

Newsletter

Summer 2017



Welcome to the Summer Edition of the club newsletter. The last few months have shown a steady attendance record and this in large part is due to you all for maintaining its reputation as a friendly, yet competitive, club where a reasonable standard of bridge is played! So, thank you. To those few members who attend less than once a month, can I please ask you to let me know if there is anything the committee can do that would entice you out to see us on a Wednesday evening! We DO need you and miss you!! Next month the Laws change (some are quite significant but overall I think they are an improvement and simplify some of the more difficult aspects) so, in preparation I thought it might be useful if in this edition I give some information regarding calling the Director and associated aspects- **THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL MEMBERS SO, DO, PLEASE READ IT!!** Firstly though -

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

The Championship Pairs ladder is well underway and finishes on 20th September. It looks as though it will be a close contest again this year

5th JULY is the Weir Teams Trophy – our premier team one-off Championship event. At the time of writing we have 9 tables but can always accommodate more! We shall be holding a random teams event later in the year where you do not choose your team mates.

4th OCTOBER is our next Swiss Pairs event - do mark your diaries **now** please as this event takes a lot of organising which is only worthwhile if it well supported.

DIRECTOR / LAWS ETC

Firstly, what does a Director do? He is responsible for the entire smooth running of the event, from the setting out of tables to the final score and everything else in between, including matters of Law, Etiquette and Discipline. When an event runs smoothly the players themselves will usually only interact with the Director when something may have gone "wrong" and one or other of the players wants a referee.

Breaches of the Laws generally fall into one of two areas: either factual (eg was there a revoke and if so what should happen), or – more difficult – judgement (eg was there a Hesitation [Break in Tempo or BIT as it is now referred to] and if so what redress should be given). It is not the intention to go into these in detail but some aspects are mentioned as illustration. Some important points to make:

There are a lot of misunderstandings regarding calling the Director. Directors are not called often enough and, when they are called, it is usually after the players at the table have debated the issue which has only made matters worse; made the players more upset; made the director's job more difficult - so the first point to emphasise is as soon as you THINK something is amiss call the director. **DON'T WAIT!**

I am very conscious that some of our less experienced, newer members will be understandably nervous or reluctant to call a Director even if they feel "unhappy" so I do hope this article will go some way to dispel their fears. **It does need stressing that calling the director should not be seen as a hostile act and that no moral wrongdoing is being ascribed to opponents – they have no need to be upset; everyone has the right to call the director at any time.** Before calling the director a player should courteously inform his opponents he intends to do so, and proceed in a calm manner. A good director will then come to the table with the attitude: 'How can I help?' He will first listen to the player who called, clarify matters until he fully understands what has occurred, and then

Thank you for your support

ask opponents for their comments. Opponents should remain SILENT until asked by the director for their comments. It is highly discourteous, even a likely breach of another Law, if all the players at the table try to give their views at the same time – and it delays the director's decision making so can hold up play generally.

Call the Director EARLY - in practice players who try to do things themselves tend to get it wrong. For example, South makes an insufficient bid:

If he simply pulled the wrong card out of the bidding box (a mechanical error) he may be allowed to change it without penalty if certain criteria are met.

If he 'meant' the insufficient bid because he did not notice an opponents' bid he cannot just put it right as West has the right to accept it and bid over it.

In practice, by the time the director is called the insufficient bidder has probably tried to put it right himself, wrongly and thus making the director's task all the harder.

How should you react if the director is called to the table and rules against you? Maybe your partner hesitated and you then made a bid that the director deems inappropriate. We all know the feeling of helplessness as we had a difficult decision to take (to bid and, if so, what) which is now complicated further because of BIT possibly giving rise to unauthorised information from partner and the opps have called the director and he rules against you. Just accept that he is doing his best and that he is not trying to 'penalise you', just making absolutely sure your opponents get justice. What is unhelpful is when a player can only repeat the fact that he would always make the disallowed bid. That is not the criterion by which the director must make his judgement.

Sometimes you may "reserve your rights" or hear your opponents say it. What does this mean? Simply reserving his legal right to call the director but prepared to wait until after the board has been played and the result is known. Example: suppose an opponent asks about a bid during the auction and then passes. The auction ends and the opponents partner is on lead and, behold, then leads the suit that the question was about. Declarer now says he wishes to reserve his rights. Unless the suit led is an obvious lead, say Q from QJ109 then the Director may award an adjusted score. Better practice though is to call the Director immediately, when a possible use of Unauthorised Information is available, rather than waiting until the end of the auction or play.

Bridge is a game where the players can see each other, but legal methods of communication are very limited. Inevitably things go wrong and the rules to cover the process of putting it right are necessarily complicated. Most players cannot be expected to know or understand these rules, indeed directors hardly find them easy. Do your best as a player, accept the director is trying his best, and enjoy the game. Most really good players are very tolerant of their less experienced brethren, so don't be put off pitting your wits against them by a false belief they will spend half their lives trying to get one over you.

Below is an article by David Stevenson published in Bridge magazine. David is a past Chairman of the Laws & Ethics Committee of the EBU and an excellent Director who has a good knowledge and feel for the ordinary player in an ordinary club! I thoroughly commend you to read it, **please**.

The new Laws 2017 will come into effect at the club sometime in August, ready for the 1st September mandatory introduction. Prior to that I will do a summary of main changes for you all and, of course, Directors will be very tolerant where the new Laws are applicable. Again, though, please be tolerant of Directors – at the same time as the new WBF/EBU Laws come into being the EBU will be issuing the new 2017 "White Book" (a more technical book for directors) and also the new 2017 "Blue Book". Everyone, not just Directors, would benefit from downloading and reading this (its free) from EBU as it has a lot of useful information.

Thank you for your support – if you have a new or changed email address please let me know

What does a Good Club Director do?

Some people think all they do is give unfair rulings that stop you winning, but, really, directors are the people who make it all work.

When it comes to the start time, the director has to decide on a movement. This is often complicated for him by late arrivals, players whose partners 'are definitely coming' and stationary pairs. In clubs that play Mitchells and where you can choose which way to sit, more pairs prefer to be stationary than move, so, at start time, the director may have nine N/S pairs and four E/W pairs. A tip for this from Llandudno BC: players who want to sit N/S take tickets when they arrive: if they need more E/W pairs, they move the pairs with the highest numbers on their tickets: an excellent idea.

How does the director decide the movement? Usually, clubs have decided in advance what to do with certain numbers of pairs and may have written instructions. Even if this is not the case, he will have experience of what works and suits this club. Whatever he does, someone will moan so he needs to make his mind up, stick with it and ignore the complaints. In these days of Bridgemates, he also needs to feed the movement into the computer at the start. While that makes the start more difficult for him in some ways, the program will offer him certain movements for each number of tables, which helps.

With the movement decided, he gives out the boards (and the Bridgemates if they are being used) and tells everyone to start, usually explaining the movement and making a couple of other announcements that no-one ever listens to. If there is a timer, then he starts that as well. During the evening, the main things that he does are: respond to any director calls, check the time, look for slow players and move the pairs at the end of each round.

In the better clubs, players have faith in the directors and call them when there is an irregularity. A good director will come pretty quickly and will sort things out calmly, trying not

to upset the players any more and to calm things down if the players are upset. Unless someone has actually been rude, in which case he has to penalise to stop a recurrence, even though the rude player will now definitely be upset, he tries to keep everyone fairly happy. Note that directors who make players wait until they have finished the hand they are playing exacerbate the situation: unless they are very nearly finished, they should go to a call immediately.

Sadly, many players try to sort things out without calling the director, leading to the most ferocious arguments that ever happen in clubs. Often, they argue for a time, then call the director, which means they are already upset. In some poorer clubs, players tend not to call the director, saying it is a friendly club. Not so: the friendliest clubs have faith in the director, always call him and accept what he says without argument: in fact, the player who has done something wrong should actually call the director.

Time is one of the biggest headaches for a director. Most clubs have a couple of pairs who take a few minutes longer than others, delaying the room and upsetting their opponents. I am not referring to a pair who does this occasionally: everyone has to think deeply from time to time. I am referring to pairs who are behind regularly and no evening passes without them finishing three or four or more rounds behind. Such pairs must be harried and persuaded to play to time and if this does not work, they must be penalised. Unfortunately, a lot of directors follow the maxim that if they penalise players, they will leave, so to keep people happy, they do not penalise. In fact, what happens is that other players are upset by slow players and they leave the club. Failure to penalise players for slow play loses more players than penalising does.

If any club has its own premises then they should have a timer. It makes life far easier for the director since players understand when the round ends. Also

he can check the time much more easily. Some players also watch the timer and speed up if they realise they are behind. A good timer is fully adjustable. Mike Rothwell has a free downloadable timer that is brilliant, but you need a computer screen, so it is not so easy if the club is in hired premises.

What sort of rulings does a director have to deal with? In practice, nearly all club rulings involve scoring, leads or calls out of turn, insufficient bids, boards not played for any reason, bad claims or revokes and directors get used to all these. Except for scoring and leads out of turn, these should be read from the law book. Occasionally, a director will get a more complicated ruling and then he will have to look in the law book and also find out what has happened. If he gets a ruling that might involve an adjustment, for example a hesitation or misinformation problem, then he gathers the facts, tells them to score the result as obtained and says he will rule later. He now considers the problem, consults a couple of better players or other directors and gives the ruling some time later, usually at the end of the evening. If it is very difficult, he might even ring a top director for advice. If he adjusts, he must remember to change the score that has been entered.

In clubs, the director is usually the scorer as well. These days, there is often a computer present and results are immediate. In many clubs, results are also uploaded to a website. If there is no computer, the director will have to score by hand, often taking it home, so people see the results either next week, or on the website during the week. He also collects the boards and in some clubs, he may have to clear up.

What reward does the director get for all this? Most clubs give him just free entry, so it is surprising how many people are willing to do it. Perhaps they should offer him free refreshments. Without the club directors, clubs would fold, so next time you play, try to thank him at the end. ■