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Law 86D

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L86D

When does L86D apply?

It is team play and something happens or has happened through which no table result can be awarded at the 'second' table. It is really the second table when the boards are exchanged between the two tables and it is just one of the two tables in the match if the boards played at the two tables are from different sets.

So L86D does not apply when the TD is asked to give a ruling in a L16 case. It is good to realise that L12 allows to give an artificial score if the possible legal outcomes of the board are numerous and a weighted score is difficult to assess. But once you give such artificial score the result at the other table plays no role anymore. It is not difficult to conclude that if the TD establishes that a favourable result has been reached at the other table, regardless for which side, he should give an assigned adjusted score.

But L86D apparently also allows the TD to assign an adjusted score inimps, not giving an adjusted score on the board at the table where it appeared to be unplayable, but as a result on the board in the match. The TD may also give a result in total points. That is normally not an option. If the board cannot be played in identical form it doesn't make sense to award a result on that board. Applying L86D then means that a result inimps is given.

Let us give some examples where a board cannot be played, or where the TD decides so.

- a) The ♠A is faced up in one of the pockets. The players 'refuse' to play it. Or when taking the cards out of the board and starting counting them in one of the hands four cards appear to be faced up and are visible for a while.
- b) A table overhears talking about the same board at an adjacent table: 'why didn't you bid 7D?'
- c) The table gets the same cards in two boards twice and it appears that board 7 and board 8 got the cards of board 8. Board 7 can be fixed but board 8 is destroyed.
- d) Boards are not piled up in the normal order, cards of board 7 in 8 and vice versa. Players should notice not playing the boards in the right order but they don't. Now two boards are destroyed. (And it might happen that somewhere in the pile a strange board has invaded and all others following jump one place (11 in 12, 12 in 13 etc), causing that complete part of the set fouled.)
- e) When discussing the session after play the players find out that a board was not played in identical form.
- f) Play at one of the tables is very slow and the TD decides to remove two boards (L82B2).
- g) There will be more possibilities for sure. To illustrate this I tell you a story.

A long time ago a famous and 'very professional' player in the Netherlands played a small slam and went down because the third finesse he needed did not work. It was a bad slam so,

certainly not bid at the other table where it had to be played still. There were a lot of kibitzers around the table, with ladies in nice dresses. When conceding the contract he made a stupid gesture by which a glass of cola dropped in the lap of one of these ladies, causing a mess with a delay in play of at least 5 minutes. When the board was played in the other room it appeared that the West and East hands were exchanged. Fouled board. The declarer was seated North.

Cases b), c) and d) don't create an offender. For a) and e) it depends whether the boards are exchanged between the two tables of a match or not. And if they are exchanged there is an offender but whom?

In f) an offender exists when the TD decides that the delay was caused by one side, giving a penalty to that side.

What with g)? It is difficult to point to an offender, players are responsible for their own cards being put in the right pocket. Declarer offended good manners towards nice women, but that is not the offender in L86D.

What to do if the TD discovers that a board cannot be played due to whatever has happened without one of the players being at fault and the other table plays another set of boards. This means that there is no offender and no need to give an adjusted score. The footnote says that if play of that board has started the TD could decide to let it play. My advice is not to do so if abortion of play is not ridiculous. If the TD approaches the table and sees that eleven tricks have been played it does not make sense not to have it completed. The players will almost always have a fair idea about the outcome and the probability of it. But when possible cancel the board at once and reshuffle it.

There is a logical issue involved when the match is played with different sets of boards at the two tables. We already saw that we do not have a L86D offender in that case, but how to decide which board is the fouled one? Or do we take into account a favourable result no matter on which of the two boards it occurred? May be favourable results at both tables?

The answer is by far not obvious in my opinion. Some might consider the board produced by the duplimate and appearing on the sheet with hand records as the original one, but within the match itself there seems to be no hierarchy between the two boards. This is different from a match played with one set, where the shuffle in advance or at one of the tables creates the official board within that match. To illustrate this: when such a board is not in accordance with the hand records nobody cares; it is played in identical form at both tables and then has an official result.

Reading L86D you notice that it doesn't mention an offender but speaks about the non-offending side. Which raises the question whether the TD needs to give an adjusted score when both sides are non-offending. My answer is 'no': this obligation in L86D only makes sense if there is also an offending side.

This means that the TD should not cancel a fouled board and reshuffle it in a match when there is an offending side and a favourable result. He may consider to cancel it when there is

no offending side and there is a favourable result, but he doesn't need to do so. Don't forget L86C which tells that there cannot be a reshuffle on one board if the result of the complete set is known (could be known). If you remember case g) and do not want to appoint an offender you still may give an adjusted score not cancelling the board.

We are left with the answers on the following questions:

- 1) What is a favourable result?
- 2) What adjusted score should be given in the various situations?

L86D leaves it all to the TD, which means that the WBF Laws Committee does not have a strong opinion about it, or better: not a so strong opinion that it appears in the laws as a detailed instruction. Which not necessarily means that it feels ignorant about this issue. It cannot be right to have different approaches in comparable cases under the same Regulating Authority. Which means that it needs regulations about L86D. When I describe an approach in this lecture it is not more than a guideline for the time being.

A favourable result exists when it is strange, unexpected. Keep in mind that in case of an offending side, when an assigned adjusted score has to be given, the non-offenders would receive +3imps when an artificial adjusted score is given. So a couple of overtricks in an undoubled contract are not meant to create a favourable result. On the other hand (end) we have g) where there certainly was a favourable result. There is no sharp line to draw unless we define each difference in total points of more than for example 8imps as being favourable (taking the difference between the par-score at the table where there was no result and the actual result at the other table). This sounds like an acceptable approach to me.

But it is possible to draw a more restrictive line, putting more emphasis on the combination of occurrences: expressed by the remark from an innocent player after a bad result: 'I would have liked the board being fouled at the other table' or 'if I had a glass of cola around ...'. Making it more objective: an (un)favourable result is one you do not believe to happen at the other table.

Let us hear your opinion?

What adjusted score to assign?

We make the following distinction

- a) An offending side creating the fouled board at the table where the non-offenders receive a favourable result.
- b) An offending side creating the fouled board at the table where they receive a favourable result.

- c) An offending side creating the fouled board and a favourable result for the non-offending side at the other table.
- d) An offending side creating the fouled board and a favourable result for themselves at the other table.
- e) No offending side, a fouled board and a favourable result at the other table.

In a) and c) the TD has to award an adjusted score. In c) there is no relation between the offense and the result at the other table. In b), d) and e) he may choose to give such adjusted score.

In a) it is fair to give the innocent side the full pound: imps (favourable result minus par-score).

In b) it is reasonable to give weight to a similar good result for the innocent side had the board been normally played. It is not their fault. What about half of the imps (favourable result minus par-score)?

In c) all or almost all of the good result should be taken into account.

In d) the way to score should be the same as in b).

In e) it doesn't look fair to ignore a very good result. And it should be more than the offenders receive for their good result in b) and d): $\frac{2}{3}$ of the imps (favourable result minus par-score).

Keep in mind that not choosing to give an assigned score results in awarding +3 imps to the innocent side. So half of the imps in b) should be more than 3 to make it worth bothering about it.

An additional advantage awarding assigned adjusted scores instead of artificial ones (+3) is that the total of VPs divided between the two teams equals 20, which the other competing teams prefer above a total of more than 20 giving twice +3.

Those who have read my Commentary on the Laws written a decade ago might notice that there is some difference in the percentages I used. That underlines the arbitrary aspect in the interpretation of this wonderful law.