

ACBL Laws Commission Minutes

Date: March, 23 2019

The meeting was called to order at 10:03.

Congratulations to new HOF member Peter Boyd.

This is the last meeting for Roger Stern, and we are grateful for his many years of service.

1. The Fall 2018 minutes were already accepted via email.
2. Requests, conditions, and procedures for appeals to the Laws Commission under the ACBL's Law 93C1 election (permitting appeals to the LC from a tournament Appeals Committee) were considered; Since there are no existing procedures, discussion centered around a draft proposal, developed by Allan Falk with assistance from Adam Wildavsky, and circulated prior to the meeting, on which various LC members had offered comments and suggestions.

There was a consensus that clarification of facts or materials provided to the committee is ok but only via the original committee or the DIC. Thus, the Laws Commission should not hear from the parties directly on these matters.

Ron Gerard made the point that the appeal report is often incomplete compared to a "legal" appeal where there are transcripts etc. Thus, there was a consensus that we can solicit from the Appeals Committee and DIC clarification of their writeup and of evidence that was presented.

There was not a consensus concerning the extent of the Laws Commission mandate, and discussion was extensive. Most of those voicing opinions believed that the "point of law" issue ought to be strictly interpreted.

This led to a discussion of the appeal form, and Adam felt that in the original appeal, the appellee should have the opportunity to make a written statement. Matt Koltnow suggested that this wasn't generally necessary and wasn't always possible.

Appeals to the Laws Commission will be filed with the ACBL Recorder, who will forward the materials to the LC. The Recorder's receipt will mark the time for calculation of applicable deadlines.

After additional editing, Adam Wildavsky moved to adopt the proposed procedures in the form attached as Exhibit A to these minutes. Carried unanimously.

3. Suggestions for improving ACBL appeals: i) follow existing procedures better, ii) allow an option for appeal parties to speak directly to the appeal panel. According to Matt Koltnow, most of the suggestions are either already in place or impractical. One possibility that there seemed to be agreement on is that parties who are unable to appear and wish to make statements could have their statement recorded. The Laws Commission encourages the Board or the Competition and Conventions Committee to provide a way for players to appeal when their score was adjusted without their knowledge, even if the deadline has passed if it is at a time when correcting the result is possible.

4. The LC addressed revisions to existing guidelines concerning claims, with the caveat that guidelines are not intended to be rigid, but to be applied in a sensible manner in furtherance of the pertinent Laws (68-70). There was a consensus to modify the current policy as below by adding item E and changing C. from the previous "C. It is considered a normal play for declarer to take a safety check with a "high" trump."

We note that whenever there is an attempt to establish guidelines, there is a risk that some will use them in lieu of common sense or even of law. Guidelines are not laws but are intended to form a basis for consistency. With this in mind, the following are given as guidelines concerning claims:

A. The order of play of non-trump suits should be the worst possible for claimer (although play within the any suit is normally from the top down).

B. Declarer may never attempt to draw any trumps of which he was likely unaware, if doing so would be to his advantage.

C. It is not considered a normal play for declarer to take a safety check with a "high" trump, nor to play trump to put pressure on a defender.

D. Declarer should not be forced to play the remainder of his trumps to his disadvantage if both opponents have shown out of the suit.

E. When ruffing, claimer is normally presumed to ruff as low as possible.

5. Further discussion of obligation to not accept a trick the opponents could not lose, laws 72B2 and 79A2:

This matter is tabled pending receiving an interpretation from the WBF Laws Commission - the ACBL Laws Commission consensus is as follows: "While the Laws Commission recognizes that there is absolutely no obligation to reveal your own revoke that is unnoticed, such as after a claim, it is recommended that in accordance with Law 79A2, a player should reveal his revoke in the spirit of Law 79A2 after the penalty provisions have lapsed."

Old Business:

6. Al Levy pointed out that our Laws are now completely independent of the WBF. While we have some variations in the 2017 edition, our laws are nearly identical to those of the WBF. However, the ACBL is no longer directly affiliated with the WBF. It is hoped however that the next drafting will still be on a cooperative basis.

With regard to law 80, while it is generally understood that the ACBL is the Regulating Authority for its tournaments, it would be sensible to state this explicitly under 80A 1. in our laws.

7. Robb Gordon announced that with much help from Chip and Adam, the "Logical Alternative" article is completed and will run in the Daily and Monthly Bulletin.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45

Attendance:

Chip Martel, Chairman
Adam Wildavsky, Vice-Chairman
Peter Boyd
Allan Falk
Ron Gerard (telephonically)
Robb Gordon (member and staff to the Commission)
Matt Koltnow
Alvin Levy
Eric Rodwell
Matt Smith
Howard Weinstein