

LAW 27 – INSUFFICIENT BID

Our opponent's insufficient bid of 1C over my partner's 1NT opening was quickly corrected to 2C, however, Bridge Laws being infinitely complex! this is only one of several options that were available to the non-offending side in rectification of this heinous crime!

The options available to the player who follows the insufficient bidder are as follows:

Option 1. The bid may be accepted, where after the auction continues but starting at the level of the insufficient bid. So, it would be legal for the next player to bid any other suit at the 1 level, even though 1NT was the opening bid.

NB1. If the next player inadvertently bids-on without noticing the insufficient bid, it is automatically accepted, and if the insufficient bid is also made out of rotation, another law applies instead (Law 31).

Option 2. The insufficient bid must be corrected by the lowest sufficient bid that specifies the same denomination(s) as that specified by the withdrawn call. . . or 'made good' as we might say (2C here).

NB2. If you're ever so bored that you decide to 'thumb through' the Law Book, please note the distinction made between calls and bids. A bid is also a call, but a call will not always be a bid! For example, Pass, X and XX are all calls, but they are not bids.

Option 3. The insufficient bid may be corrected by a comparable call (Law 23A), this being a bid that has (i) the same / similar meaning, (ii) the same purpose or (iii) defines a subset of the possible meanings of the original bid. Yes, this last one is quite difficult to fathom! Basically it means the replacement bid may convey only a part the information contained within the original bid, but it cannot convey extra information – See Option 4.

NB3. Law 27 is deliberately less Draconian than it was previously to allow (as often as possible) play to continue without further ado, and to minimise the need to invoke the dreaded Option 4, which can force the offender to wrongly guess the auction's final outcome, which often was unfair to the non-offending side and required end-of-play unravelling by the director.

Option 4. If the insufficient bid cannot be corrected by options 1 to 3, the offender may make any legal call (including a pass) but then his opponent may not bid for the remainder of the auction.

NB4. Correction of an insufficient bid by X or XX (unless somehow it constitutes a comparable call) also results in the offender's partner being forbidden from bidding for the remainder of the auction.

. . . and finally . . . As with most Laws, Law 27 includes options to impose lead restrictions due to the disclosure of information from withdrawn calls (Law 26B).

Also, the ubiquitous Law 72C applies if a player makes an insufficient bid on purpose to the detriment of the opponents, in which case (as per Law 12B1) the Director may award an adjusted score. Likewise, an adjusted score may be awarded if, at the end of play, it is deemed that the non-offending side was damaged by the insufficient bid more than originally could have been envisaged.