

Lecture by Ton Kooijman

Two longer subjects and some law questions to think about with answers at the end.

Procedural penalties.

Penalties in bridge are divided in procedural and disciplinary ones. The distinction is not completely clear. Violating prescribed procedures at the procedural side and misbehaving, infringing normal, polite conduct at the other. But then we have a smoker. There are prescribed penalties in score reduction for smoking and the player got already two of those and now is caught for the third time. That might ask for a disciplinary penalty. May be we can say that a penalty in score reduction is procedural and banning a player for the rest of the session or even longer is disciplinary. Be aware that the TD may do the first on his own authority but needs the approval of the tournament organizer for the latter (L 91). If you read L91A a disciplinary penalty could be given in a score reduction too. So the distinction described above is not right. The problem with a score reduction is that the penalty becomes arbitrary when it is not prescribed in scoring points, and the laws are silent about the weight .


Most TD's are reluctant to give penalties, even if the laws explicitly mention those. See for example L13A2, B2 and D. Also L14B2&3 and L15A4. If you read it you will see that the laws are somewhat misty. They use: 'may penalize' and 'is liable'. The latter is somewhat stronger than the first, but still not mandatory. Two more 'may's in L40 B4 and C1, both dealing with calls not permitted: the use of an agreement not permitted and a call with a hidden meaning. You might say that the lawmaker considers these to be severe infractions.

Are there not irregularities that should be penalized by law? There are some described in regulations. For example slow play and late arrival. And in slow play we see something peculiar. A combination of procedural and disciplinary: More and moreimps the slower it goes,

but after a limit (say 25 minutes late) the possibility to disqualify a contestant.

Yes there are irregularities that should be penalized by law. See L90, one of the most neglected laws in the book.

L90B gives examples of offences subject to procedural penalties. No escape, mandatory, a procedural penalty should be given. Most of them do not create a surprise, but read B5 and B7.

Let us go to Marrakech, the just played world championships. A board is played and the result entered. North wants to check the first lead and takes the relevant hand out of the board. The bottom card is the  Q and that cannot be right. It appears to be a hand from the next board. TD called, and he awards a penalty of 3 imps for touching a card from a wrong board. Much later the team tells the TD that the opponents had put the new board on the table, of which North was not aware (this is confirmed by the camera). You cannot blame him for his mistake, they say. The TD's, not happy with the penalty they gave before, now give the opponents a penalty too, for handling a board they were not allowed to. Consternation again and the request from the other team for a review. Hours after the infraction occurred the reviewer gets involved in this case. It appears that there is no regulation saying that EW may not put a board on the table, then there cannot be a penalty. The TD would like to take away the penalty for North also now, but the protest time has long passed, so that is not possible anymore. This decided the outcome of a KO match! And demonstrates how important it is to know and understand the regulations.

Was North infringing the laws by taking cards out of the board after having finished play? The TD probably didn't know even that he might have applied L90B5 which refers to L7. Let us read 7B and 7C. What is the conclusion to draw? (1)

Now read B7, which probably will surprise you. The TD has to award a procedural penalty for any error in procedure that requires an

adjusted score. Is there anybody here who knew this law? It looks like the 'may' in the earlier mentioned laws should not be there. The TD has no choice but to give it.

Should we apply L90B7 in UI cases? North hesitates and South then makes a call that is suggested by the hesitation having a logical alternative. Then the TD awards an adjusted score. I think that there are good arguments to call this an error in procedure. Read L73C1: 'he must carefully avoid taking any advantage'.

Well, does a player know that he took advantage? By far not always. There is UI and a logical alternative and we ask players what they would do. Let us draw a line with percentages for the same choice by polled players. .

0% 25% 80% 100%

If the poll has an outcome between 80 and 100 the chosen call is allowed, if less, it is not. But going lower than 1 in 4 (25%) it is a really unethical call and should be penalized. This happens regularly, an example. South opens 2 ♦ which is alerted as multi., West passes and North bids 2 ♥, kind of mandatory when not interested in game. East passes and back to South. South has 1 heart and 6 diamonds and thought 2 ♦ to be weak with diamonds. He now illegally knows that partner does not promise hearts, and legally should assume that partner has long hearts. It is impossible to find anybody not passing with the South hand now. This means that if South dares to bid 3 ♦ he should be penalized heavily, regardless the outcome of the board.

Yellow card

In Marrakech there was a new element introduced: the yellow card. It was handed out to players who did not behave as L74 tells them to do, shortly spoken: polite, friendly. As well towards the players as also towards the TD-staff. And we started a database, keeping track of these irregularities. There was a review case in which I advised the

TD's to award such card to a player in the Bermuda Bowl final (screens used) who misbehaved by not following the instructions of the TD.

W	N	E	S
	2 ♥	pass	3 ♠
X	all pass		



Weak 2 ♥ and South explained 3S as spades and invitational, while North told East 'splinter', which was not in accordance with the system. When South passed out on his splinter East understood that something had gone wrong, so the TD was called.

The TD offered East the possibility to change his call in accordance with L 21 but East refused to consider it, telling the TD that the board could not be played anymore and therewith causing a mess at the table. Not earlier than 15 minutes later play continued.

A narrative to end this issue.

A long time ago I was TD in the junior European championships held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. First round and at one table they were playing the last board of the match and had still 4,5 minutes. Declarer was in 3NT and had already made 9 tricks, but started thinking. With one minute to go I warned the table but declarer kept thinking and ended 3 minutes late (probably without an extra trick). Then I approached him and told him what had happened, that he risked a relative high penalty for a minor profit with one extra trick. And I thought this educational lesson to be enough. It was not for my chief TD. He asked me whether I had given the penalty and on my 'no, I thought it better to educate him', he ordered me to give it. So this incident became also an educational moment for myself.

L???





Dummy puts down 12 cards, the  K is hidden under the  7. LHO starts a small diamond, the 7 in dummy and RHO with AQXX plays the ace. Now the K becomes visible. TD! (2)


Alerting

A problem always. There are two issues: When to alert and how to alert to make sure that the screenmate does see it.

The alerting procedure of the WBF tells that players are expected to protect themselves, which means that not alerting a call that probably should have been alerted, gives the opponents not a free way to an adjusted score if they feel damaged.

An example from the world championships in Marrakech:




W	N	E	S
		pass	1 
pass	1 	X	2 
pass	4 		all pass

The 1 -bid showed spades. Declarer took the double as take out for spades but it was meant as showing hearts. She misplayed the spade suit and asked for a ruling. The TD decided that the meaning of the double is not clear, since many play it as take out and many as showing hearts. South should have protected herself by asking. A similar situation arises for example after a 1NT opening, doubled by LHO, not alerted. South asked for a review and lost it with the contributed money.

Let us have a look the alerting policy of the WBF. The main rule is that artificial calls should be alerted and natural calls should not. Looks reasonable, but then there is a specification saying the following: non forcing jump changes of suit responses to opening bids or overcalls are alertable and also a non-forcing new suit response by an unpassed hand to opening bids of one of a suit.



Regulations say that a player needs to ascertain himself that his screenmate has seen his alert. Alerts are made in a very clumsy way by most players, by pointing to the bid made, or by pointing to the system card, or with a vague gesture or..... The right way to do it is by placing the alert card clearly visible for the opponent and ascertaining yourself that the screenmate does see it. We have camera's nowadays, registering it all. In Strasbourg a player was complaining that a call had not been alerted and then the camera showed that the opponent had put the alert card on the tray and that the player had looked in that direction. So the TD decided that the opponent was allowed to assume that it had been noticed. It went to a review and the reviewer saw no reason to overrule the TD decision.

A revoke and a claim statement.

South is declarer in 4S and with still 4 tricks to go and LHO West having led the  7 tells: I ruff this one and then have two high diamonds and a trump left. He then puts his cards on the table and the defenders see the  4/  T among them and call for the TD. No other hearts left, nor can dummy ruff it. Decision? (3)

Declarer claims after both defenders did not follow suit. Now one of them shows a winning card in that suit. What should happen? (4)

Alcatraz

Declarer is in 7NT and has 16 tricks but 7 of them are in dummy with  AKQJT94 but no other entries and no clubs himself. No club lead either. He wins the first trick in hand and then plays the  A from dummy, RHO follows suit and the thirteen tricks are born. After the play the defenders call for the TD and tell him what happened. Decision. (5)

Miracle

North has AT96 A7 53 AKQ43 and opens 1NT which is explained as 11-14. EW pass throughout. South bids 2 ♥ as a transfer (he has KQ754 85 KQ94 T8). Now North, somewhat annoyed, bids 6 ♠. 12 tricks made and a TD call by an angry West. Decision?(6)

Dummy can do things which create UI for partner. Do you have an example? (7)

Don't make opponents revoke established

Can it be winning to ask a defender who did not follow suit whether he is really void in that suit, giving up the automatic one or even two trick penalty? (8)

Answers:

(1)

North took the hand out with the opponents at the table but &C refers to a board already been played. The incident happened with a board not played yet, so yes, the penalty could be given.

(2)

Though it is compelling to allow RHO to replace the queen for the ace, there is no legal basis to do so. Read 47. This is a rare case of applying L 12 A1 and adjusting the score afterwards.

(3)

There is an announced revoke, not an established one. So, law 70 applies: contested claim, to be solved by the TD. With the ♥ 4 declarer loses a trick, with the ♥ T he wins them all.

(4)

Now there has been a revoke, but it is not established, read L63A4 and L69B). ♥ T is placed in the last played trick and the TD decides the outcome of the board.

(5)

L72C applies, the TD adjusts the score for declarer based on not reaching dummy. Even if you consider following suit after the illegal play as an extreme serious error, the defenders get the reciprocal score. It is clear that their mistake is related to the infraction.

(6)

Yes, North has UI and yes he has a logical alternative. But what about the suggestion? Is 6NT suggested by the knowledge of the misinformation? Certainly not, North opted for a zero as a penalty for his 'stupid' partner. Well, he failed.

(7)

There are many examples, let us mention two: suggesting the play of a card from dummy and telling declarer that he put a card in the wrong direction as lost (or won).

(8)

It happened decades ago in India. The declaring side was in 6NT and got the lead of ♣A, Dummy came down with 4 small clubs and declarer himself had 2 of those. And then RHO played a small spade. Really surprised and considering 6 off too much he asked: 'don't you have clubs'? RHO had clubs, the spade became a major penalty card and declarer demanded a spade continuation, making his contract.