

REVIEW OF 2017 LAW CHANGES.

As you will be aware the WBF has brought into being a revised set of Laws which will be effective by latest 30th September 2017. However, the EBU are introducing them to their events from August 1st and I see no reason for us to hold back.

The amendments are numerous but, in reality the bulk are tidying up or very unlikely to impact on the way we play and direct at Meon. It goes without saying that Directors should be aware of the new laws and apply them and a full copy will be available at the Club when we introduce them.

The purpose of this paper is to draw your attention to the changes which are most likely to affect us on a day to day basis. There are two such major changes:

1. Law 23 introduces a new concept of “comparable calls “. It is defined in the law but to me the meaning is in the words used. However, you should read the wording yourselves.

The use of this expression “comparable call” is now in Laws 26,27,30,31 and 32. For example where there is an unaccepted insufficient bid Law 27.B.1.b allows that bid to be corrected by a comparable call (as well as by a bid in the same denomination). There is no consequence for the offending side (although the director has a fall back remedy if damage has resulted).

Similarly, Laws 29 to 32 allow a comparable call to be made when a call has been made out of rotation. This is a major change. Previously you will recall that, if a bid was made at partner’s turn to open, this would require you to pass at your first bid. This, and the equivalent for other calls out of rotation, led to guesswork about the final contract from one or other of the pair. This has changed and allows the offending player to make a comparable call. So, for example, where you pass at your partner’s turn, the bidding will revert to him and you can make any bid at your turn which is less than of opening values. This is not altogether clear to me but it does allow for the Director to use common sense and the players to bid normally in many circumstances. The EBU has produced a paper on this which you can find on its website under the heading of “New Laws of Duplicate Bridge”.

You should note that, where a call is replaced by a call which is not comparable, Law 26 has revised the way in which lead restrictions can be applied. There are no lead restrictions if a comparable call is made.

2. Laws 68 to 71. These laws relating to claims have been rewritten. The most significant change is that Law 68 now provides for play to be suspended when a claim is made or a concession given. If this not accepted, rather than call the director, a player from the contesting side can ask for the hand to be played out. Provided all 4 players agree this will happen and the result achieved will stand. It follows that the claim or concession is void.

You should note that the procedure must be strictly followed and that it is not an option open to the claiming person nor to the director. It must be instigated and followed through precisely as stated.

It goes without saying that Directors should also be aware of what the procedures and practices are if we are called upon to adjudicate on the validity of a claim. Law 70 should be read carefully, particularly Law 70.D.

These are the two areas of greatest change but I should draw your attention also to the following:

- a. Law 6 proscribes dealing two adjacent cards into the same hand
- b. Law 9. Dummy may now attempt to prevent an irregularity, subject to the overall requirements of Laws 42 and 43. This is a new power for dummies, enabling them, for example, to point out a play or lead out of turn or a revoke. Law 42 permits dummy to prevent declarer from failing to follow suit.
- c. Law 12. This introduces wide ranging and complex changes to the powers of Directors to award adjusted scores.
- d. Law 15. Where two pairs play the wrong board against each other and neither has previously played the hand, the result will stand.
- e. Law 16. There is clarification as to what calls can be made following UI.
- f. Law 25. This may be more important for us. Where a player makes a call he has not intended to make, he may change that call at any time until his partner has bid. This replaces the “pause for thought” in the previous law. However, you should not read too much into the change

as the emphasis is on a mistake and not a lack of concentration. Similar wording is used now for the play of the wrong card from dummy by declarer under Law 45. It will pay to read these two changes with care.

- g. Law 75. This provision relating to partnership agreements has been substantially redrafted with the examples removed. You should note particularly that it is an infraction to describe a partnership agreement if none exists.

As I stated at the outset this is not a comprehensive review but a brief overview of my reading of significant changes. You should read the new laws and I am quite sure that guides such as the yellow and red books will soon be updated to assist.

Tim Howard

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