**New Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017**

The laws are updated about every ten years, and the latest version will come into effect in EBU events from start of August. There have been many changes. About half of the Laws have changed but the vast majority are small changes to wording. From a player’s point of view, there are no changes to the mechanics or scoring of the game, so you can essentially continue to play your game and allow the Directors to worry about dealing with any irregularities that arise. There are, however, a few changes that players would benefit from being aware of.

The first is a small adjustment to Law 7 about the placement of the board. The Law now says that: ***“When a board is to be played it is placed in the centre of the table where it shall remain, correctly orientated, until play is completed”.*** The words ***correctly orientated*** have been added to prevent problems with mis-boarding.

The second change to mention is in Laws 68-71 relating to when a claim or concession has been made. Under the revision, play is only ***suspended***; if the non-claiming side suggest playing on and if all four players agree to it they may do so. This is not recommended because if they do so, the Director will not get involved in any way if the claim is subsequently doubted: the outcome at the table will be final. It is therefore recommended that if there is any doubt about a claim that the Director is called when the claim is made…otherwise its tough!

Thirdly, there is a change to Law 50E which deals with the information derived from a penalty card i.e. whether it is authorised information or not.

1. ***Information derived from a penalty card and the requirements for playing that penalty card are authorized for all players for as long as the penalty card remains on the table.***
2. ***Information derived from a penalty card that has been returned to hand [as per Law 50D2(a)] is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the penalty card (see Law 16C), but authorized for declarer.*** For example if partner incorrectly plays the Q, they must also hold the J and can’t hold the A.
3. ***Once a penalty card has been played, information derived from the circumstances under which it was created is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the card. (For a penalty card, which has not yet been played, see E1 above.)*** I.e. anything can deduce from the fact that partner held that card.
4. ***If following the application of E1 the Director judges at the end of play that without the assistance gained through the exposed card the outcome of the board could well have been different, and in consequence the non-offending side is damaged (see Law 12B1), he shall award an adjusted score. In his adjustment he should seek to recover as nearly as possible the probable outcome of the board without the effect of the penalty card(s).***

The Director will explain / read from the Law book, so there is no need to remember all of this.

The big change that will affect players is the introduction of a new concept in Law 23 of a ***comparable call***:

***A call that replaces a withdrawn call is a comparable call, if it:***

1. ***has the same or similar meaning as that attributable to the withdrawn call, or***
2. ***defines a subset of the possible meanings attributable to the withdrawn call, or***
3. ***has the same purpose (e.g. an asking bid or a relay) as that attributable to the withdrawn call.***

This is similar to the existing idea for allowing replacements bids for insufficient bids but it has been a bit more clearly explained and most importantly **its application has been extended to apply to Calls Out Of Turn** as well as insufficient bids. In most instances, replacing an insufficient bid or a call out of rotation with a comparable call will allow the auction just to continue.

Of course, if the incorrect call is not replaced by a call that the Director deems to be comparable, then the partner of the offender may still be silenced or lead restrictions may be applied as per Law 26.

This change should reduce the occasions on which one partner or another is barred from bidding, which has tended to leave the pair concerned to guess, leading to the undesirable situation that the result is largely dependent on luck, or, to a situation where the Director has to award an artificial score.

One of the beneficial effects of this change is that the frequency of lead penalties under Law 26 will be greatly reduced and much easier for the Director to implement. Do note though that **if you appear to have gained** by an insufficient bid or a call out of turn, **the Director always has the ability to adjust the score at the end of the hand.**

So the new law applies if there is a bid out of turn or an insufficient bid. You would call the Director as normal and the Director will explain the options and rule accordingly. Hopefully the application of the new law will leave a higher proportion of satisfied players than previously.