

Opinions about the laws

As you might know the WBF is working on a new set of laws. Being together with a group of experts in applying those and assuming reasonable qualities regarding the play of the game the drafting committee has a big opportunity to get some input from you.

To be honest I am not sure that your opinion will make much impression, though it is not impossible it will. But even then I personally am very much interested in your views and certainly will use it for my input in the drafting committee. The more so since I am not sure about the best way to develop the laws.

- a) The scope of the laws speaks about ‘designed not as punishment ..., but rather as redress for damage’.

Present law 12 seems not to follow that approach. The non-offending side gets the best of likely results, the offenders the worst possible score. No balance and an invitation to appeal. In the mid-nineties we opened L12C3 for TD’s in an effort to get more balanced adjusted scores and we consider that decision helpful for the game.

Question 1: Should we express in the laws that adjusted scores should be based on an equity oriented approach in which the score for both sides is complementary? Or is it better to give the offending side less than their opponents if such score is still reasonable?

Damage for the non-offending side can be split into damage caused by the infraction (consequent damage) and damage as a result of its own bad play. Redress should only be given for the part being considered consequential.

Question 2: where do we draw the line? The advice given at the moment is that only very bad (egregious) play will be considered not consequential, but my experience is that TD’s don’t like to compensate for less than reasonable play. How should the laws express this?

Let me take a list of possible inferior plays by which a side pushed to 5♠ after a hesitation 5♥ by the opponents manages to take only 10 tricks (an old blml one made up by Tim West-Meads):

- 1) Declarer draws a premature round of trumps failing to get a ruff in dummy
- 2) Being in dummy with xx and in hand AQ9 declarer finesses with the Q; playing the 9 would be winning.
- 3) Declarer plays a side suit for 3-2 instead of double finessing for 1 trick.
- 4) Declarer doesn’t take a safety play with AJxx opposite K9xx
- 5) Declarer counts a suit in dummy to be a 5-card while it is a 6-card and takes an unnecessary finesse.
- 6) Declarer mistimes the use of his entries.
- 7) He calls for a card from dummy which is accepted when being in hand.
- 8) He doesn’t realise the ♣8 to be high after 2 rounds of clubs.
- 9) He forgets to draw the last trump
- 10) He revokes

11) He concedes 1 down while continuing play would have created an automatic squeeze.

This list is by far not exhausting. Assume there to be no good reason to play like declarer did.

If we do not allow a side to bid a slam after a hesitation, because we consider pass to be a logical alternative its opponents get a good score, a minus game where 75% of its opponents get a minus slam. Some consider this too lenient and suggest for example the following:

To be entitled for redress a side has to call the TD immediately and in case the offenders go down their opponents get a game score. Another solution is to adjust a weighted score if the slam makes (for the non-offenders), for example giving minus (60% of the slam and 40% of the game). And going back to the first question this even could mean that the offenders get some of the slam anyhow.

Question 3: Do you see any reason to change our approach on this subject?

b) It is not a secret that we are going to drop L25b, getting rid of the possibility to change a call made on purpose (non-inadvertent) no matter how stupid it may be. There are people who want to get rid of changing anything: ‘made is played’, in bidding and play, paraphrasing the ‘touched is moved’ approach in chess.

Question 4: What is your opinion?

Question 5: If we leave 25A, till when should we allow the inadvertent call to be replaced?

c) Once during our meetings we got the idea to abandon penalties for infractions and to deal with those using unauthorized information. We seem to have left that idea behind us. But still for some laws it might be a good solution.

Question 6 : What do you think about L26 and L27 in this respect?

One of the consequences of the present penalties is the enforced pass creating non-bridge results (W/ all; East opens 1NT OOT not accepted. Pass, pass, and East now gambles 3NT, not bid anywhere else).

This seems not in line with the ‘redress for damage’ approach.

Question 7: Should the drafting committee try to find a solution? If so: does anyone has a suggestion ready?

d) The revoke penalty meets a lot of criticism and disbelief. One of our best players in the Netherlands challenged my decision not to give him an extra trick after a revoke by an opponent (he took all tricks). How can such a stupid infraction go unpunished?

It is worth trying to find a more equity oriented penalty and to ignore this player. But we should not encourage revokes to be made. If they go unpunished it might get attractive to make one.

There is an idea to make it a one trick penalty, but I expect the just mentioned problem arising, especially when revoking by a ruff. It doesn't hurt anymore.

Question 8: What is your choice:

- 1) Leave the law as it is?
- 2) Make it a standard 1-trick penalty
- 3) Make it a 2-trick penalty when the revoke trick was won by the revoker, otherwise 1 trick.

Of course 64C remains there as it is.

- 4) You will use your own imagination anyway.
- e) The claim laws, but they take another couple of hours for which we will use another paper.

Ton Kooijman