



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU LAWS & ETHICS COMMITTEE
HELD AT YOUNG CHELSEA BRIDGE CLUB, GOLDHAWK ROAD
ON WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 1ST 2017**

Present:

Tim Rees (TR)	Chairman and Elected Member
Mike Amos (MA)	Elected Member
Robin Barker (RB)	Elected Member
David Burn (DB)	Elected member
Jeremy Dhondy (JD)	EBU Chairman
Richard Fleet (RF)	Elected member
Frances Hinden (FH)	Vice Chairman and Elected Member
Martin Pool (MP)	Elected Member
Gordon Rainsford (GR)	Chief Tournament Director
Ian Mitchell (IM)	Secretary

1 Apologies for Absence

Barry Capal (BC)	EBU General Manager
Ian Payn (IP)	EBU Vice Chairman

2 Minutes of the previous meeting (5th October 2016)

2.1 Accuracy

It was questioned whether the last sentence of the first paragraph of 2.3.1 was accurate. ("No person will be able to be on both prosecution and disciplinary panels")

JD confirmed that membership of the panels should indeed be distinct. However, having decided in favour of prosecution, it would not be out of the question to co-opt a member of the D.P. to act as prosecutor if needs arose.

2.2 The minutes of the meeting of 5th October were approved and signed.

2.3 Matters arising

2.3.1 JD confirmed that the Prosecution Panel had been formed, and a list of members of both the Prosecution and Disciplinary Panels was circulated.

2.3.2 (Item 5.2) IM confirmed that his predecessor had already done significant work on the 2015 booklet, and that it was ready for circulation. There was a brief discussion regarding inviting additional commentators.

2.3.3 RF was concerned that a matter arising from the previous meeting (Item 2.3.4) had still not been addressed. FH suggested that this would be addressed in time for the next meeting, at which Blue Book issues will be discussed in time for publication with a view to implementation in August.

- 2.3.4 RB observed that the White Book will need significant changes when the new Laws come into effect. This is scheduled for September, whilst the White Book is normally updated in August. Therefore publication in August would require some clarification that some regulations would be modified in due course.

It was suggested that the implementation of both documents (Laws & WB) might be synchronised. On publication of the previous version of the Laws, the WBF allowed a degree of discretion on the part of the NBOs for date of implementation*. It was not clear yet whether they would do so on this occasion, and the committee agreed to postpone a decision on this point until clarification was received from the WBF.

[* secretary's note. We have now heard from the WBFLC that implementation should be on or before 1st September 2017]

FH also requested some guidance on Law 86D. [This was raised as a result of a fouled board in the EBU Point-a-Board Teams Congress, for which Specific regulations were in place.]

3 Appeals to the National Authority

None this time

4 Disciplinary Cases

4.1 Ultravox

An observation from a friend and playing partner of the accused had been circulated, in which his innocence had been asserted, backed up with some statistical evidence. Our own statistical experts were consulted. Their conclusions were that whilst their respect for the accused as a player was increased, the findings of their own statistical analysis was unaltered. A meeting prior to the hearing will be arranged between the statistical experts of both parties, with the aim of agreeing which evidence will be accepted and which is disputed, to save time at the hearing.

IM reported that a date had been fixed for the hearing, to be held in London in late April. Otherwise there was little more to report on the case.

JD observed that this should be the last disciplinary case to be considered by the committee itself. Hereafter, cases would be passed on to the Prosecution Panel when appropriate.

4.2 Borovik

A new case had been referred to Laws & Ethics, in which a member was suspected of obtaining and using prior knowledge of hands. TR & FH initially considered the case, and a statistical expert was consulted. As a result of the findings, it was considered that there was a case to be answered, and this will now be passed on to the Prosecution Panel for further consideration.

4.3 Hoveton Bridge Club

A dispute has arisen between a member and the club chairman, resulting in the member being 'no longer welcome' at the club, without any formal measures having taken place to exclude him. The member expected the Laws & Ethics Committee to intervene directly. The Committee felt that mediation was by far the best solution, and JD agreed to write to the chairman with a view to determining how to proceed.

4.4 GR reported on an incident at the Autumn Congress, in which a pair refused to play against another pair in the final round of the Swiss Pairs, having had an unpleasant experience with them on the previous day. The matter had been dealt with, with a warning given to the pair that refused to play, and the case is considered closed.

4.5 GR reported on an incident at the Tollemache Qualifying Round, in which the EBU Chairman had had a verbal disagreement with some of the hotel staff, in relation to the way dinner arrangements were being handled. GR had subsequently spoken to the hotel manager. No violence or swearing had been alleged, and no formal complaint was made by the hotel.

Relationships between the EBU and the hotel were already strained (from both sides), and GR suggested that even without this incident, it was likely that our arrangements with this hotel would be discontinued shortly.

- 4.6 Following the incident referred to in 4.5, the committee had received a letter by e-mail from a trio of county representatives, in which it was alleged that the Chairman had assaulted a member of staff, and that the chief TD had been aware of this but declined to take action.

The L&E Committee Chairman in consultation with the EBU Vice-Chairman wrote to the authors of the letter asking them to explain the origins of these unfounded rumours, or in the absence of such explanation apologise to both the Chairman and Chief TD for the libellous allegations.

The Committee Chairman reported that the author of the letter had spoken informally to him, and had suggested that an apology would be forthcoming. It had not been received at the time of this meeting, approximately two weeks later.

- 4.7 A county representative referred the committee to a case that had been closed two years ago. At the time the committee had declined to pursue the case, principally on the grounds that the accused had undertaken to withdraw from relevant bridge-related activities.

The correspondent observed that recent activity suggested that the person in question was not honouring his undertaking, and suggested that the committee reconsider the question of disciplinary action.

The committee acknowledged that, in retrospect, the decision at the time not to pursue the case might have been a mistake, and cited other occasions when disciplinary cases had been pursued even when the accused had resigned their membership of the EBU.

However, the committee considered that it would not be in the best interests of any concerned that the case be re-opened after a gap of two years.

- 4.8 A case was reported to the committee in which inappropriate comments were made in an online game. GR reported that the comments were intended in jest, but had not been taken as such. The perpetrator later made a number of attempts to apologise, even before the EBU were involved, and GR considered that the matter was now closed. The committee supported GR's actions.

- 4.9 JD reported on a possible forthcoming case, involving abusive e-mails being sent to members of EBU staff and to representatives of a local club and county.

- 4.10 MP reported on an issue that had been raised with him by Rugby Bridge Club. Under their constitution they were required to consult the EBU for advice whenever they have any disciplinary cases. GR had referred this to MP, who had given such advice, not only on the correct procedures, but also on the proportionality of their sanctions. He had not heard about further progress.

5 Technical Matters

- 5.1 At the Year End Congress, a number of players opened 2♣ (Benjy or similar) on a hand that failed to satisfy the Extended Rule of 25 (♠AKJ98752 ♥ – ♦10x ♣AJ10). This was reported to the TDs on two occasions (it is suspected that this went unreported more often), and this was ruled to be an illegal agreement.

There has been much discussion on internet forums about this case, and the committee noted that there were several untrue statements published. Rather than address the rights and wrongs of what had been published, the committee chose to concentrate on whether the regulations needed to be amended and/or clarified.

Most of the committee agreed that the current regulations were far from ideal, not least in terms of their clarity. They observed that wherever a boundary is drawn, there is bound to be a hand which many would consider to be worth a 'strong two' opening, but which would fall short of the requirements.

Some committee members were in favour of removing any limitations. Some suggested alternative approaches (RF considered that any definition that involved High Card Points was flawed – in particular when, for example, a singleton jack rather than small singleton could make the difference as to whether a hand satisfied the conditions or not). Alternatives included counting "controls" (Ace = 2, King =1), and "containing an outside Ace".

The committee felt that it was very difficult to decide either on whether or not to apply limitations, or on alternative valuation methods, unless there were specific examples of each. FH agreed to produce, in time for the next meeting, some alternative wordings for the regulations for the committee to consider.

6. Applications for new permitted methods

- 6.1 An application was received for "Minor Suit Jammers", in which an opening of 2 of a minor showed a (weak) 3-suiter, including the suit bid and one other anchor suit (the 'relative major').

In its original form, the suit bid could be as little as three cards, and the anchor suit a minimum of four cards. The correspondent believed that this was once legal, but that under current regulations he has had to change his agreements to comply, by increasing to four the minimum length held in the suit bid.

[Under current regulations, either the suit bid must be guaranteed to have four cards, or the anchor suit must be guaranteed to have five cards.]

The committee had much sympathy with the correspondent, deeming the original methods described to have as much merit as the (legal) variation that he has adopted, and that it would be no more difficult to defend against.

The committee rejected the idea of making a specific exception to the rule. DB noted that the regulations could be amended very easily (by the change of a single character) to accommodate this request, but feared that by doing so we might be permitting a number of other undesirable agreements.

Since changes to the Blue Book would be considered at the next meeting, DB agreed to look at the effects of any changes, whilst FH agreed to contact the correspondent.

7. Reports from Tournament Directors 16.030 to 16.049

- 16.030 The committee considered a hand from the Great Northern Swiss Pairs, in which a player had opened 2♣, ostensibly showing at least 4-4 in the majors, while holding only 4-3.

The TD ruled that this was an illegal agreement, and the AC upheld the ruling, citing WB 8.40.3.

The committee felt that the TD and/or the AC were misinterpreting this paragraph, and some members admitted that they hadn't been sure of the intended meaning.

[it appears that they interpreted the paragraph as meaning that there was no need to find any other instances of misuse in order to determine that there was an illegal agreement. The committee confirmed that the intended meaning was that, having determined that an illegal system was in use, the TD is not expected to examine previous hands in order to make further adjustments].

The committee considered this to be a deviation, and that the hand should be reclassified as such in our records. It was too late for any retrospective rescoring of the tournament.

8 Any other business

- 8.1 The committee considered correspondence from Mr Graham, in which he suggests a 'campaign of education', aiming to improve players' understandings of ethical situations.

The committee considered this to be a good idea, and agreed that the secretary should contact the editor of English Bridge with regard to instigating a regular article on the subject. MA also suggested that Sarah [Amos] might be approached to produce some material.

- 8.2 The secretary had received an e-mail from Mr J Allerton, on behalf of Surrey County, regarding the recording of psyches at club level. He suggested that, since there were many players that played at multiple clubs, it was in the interests of the clubs that psyches should be recorded centrally (i.e. by the EBU), so that any frequent psyching at different clubs could be tracked.

The committee observed that although most TD reports came from EBU events, clubs and counties should be welcome to submit such reports to the EBU, which would then be put on file. However, we shouldn't actively encourage clubs to do so.

9 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 31st May at 1.15pm.

Venue is Young Chelsea Bridge Club, Goldhawk Rd, Shepherds Bush.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm.