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Definition of an Infraction

A brief reminder of Law 12B1

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Of course we all know and appreciate Law 12B1 very well - in fact it's a fundamental principle of bridge law; something we've all read and appreciated so many times before and therefore something of which we never need remind ourselves. Or maybe we do, and should re-read it just every now and again?

Law 12B1:

*The objective of score adjustment is to redress damage to a non-offending side and to take away any advantage gained by an offending side through its **infraction**.*

*Damage exists when, because of an **infraction**, an innocent side obtains a table result less favourable than would have been the expectation had the **infraction** not occurred – but see C1(b).*

I invite you to consider the word 'infraction' very carefully, and then join me in a discussion in a game I've called "Spot the Infraction".

There are two very specific references back to this law, which are contained within Laws 27B1/27D and 43B2, and several other implicit references back to it - but for the purpose of this brief discussion, I propose to only add 50E into the subject (though I fear I'll be unable to resist mentioning 50D2(b) as well).

Law 27D:

If following the application of B1 the Director judges at the end of the play that without assistance gained through the infraction 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 had the insufficient bid not occurred.

Law 43B3:

If dummy after violation of the limitations listed in A2 is the first to draw attention to a defender's irregularity, there is no rectification. Play continues as though no irregularity had occurred. At the end of play see Law 12B1.

Law 50E3:

If the Director judges that the exposed card conveyed such information as to damage the non-offending side he shall award an adjusted score.

My main point is to be careful that we understand what the 'infraction' refers to in these particular cases, as NONE of them are examples of our old Unauthorised Information friends Laws 16B1 or 16D2. They are 'restoration of equity' laws, not UI ones. And therefore any adjusted score which might eventually arise as a consequence may well be weighted and may well include an element of the actual table result [Reveley rules OK? - Yes, he does in these particular cases!].

Law 16B1:

- a) *After a player makes available to his partner extraneous information that may suggest a call of play, as for example by a remark, a question, a reply to a question, an unexpected alert or failure to alert, or by unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, or mannerism, the partner may not choose from among logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information.*
- b) *A logical alternative action is one that, among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership, would be given serious consideration by a significant proportion of such players, of whom it is judged some might select it.*

Law 16D2:

For an offending side, information arising from its own withdrawn action and from withdrawn actions of the non-offending side is unauthorized. A player of an offending side may not choose from among logical alternative actions one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the unauthorized information.

For the purpose of this discussion only, you'll be delighted to know that we can forget these UI laws.

For example (from the Entry Test):

	♠ A 7 6 3	Board 1 N / none
	♥ A Q 9 4	
	♦ A J 6 3	
	♣ 6	
♠ K 10 9	N	♠ J 8 4
♥ J 8 3 2	W	♥ K 6
♦ 8 5 4	E	♦ Q 7 2
♣ 9 4 2	S	♣ A Q J 10 7
	♠ Q 5 2	
	♥ 10 7 5	
	♦ K 10 9	
	♣ K 8 5 3	

W	N	E	S
	1♦	2♣	1NT ^{TD}
			2NT
All pass			

After instruction from the TD South bids 2NT and the auction continues without restrictions. All pass.

The TD returns at the end of play when declarer has made 8 tricks (1-2-4-1 in ♠-♥-♦-♣).

The original entry test contained an interesting insufficient 1NT case did it not?

Here, the infraction is not the 2NT bid, and neither is it the Pass of the 2NT bid. The infraction referred to is the original insufficient 1NT bid. Therefore, adjusted scores, if any, are back to the equity of the board absent of the IB. One might reasonably conclude (having of course consulted some players) that absent of the IB, final results of 2Cx-1, 2D=, 2NT=, and 3NT-1 were all possible outcomes, and award some sort of weighted adjusted score around these possibilities.

<To digress for a moment, I'm under strict instruction to emphasise that I'm not referring at all to the Law 27B2 'rub of green' situations wherein the offending side elect to/are forced to silence partner and gamble on a final contract - I'm referring ONLY to Law 27B1 in which the offending side elect to attempt a 'normal' auction without rectification. But surely no need for me to even mention this to this group?>

Also from the Entry Test, slightly modified:

	♠ K 9 7 4	Board 15 S / NS
	♥ J 7	
	♦ A Q 9 4	
	♣ J 8 3	
♠ Q 10 5 2	N	♠ 8
♥ 10 4	W	♥ A 9 8 5 2
♦ J 8	E	♦ 7 6 5 2
♣ A K Q 7 4	S	♣ 9 6 2
	♠ A J 6 3	
	♥ K Q 6 3	
	♦ K 10 3	
	♣ 10 5	

W	N	E	S
			1♣
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	All pass	

Before the opening lead dummy shows some interest in West's hand and is allowed to look into it. West starts with AKQ in clubs and on the ♣Q both East and South show out, South ruffing and while immediately playing a small heart, on which West follows suit, dummy asks declarer: 'no clubs?' The answer is 'no', after which North says to East: 'then you revoked'. East wins the trick and returns a heart. South wins, plays a spade to the king and loses 2 trump tricks for 3♠ -1. Declarer would like a penalty trick for the revoke.

The modification from the Entry Test is that Law 43B3 does apply, as this time dummy has voluntarily looked at the opponent's cards.

So who is the offender to whom we refer here? Surely it refers to the revoker - the player who is no longer subject to 'rectification' for the revoke. So therefore please stand by to apply an 'equitable Law 12B1 adjustment absent of the infraction' one rather than a UI one. In fact, the revoke does no harm in this particular case, so no need to adjust at all; but it's something you may need to consider in a slightly different case.

And thus we eventually arrive at the serious stuff; Law 50E and (implicitly) Law 50D2(b).

♠ Q 8 6 5 4

♠ A 10 9 7 3

W	N	E	S
			1♠
pass	4♠	All pass	

The rest of the hand is irrelevant. The lead is in hand.

How do you play this suit? Of course, it depends on your objective. Maybe you cash the Ace, or maybe you safety play it and lead low.

Now we add West to the diagram:

♠ K 2 ♠ Q 8 6 5 4 ♠ ?
 ♠ A 10 9 7 3

So how should West defend on a low trump lead from declarer? After all, maybe partner holds the singleton Ace?

Though maybe it's not quite such a difficult question if partner holds a penalty card Ace or penalty card Jack in 4th position which he's obliged to play?!

But it's a Law 12B1 adjustment - not a UI one; so a weighted score is possible, getting it right some of the time and getting it wrong some of the time.

But if the ex-penalty card has already been returned to partner's hand then - as if by magic - it DOES become a UI case. I never said the laws were simple: in fact, that's why we're all here!

And finally:

A 12-round relay auction ending in 7NT by South.

East holds the ♠A ... and gets excited (no screens) ... and doubles ... and leads it face up out of turn.

This was a real case, which was subject to much ill informed comment on social media. Suggested strategies for declarer were:

- a) find a new partner;
- b) learn his own system;
- c) ban a spade lead;

At the table, declarer did ban a spade lead but still went off as there were not 13 tricks available in the side suits.

...

- d) keep the ♠A on the table as a penalty card hoping East has to discard it on the run of a long suit - and use the UI law if West has the audacity to lead a spade at trick 1, as there are sure to be logical alternatives available.

Law 50 D2(b):

*Declarer may choose, not to require or prohibit a lead, in which case the defender may lead **any** card; the penalty card remains a penalty card. If this option is selected Law 50D continues to apply for as long as the penalty card remains.*

Well, I can tell you that strategy d) above is hopeless, because of the word ANY in Law 50D2(b), which I know may surprise some people. But 'any' really does mean 'any' (it does NOT mean 'any, subject to Law 50E2'). 'Any' suggestions from anyone on how to improve on this word in the 2017 edition will be more than welcome!