Stern, whose humanity, wisdom, insights, and contributions to the Laws and to the deliberations of the Laws Commission over many years were invaluable and inspirational.

The WBF Laws Commission met in Wuhan. The minutes will be distributed when they become available.

1 - Law 45C2 - The WBF LC discussed when a card becomes a "Played card"¹. The ACBL Laws Commission promulgated the following interpretation in March 2005:

"The two phrases of law 45 C 2 are separate - i.e. Declarer must play a card from his hand held face up, and either (1) touching or nearly touching the table or (2) maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played."

Our new interpretation follows: A declarer's card in motion held face up nearly touching the table is not a played card. The word "held" in the law means "maintained", not "held between two fingers"

The prior consensus of the ACBL Laws Commission (Pittsburgh 2005) is that, once the director determines that declarer's detached, face up card reaches the position of nearly touching the table or actually touching the table, it is a played card.

The WBF interpretation is: "For declarer the manner in which he exposes the card is very important. Declarer is allowed to discover that he detached the wrong card from hand and attempt to retract it. Such a card is not necessarily played, even if it has become visible to one or both of the defenders. Bringing the card to the table and retracting it in the same movement also

¹ See notes in Appendix

does not make it ‘played’. The definition of a declarer’s played card is only fulfilled at the moment when the card comes to rest.”

Peter Boyd said that the WBF wanted to make a determination as to intent rather than the current more punitive interpretation. Allan Falk was concerned about maneuvering a card as a means of testing an opponent’s reaction – Aaron Silverstein noted that Law 12A1 could be applied (and 73D2 – rg) in the situation envisioned by Allan.

Aaron Silverstein moved – Adam Wildavsky seconded – to adopt the WBF LC’s interpretation of the meaning of the word “held”. Motion passed unanimously.

2 – Prior LC interpretations: Adam W raised the issue of whether a prior interpretation (under a previous Laws version) loses validity when new laws are promulgated. There was discussion leaning toward continuing the effectiveness of any interpretation as to which the underlying Law was not the subject of a substantive change.

Jeff Goldsmith advocated that the LC should reinterpret in all cases because otherwise, in his view, the “Laws are not complete”. This didn’t have the concurrence of the rest of the members.

3 – Indexing interpretations: Chip suggests indexing Laws Commission interpretations to correlate with the Laws by Law number. Adam W stated that the WBF is working towards that end. There was no motion, but the general sense of the group was that the LC should strive to incorporate interpretations into new editions of the Laws. When that is not done, directors must use judgement as to how/whether to apply interpretations of predecessor versions of the Laws, assuming TDs have access to such rulings and are aware of them generally.

4 – Defender’s claim: Regarding Laws 49 and 68-71, Eric Rodwell was concerned that a defender shouldn’t be forced to lose his trick because he was trying to claim or speed up play by showing declarer his winning card(s). There was consensus that it is a matter for the director’s judgment, but generally the defender should not be forced to discard his winner.

5 - Opening 1NT with singleton¹ -

Tournament Directors have no defined rectification for violation of the regulation. After considerable discussion -

Moved by Adam Wildavsky, seconded by Aaron Silverstein:

The Laws Commission respectfully requests that the Competition and Conventions and Committee revisit the phrasing of regulations regarding, for example, notrump openings with a singleton below the rank of the queen. As currently formulated, any such regulations appear inconsistent with Law 40A3, which guarantees the right of any player to base a call or bid on bridge judgment and such a deviation may not be deemed “illegal”. The Laws Commission does note that, per Law 40C1, repeated deviations of this kind might indeed reflect an implicit

partnership agreement or understanding (see Law 40A1(a) and B(1)(a)) which can be validly proscribed consistently with Law 40B2(a)(i).

6 - Thinking at trick one: The LC had a lengthy discussion about defender's play to trick 1. The LC recognizes that there is provision for regulation in Law 73A2. There was no consensus on further interpretation.

7 - Law 91B: The Laws Commission recognizes that the Board of Directors in San Francisco passed a motion eliminating Tournament Conduct Committees at Regionals and Sectionals. The Laws Commission interprets "disqualification" in Law 91B to include behavior sufficiently egregious that removal of a player is desirable and necessary for the tranquil operation of the tournament. The Director in Charge, with the approval of the Tournament Organizer, therefore, has the right to remove a player for the balance of the tournament. When a player has been disqualified by the Director-in-Charge for the balance of a tournament, the matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Chair having jurisdiction for further adjudication as soon as practicable.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30AM.

Appendix

Played Card

The WBF Laws Committee in Wuhan interpreted Law 45C2 in a way that seems to be contrary to what our LC interpreted some time ago. The WBF interpretation is that a declarer's card in motion held face up nearly touching the table is not a played card. That is, the word "held" in the law means "maintained", not "held between two fingers". In light of that interpretation, maybe we should reconsider or clarify our position. Below is the minute from Pittsburgh in 2005.

Matt Smith

Law 45C2: If the director determines that a declarer detaches a card from his hand and places it touching or nearly touching the table, does it matter how long the card remains in that position? The two phrases of law 45 C 2 are separate - i.e. Declarer must play a card from his hand held face up, and either (1) touching or nearly touching the table or (2) maintained in such a position as to indicate that it has been played. The consensus of the commission is that, once the director determines that declarer's detached, face up card reaches the position of nearly touching the table or actually touching the table, it is a played card. (Pittsburgh Spring 2005)

Opening INT with singleton

Subject: Opening INT with a singleton

In the October "Ruling the Game", director Matt Smith states that "opening 1NT with a singleton below the queen ... is an illegal bid in itself".

Law 40 2a of The Laws of Duplicate Bridge says "The Regulating Authority (ACBL) is empowered without restriction to allow, disallow, or allow conditionally any special partnership understanding. ... Such a regulation MUST NOT restrict style and judgment, only method.

If I pick up J AKQ K532 A8742, it is a matter of style and judgment whether I think that the best opening bid is 1C, 1D, or 1NT. As long as we continue to play under the Laws, the ACBL and the director do not have the right to tell me which bid I may or may not make.

Douglas Doub

From: **Rulings**

Hello Douglas

Just a few years ago the definition of a natural 1NT opening excluded a singleton of any rank. Players said that they should be allowed to use their judgement to open 1NT with a singleton Ace or King. The regulation was changed to allow that judgement and included singleton Ace, King, or Queen. The new convention charts continue to allow that judgement and include the statement in the headings of each chart the statement "If an Agreement would be disallowed unless it satisfies a specific High Card Point or shape requirement, a player may not use judgment to include hands with fewer High Card Points or a different shape."

There was considerable discussion among our top directors regarding the subject of Matt's article. I was aware of the discussion but I was not a part of it so I can't comment on it. It certainly wasn't just Matt's interpretation of the convention charts.

The instructions that were sent to ACBL Tournament Directors on this included the following: "While it is understood that some may have misgivings that this policy could be in conflict with portions of Law 40, the ACBL Laws Commission has declined to find that to be the case. What is below represents official ACBL policy and is to be enforced by all tournament directors."

If we now allow judgement to include a singleton Jack then what about the player who wants to use judgement to include a Ten, or an Eight, or maybe a Deuce. If we allow any player to claim “judgement” then the Convention Charts become useless. As a director I look for a clear regulation on this so I’m not using my judgement to decide if a player’s judgement is reasonable and allowable.

Any change to this policy would need to originate with either the Laws Commission or the Competition and Conventions Committee.

John Nichols, Tournament Director and Ruling Box Associate