

**Ethics and Discipline**  
**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**  
**Updated January 2012**

**From Non-Officials:**

**Q:** I had a problem with the behavior of an ACBL tournament director at a recent tournament. Do I complain to the unit and request a disciplinary hearing?

**A:** No. A complaint about an ACBL tournament director, TD, (an ACBL employee) goes to the employee's supervisor. At a tournament, the director-in-charge of the tournament (DIC) should be notified. A complaint about the DIC or the DIC's resolution of a complaint should be sent to the ACBL's Manager of Bridge Quality and Services, Ken Horwedel at ACBL Headquarters, 6575 Windchase Blvd, Horn Lake, MS, 38637 or e-mail to [Ken.Horwedel@acbl.org](mailto:Ken.Horwedel@acbl.org).

**Q:** At our regular Wednesday evening game at the bridge club, a player was rude to me and my partner. The director of the game did nothing. To whom should I send a complaint?

**A:** The responsibility for behavior at a club sponsored game is that of the Management of the sanctioned game (i.e. the Club Manager). If the director of the game and the Club Manager are the same person, you have nowhere else to go to voice your displeasure with the director's handling of the incident (i.e. you have to go to the director/club manager) unless the club has a Board of Directors (e.g., it is a member owned and operated club). If such is the case, you could make a further complaint to the Club Board of Directors about the original incident and the club manager's handling of the incident. If club management continues to do nothing about player misbehavior, your only options are to put up with it or play at another club. Player behavior for club sponsored games is the sole responsibility of the sanctioned game (club).

**Q:** At a Unit Championship held at our club, a player was rude to me and my partner. The director of the game did nothing and the club manager upheld the director. Is there another entity to whom to address a complaint?

**A:** Yes. Since this is a unit sponsored event, you may make a complaint (in writing) about the original incident to the sponsoring unit and request a disciplinary hearing. Be aware that if charges are made to the unit's disciplinary committee, you, as the complainant, will have to appear to support (present evidence and/or testimony) your complaint.

If the unit has a recorder, you could, instead of a written complaint to the unit, make a report (submit a player memo) to the recorder to handle the incident as he or she sees fit. In that case, if the recorder decided to make a complaint and request a hearing, the recorder would be the complainant and you would likely appear as a witness.

**Q:** At the Monday evening game at our club, my opponent was rude and obnoxious. I called the director and asked that director enforce the ACBL Zero Tolerance policy. The director did not penalize the player and only requested that the player stop harassing us. Please make the director enforce the ACBL Zero Tolerance Policy.

**A:** There is some confusion about the ACBL Zero Tolerance (ZT) Policy. This policy is in effect for the three North American National Bridge Championships conducted by ACBL. This policy encourages the director to use his disciplinary authority to issue on the spot penalties to players who misbehave during a session rather than go through a formal ACBL disciplinary hearing. While Districts, Units and clubs are encouraged to use the ACBL ZT policy and most regional and sectional tournaments use it, the manner in which misbehavior is addressed at their events is up to the local sponsoring organization.

If you are displeased with the way misbehavior is handled at a club game, you should voice your concerns to club management (the club manager). Many times the club manager and the director are the same person. You should still voice your concerns to this person as dealing with misbehavior at a club game (with or without a ZT policy, ACBL's or the club's own) is the sole jurisdiction of club management.

**Q:** After a local tournament session, another player was rude and obnoxious to me as I was walking to my car.

**A:** A player can be disciplined under the Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR) Section 3.7 for actions and behavior anywhere on the playing site. CDR section 3.7 provides:

**3.7** Actions or behavior unbecoming a person participating in an ACBL sanctioned tournament or event; or a person attending (at the time and site of) an ACBL sanctioned tournament or event or ACBL activity (including a unit or district activity).

3.7.1 "Site" includes, but is not limited to, parking lots, elevators, restaurants and hotels at or around the location of such tournament, event or activity.

3.7.2 A private and confidential conversation is not within the ACBL's jurisdiction even if it takes place at a tournament site.

3.7.3 E-mails or letters sent to an ACBL official or entity (such as a unit or district Board of Directors) may constitute a violation of 3.7.

3.7.4 E-mails or letters sent to private individuals shall not constitute a violation of 3.7.

A written complaint should be prepared by the Unit Recorder or any other ACBL member, and the complaint should be sent to the Unit Charging Party/President. The Unit Charging Party determines whether there is sufficient grounds for making charges against the person. The Unit President prepares a written charging letter and forwards it to the Unit Disciplinary Chairman. The Unit Disciplinary Chairman conducts a hearing and determines the appropriate punishment.

**Q:** Where should I take a Player Memo form that I filled out at our local tournament?

**A:** The Player Memo can be turned into the local Unit Recorder or any tournament director working at the tournament. The tournament director will take responsibility to forward the Player Memo to the appropriate Recorder.

**From Officials:**

**Q:** I am the disciplinary chairperson for my unit. A member of the unit filed a complaint with me requesting a disciplinary hearing. How do I decide whether to have a hearing?

**A:** To decide whether to hold a hearing is not a decision that is yours to make. A complaint should go to the unit president and be given to the unit charging party. If the unit has not designated a charging party, the president usually assumes that responsibility. Once the charging party makes charges and sends them to you along with the underlying complaint, you must schedule, conduct and report (to ACBL headquarters) a hearing. Please refer to How to Handle Complaints at <http://www.acbl.org/play/disciplinaryCode.html> for complete information.

**Q:** What is the time limit within which I, as unit disciplinary chairperson, must hold a hearing?

**A:** The only specific period of limitations established by the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations (CDR) is the time within a complaint must be made. Once that has been met, the charge and the hearing should be brought and scheduled, respectively, expeditiously. For example, CDR 5.2.2 dictates that an initial charge based upon a complaint must be brought expeditiously but does not state a specific time.

Some reasons why no specific time period has been established are:

- There may be significant reasons why the charging party has to get more information from the complainant in order to make a decision.
- The disciplinary committee chairperson has to find a time for the hearing that is reasonable for the committee, the complainant and the accused.
- Parties to the appeal may be unavailable due to prior business or personal commitments.

**Q:** As Unit Recorder, How should I handle a Player Memo that I received at a local sectional tournament?

**A:** The procedure for handling a Player Memo is outlined in the ACBL Recorder Regulations, which can be viewed on the website at: [http://web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/play/Recorder-Regulations-and-Procedures\\_11\\_08.pdf](http://web2.acbl.org/documentlibrary/play/Recorder-Regulations-and-Procedures_11_08.pdf)

As the Unit Recorder, you should conduct a preliminary investigation. This includes speaking to all involved parties and any witnesses. You should not disclose names of the other involved parties while conducting your investigation. This is true, even if, they are likely to guess the identity of the other parties. After you conclude your investigation of the player memo, you need to make a decision about the seriousness of the issues presented:

- 1) Do you as the Recorder believe that this one incident is grounds for a disciplinary hearing against the subject(s)?
- 2) Do you believe that the incident warrants recording in your files for possible future use?
- 3) Do you believe that there is no merit to the issues presented in the player memo?

If you decide yes with regard to question number one, then you should forward the player memo and your file to the Unit Charging Party/President along with a recommendation that charges be brought and a disciplinary hearing be conducted. If you decide yes with regard to question number two, then you should prepare a written summary of your findings and record it in your files for possible future use. In addition, you should send a copy of the player memo/summary of your findings to the National Recorder. If you decide yes with regard to question number three, you can destroy the file and close your investigation.

Normally, you choose one of the three alternatives presented above and disregard the other two alternatives. In all three cases, you should send a short note to the Reporter and the Subject informing them of your decision. You should not disclose names or files to the reporter or subject.