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## LAW 16

If a ranking of the most important articles in the Laws were to be established, for sure Law 16 would rank among the first ones. As would also Laws 73 and 75. All the laws are of course important, but the very foundations of bridge do rest on Laws 16, 73 and 75.

Before we start studying this essential law, I would like to quote this sentence extracted from the « Scope and Interpretations of the Laws »

« The Laws are primarily designed not as punishment for irregularities, but rather as redress for damage.»

In other words, the aim of tournament directing is not to punish but to restore equity, that is the result, which would have been obtained if there had been no irregularity. Let's keep in mind that, in the context of Law 16, the TD will always have to ask himself the following question: which result would have been reached if the irregularity hadn't taken place? We must admit that his task is at the same time quite honourable and rather tricky. We really need to understand his reasoning, and what might be considered as a violation of this law.

Laws 16 and 73 (communication between partners) are quite complementary. Violation of law 73 leads to unauthorized information. But it's not the only one. That's why the Laws make a clear difference between extraneous information from partner and extraneous information from other sources.

Law 16 on extraneous information is an essential one. In one single sentence it explains why a player is not allowed to say: "He's breaking my heart!" (as Cesar does in a famous scene of the film by Marcel Pagnol) and it lists the three legal sources of information: « Players are authorised to base calls and plays on information from legal calls and/or plays, and from mannerisms of opponents. To base a call or play on extraneous information may be an infraction of law ». Law 16 therefore specifies the only legal ways a player has to get information on what his partner and consequently his opponents have in their hands.

If you want to understand what information is legally accessible, just imagine yourself sitting at the table, with your opponents next to you as usual, but with an inaudible and invisible partner, whose bidding and play would always occur with the same tempo. Screens allow us to come very close to this ideal situation, but not to completely reach it. In most cases, the TD

will need to ask himself what would have occurred if the players had been in such a context. And if he does ask himself that question, he's much closer to a solution.

Outside of these three sources, you're in the Dead Zone, you're outside the law, or at least you've entered the territory of extraneous information.

### **Extraneous Information from Partner .**

Most cases of unauthorized information come from a huddle by the partner. But we'll come back to this later.

Another case of extraneous information from Partner often happens when he answers a question by the opponents. In this field, conventions describing two-suited hands are a true gold mine for TDs throughout the world.

West :

♠ J5

♥ 5

♦ 863

♣ AQJ10973

South opens 1♥ and West bids 3♣ forgetting that in their system it describes a two-suited hand in ♠-♦. East alerts and, when asked by North, correctly explains the bid. The latter then fits with a 3♥ bid and East bids 4♠ doubled by South . You obviously know that the director will redress a possible 5♣ bid and award an adjusted score corresponding to 4♠ doubled. What would have happened if we had been in the ideal situation described before?

It is essential for the TD to fully understand Law 75 (agreements between partners) and its interconnections with Law 16. Bidding system application mistakes by a player do not constitute an infraction to the Laws. On the other hand, if you don't inform your opponents on the precise agreements you have with your partner, you are committing a breach of Law 75. By the way, may I remind you that this type of infraction, when inadvertent of course, constitutes the sole exception to Law 72B3 which says that « there is no obligation to draw attention to an inadvertent infraction of law committed by one's side (but see footnote to Law 75 for a mistaken explanation) ». This footnote says that a player whose partner has given a wrong explanation, must after calling the Director at the first legal opportunity (after the final pass, if he is to be the declarer or dummy, after play ends, if he is to be a defender), inform his opponents that, in his opinion, his partner's explanation was erroneous. This law is, I believe, not very well known yet, including among high level players and it is also one of the essential tasks of the TD to make this law known by all the bridge players.

However, we should be careful! While an application error is not in itself an infraction, it inevitably incurs unauthorized information, as the partner of the players who has explained immediately knows that his own bid has been wrongly understood. Let's always keep this in mind!

In the here above example, there is no infraction to Law 75, but the answer to the question is an unauthorized information for the partner. These rulings are spectacular and often not well understood by most players.

Explaining his decision to the player who bid 5♣, the director might ask him the following simple question: Just imagine your partner had said that your 3♣ bid meant a weak one-suited hand with ♣, what would you have bid after the double at 4♠? Some players might then understand that their 5♣ bid has in fact been influenced by their partner's explanation.

Another example:

♠ KQ10  
♥ J98765  
♦ A  
♣ AK2

♠ A6  
♥ AK4  
♦ Q764  
♣ QJ43

♠ J9872  
♥ 10  
♦ J8532  
♣ 87

♠ 543  
♥ D32  
♦ K109  
♣ 10965

West opens 1NT and North overcalls with 2♥. Alas, South wrongly alerts and gives the following explanation: Transfer to ♠! East passes and South normally bids 2♠, West passes and ... Poor North. Is it possible for him to bid less than 4♠? Never! What would North have declared if South hadn't alerted or if he had explained the 2♥ bid as being natural.

This will again result in a drastic ruling and a wealth of diplomacy to console the N-S partnership.

Any TD is well aware of this type of situation. However, some kind of unauthorized information may be more tricky to detect:

N	E	S	W
2♦°	P	3♥°°	

At his turn to bid, West asks: 2♦ is?; the answer is: multi . 3♥?; answer: Pass or correct. West then passes without any huddle. Can we talk in this case of extraneous information from West to East? Apparently, no infraction, no variation of tempo; What could we blame West for? The answer is easy: nothing! Let's hear however Grattan Endicot's comments in such a case:

“ As the law now stands, if West asks a question, his partner, East, without screens, may use the information contained in opponent's response to that question. But if either the content of the question, or the fact that it is asked, conveys a suggestion to East as to the nature of West's hand, this is information that East may not use. This is a matter of Law and not of regulation. Whether there is an alert or not does not affect the Law on what information is authorized. Whether the disclosure regulations provide for alerts or not does not affect the

Law on what information is authorized. We have to change the Law if we want to get away from these inescapable facts.”

Another rather funny situation:

North  
♠ 85  
♥ AQJ106  
♦ KQ52  
♣ 64

South  
♠ AQ6  
♥ K8  
♦ J10763  
♣ AJ8

N	S
1♥	1NT
2♦ <sup>o</sup>	

- <sup>o</sup> alerted by South who when asked by East explains it is a transfer for ♥. In fact, South did not see the opening bid.
- 1) East asks the bidding to be repeated. South realises his mistake and when East passes, he bids 3NT .12 tricks after the ♠ lead for a top.  
No infraction, No extraneous information.
  - 2) East says nothing South says 2♥. North understanding that South hasn't seen his opening bid says 3NT. Still 12 tricks and still a top.  
The score will be adjusted to a score related to playing 2♥ The extraneous information is the alert and South's explanation, which is information North is not allowed to.

Even funnier:

Inadvertently, you pull the wrong card from the bidding box(related to L25A), but do not realise it.

- 1) Your partner alerts, which surprises you. Because of the alert you look down, see what you have done, immediately attempt to change your bid. Will the TD allow you to change it?  
Yes, is there any logical alternative?
- 2) Your LHO asks a question, which sounds strange . Because of his question you look down, see what you have done, immediately attempt to change it. Do we allow the change?  
Yes, why not?

Examples like these would be endless and you can trust the boundless imagination of bridge players to endlessly present directors with new problems. It is rather tricky for TD's to truly apprehend all those situations and detect possible extraneous information.

## Huddles

A more frequent problem, in my experience, are huddles, representing one of the trickier tasks of a TD. For various reasons. First of all, because the TD will have to use his judgment and a lot of players will think he is not competent enough to give them what they will consider as a bridge lesson; and next and mostly because rulings taken in such a situation are considered by a great part of the players as an attack at their honesty. And it occurs all the more often when the level of the concerned players gets lower. Beyond the adjusted score, it is their honesty, their morality and their honour, which according to them has been questioned. The simple fact of seeing the opponents call the director already makes some players feel like they were accused of cheating.

It will be the director's role to repeat again and again that huddling is not an infraction.

In so far as the player has a true bridge problem to solve, huddling does not in itself constitute an infraction. Where would the pleasure of this game be if we were not allowed to think? The Laws are very clear on the fact that it is desirable but not required that players should maintain a steady tempo and unvarying manner. The problem is that a huddle very often carries some type of information and that this information is very often quite identifiable. And in fact, this type of communication is not allowed. When the director is called after a huddle, it is not sure that there has in fact been an irregularity. The irregularity only occurs when the partner draws some kind of profit from the huddle, only if the partner « chooses from among logical alternative actions one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information. »

So, here is the big question: what exactly is a logical alternative? It has been a subject of debate for many years. We could consider this interpretation: a logical alternative is: « any action a number of the player's peers would seriously consider. » But « a number of peers » is rather vague. Grattan Endicott is more precise. " We broadly interpret a logical alternative as being a call or play which three or more in ten players of equal ability to the player whose call is in question could be expected to make in the particular situation, using all the legal inferences from the auction and play, but undisturbed by possession of any illicit information."

An example extracted from « The Bridge World magazine » could help.

“ ♠KQ10763 ♥4 ♦ K5 ♣ QJ63. LHO opens four hearts, non vulnerable against vulnerable; partner takes 25 seconds to pass; after RHO passes, you risk a four spades bid; plus 650.

A TD, like most bridge players, believes that he would come up with the winning action which, invariably, is the one made at the table (otherwise the case would never have come to the TD). So, the verdict is likely to be that – all good players – would reopen: the result stands. What a TD should do with this guideline is to redirect his attention: away from the successful action to the losing alternative. Would it have been obviously foolish to pass, an egregious error, absurd? No, it wouldn't. Pass would be quite often right. Thus, the score should be adjusted to four hearts passed out.”

It is consequently not possible to know whether there has been an irregularity before seeing the hand of the partner of the player who has huddled. This is why you don't systematically call the director after a huddle. You shouldn't call him, as he should not be called before the attention has been drawn on an irregularity.

If the four players agree on the fact that there has been a huddle, the director can wait. You're in no hurry. A player will immediately declare that he reserves his rights of calling the director later on. However, the Laws specify that the opponents should call the TD if they don't agree on the fact that there could have been an extraneous information. The main reason for that is that the first task of the TD is to establish the huddle, which is not always very easy. In this area, it will probably be a good thing to ask the partner of the huddler if he agrees. If not, things get more complicated, even if we all know that if the TD has been called it means that a variation in tempo has probably taken place. Skilful questions and a look at the diagram will maybe allow the TD to build up his own conviction.

If the huddle is established, the TD will ask the players to go on playing and to call him again if they think it's necessary.

Once the play is over, the TD will be called back, if the non-offending side think they have been damaged. There starts the inquiry and you'll have to ask the right question at the right moment, about the pair's bidding or signalling conventions; the concerned player will have to explain his reasoning. This reasoning may sometimes contain some incoherence, which should be detected as soon as possible. This is why the TD should be a good bridge player. Once the inquiry is over, you should then take your time to study the hand and, if possible consult other players, experts and other TDs. These consultations are essential and hugely useful for the TD, as it is so very easy to oversee some detail, to make a mistake when analysing a hand that the remarks and advice will very much help the TD in his task.

As far as extraneous information is concerned, the TD's reflection will always have to take into account the following principles:

Was there an UI, a hesitation, a variation in tempo? If not, the case is over.

Did it cause damage?

Was there a logical alternative?

Could the alternative chosen have been suggested over another?

If the answer to these four questions is "yes", the score should be adjusted.

Once a decision is reached, time has come to inform both partnerships. We all know that this type of decisions is often disputed, which is not a problem. Both partnerships should know that they have the possibility of appealing the decision. This is why it is a good thing that you should quickly come to a decision, so that the players have time to think it over and decide whether they want to appeal and you have time, when necessary to gather an appeal committee. But the most important thing is the words you choose to pass your sentence. It is my opinion that players calling the TD after a huddle are, most of them, more than average players. When their opponents are more modest players, it is essential that they understand that they haven't done anything wrong, that their honesty is not being questioned and that they are obviously in good faith. Reassuring them is part of our job. Saying something nice and explaining to them that any player, even you, could have done the same thing in their place could really help.

One last remark: Concerning unauthorized information, and in particular huddles, decisions are radical: it's black or white, a player can or cannot. A usual mistake of appeal committees is to split scores. The Laws does not allow it. A fortiori, a TD does not have this possibility either. Law 12C3 is not applicable.

Let's now take a look at the following hand:

	♠ KQ1087652	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 732	
	♣ 3	
♠		♠ A93
♥ 10864		♥ AQ5
♦ AJ108654		♦ KQ9
♣ KJ		♣ 9752
	♠ J4	
	♥ KJ732	
	♦	
	♣ AQ10864	

Vul : N/S

W	N	E	S	
3♦	P	3NT	P <sup>°</sup>	
P	4♠	P	P	
5♦	P	P	Double <sup>°°</sup>	
P	5♠	Double	All Pass	Result : +1 : 1050N/S

<sup>°</sup> : hesitation

<sup>°°</sup>: longer hesitation

ruling : 5♦ doubled down one

North claimed that an immediate bid of either 3♠ or 4♠ over 3♦ would have shown a better hand than a delayed bid. North further stated that he pulled the double of 5♦ « out of fright. » He felt that the opponents were just unhappy that they did not lead the ace and another spade to defeat the contract.

The committee decision: The committee members felt that while North's 4♠ bid might have made some players nervous, pass was not a logical alternative. However, North's own testimony about the strength requirements of a direct spade bid suggested that South did not expect any defensive tricks from North. Since a pass of 5♦ doubled would certainly have been the choice of many players with these agreements, pass was decided to be a logical alternative.

The committee changed the contract to 5♦ doubled down one

## Extraneous Information from Other Source

Unless you have at your disposal vast and spacious rooms, such incidents are bound to occur from time to time. For the TD, the difficulty consists in determining whether the obtained information might have interfered with the normal play of the hand, in particular in a pair tournament, as you then need to reach an immediate decision.

Example: When taking the cards from the board, the ♠2 which was badly put back by the player at the previous table can be seen in South's hand. South becomes the declarer of a 6♦ contract and West leads the ace of ♠ with: ♠AJ9864; the dead body's hand appears with: KQ103. East follows with the 5 and South with the 7; the defender's play is quite easy.

The Laws gives the TD a few clues on how to deal with such a case:

- ❖ Changing positions, E/O partnership becomes N/S and vice versa; in a pair tournament, computer programs allow us this type of acrobatics.
- ❖ Designate a substitute player: in my opinion a more theoretical than practical solution.
- ❖ Immediately grant an artificial adjusted score. What does "immediately" mean? Some TDs think that they can let the play go on and stop it only if the obtained information interferes with the normal play of the hand. The advantage of this type of attitude is to avoid systematically granting a 60/60 score. But I'm not sure that the Laws allow such a thing.
- ❖ Finally, in a team match, it is always possible to deal the hand again, if it hasn't yet been played at the other table.



## Information from withdrawn calls and plays

This law has been largely modified in 1997. For the offending side, information arising from its own withdrawn action and from withdrawn actions of the non-offending side are now unauthorised. For the non-offending side, all information arising from a withdrawn action are still authorised; no change.

This law is mentioned everywhere in the Laws. Rather than a long speech, let's study some examples.

### Law 16C1

			♠ 1062	
			♥ KQ986	
			♦ 1098	
			♣ 52	
	♠ K87			♠ AJ94
	♥ J7			♥ 42
	♦ Q2			♦ 7643
	♣ AQ10863			♣ J97
			♠ Q53	
			♥ A1053	
			♦ AKJ5	
			♣ K4	
S	W	N	E	
1♠(inadv.)	2♣			
TD.! then				
1NT	P	2♦(♥)	3♣	
3♥	three passes West leads a ♠ , South will finesse the ♦ . Result 3♥-1			

Score stands

Another example:

	♠ 8653	
♠ K		♠ 9742
	♠ AQJ10	

South is the declarer at a ♥ contract. From the dummy, ♠3 , East ruffs , ♠10 , ♠K . East discovers his revoke. South now plays ♠A. Bang! No problem.

**Law 25A/16C2**

♠ K10  
♥ Q102  
♦ AJ5  
♣ K8643

♠ J975  
♥ A83  
♦ Q98  
♣ AQJ

♠ -  
♥ KJ964  
♦ 10743  
♣ 10952

♠ AQ86432  
♥ 75  
♦ K102  
♣ 7

S	W	N	E
3♥(inad)	double		
TD!			

South wants to change his 3♥ bid into 3♠, and the TD allows it. So the bidding is now:

S	W	N	E
3♠	Pass	4♠	End

Lead ♦; The TD will not allow South to finesse the ♠J

**Law 16C2/28**

Same diagram, but the bidding is:

S	W	N	E
3♥then			
3♠	Double TD!!		

West who had seen the 3♥ bid had doubled this bid and now sees the 3♠ bid

Same ruling

**Law 16C2/31**

	♠ 10865 ♥ K7 ♦ AJ82 ♣ KJ10	
♠ KQ4 ♥ J10965 ♦ 75 ♣ 632	♠ 3 ♥ 83 ♦ KQ9643 ♣ AQ87	♠ AJ972 ♥ AQ42 ♦ 10 ♣ 954

South dealer , East opens 1♠ out of turn .  
 South refuses and N/S reach a 5♦ contract with no bid by the opponents  
 South demands a ♠ lead. West leads the King and then switches.

Another example

	♠ K85 ♥ 96 ♦ J10963 ♣ Q74	
♠ 96 ♥ A843 ♦ 875 ♣ 10985	♠ AQJ1032 ♥ J ♦ AKQ ♣ 632	♠ 74 ♥ KQ10752 ♦ 42 ♣ AKJ

E	S	W	N
1♥	1♠		
2♥OOT. TD!!			then
		P	2♠
P	4♠	All Pass	

West leads ♥A , and ♣ , down 1

Law 16C2/50

♠ K987  
♥ KJ54  
♦ A3  
♣ 652

♠ 104  
♥ A97  
♦ QJ1054  
♣ J74

♠ 53  
♥ 8632  
♦ 87  
♣ AK983

♠ AQJ62  
♥ Q10  
♦ K962  
♣ Q10

S	W	N	E
1♠	P	4♠	end

East leads OOT ♣A  
South forbids ♣lead  
West leads ♦Q, A, 8, 2  
♥4, 6, Q, A  
Is West allowed to return ♣ ?

South could have:

♠ AQJxx  
♥ Q10  
♦ 96  
♣ AKxx

In that case it would be better for the defense to switch ♦.

Is the case different if West ducks the first round of hearts, takes the A on the second, East playing ♥6 followed by 2♥ ?

## Law 16C2/50

♠ KJ86  
♥ 865  
♦ KQ6  
♣ A94

♠ 73  
♥ AK432  
♦ 10753  
♣ J5

♠ Q109  
♥ Q7  
♦ 982  
♣ 108762

♠ A542  
♥ J109  
♦ AJ4  
♣ KQ3

South plays 4♠ , East leads OOT the ♥Q

1) South lets West free to lead what he wants; the ♥Q being exposed, the latter chooses to lead the ♥2 , result : minus 1

2) South demands a ♥ lead

West again leads the ♥2 for the same result

Law 50D1 : the requirement that offender must play the card is authorized information for his partner ; however , other information arising from facing of the penalty card is unauthorized for partner .

So score stands in 1)

Adjusted score to 4♠ just made in 2) and a penalty for EW who should have realized that the play of the ♥2 is not acceptable.

## Law16C2/62

♠ 8632

♠ K

♠ 9754

♠ AQJ10

South declarer , from dummy played ♠2 , 4 , and discarded a small ♥; West played K♠. If South now discovers his revoke, he will need very good reasons to justify the play of the A♠.

## Law 16C2/47

♠ K54  
♥ 86  
♦ AKQ9754  
♣ 4

♠ Q106  
♥ J109  
♦ J10632  
♣ 106

♠ J973  
♥ K743  
♦  
♣ KJ982

♠ A82  
♥ AQ52  
♦ 8  
♣ AQ743

South plays 6♦. West leads the ♥J to the ♥Q.

South plays the ♦8, 2 and North takes the A. East discards. South claims: I didn't say anything : TD!!!

The TD correctly informed South that he was allowed to play any ♦ from dummy but the knowledge of East's void was not authorized. South called the ♦4. Safety play he said !

The TD ruled score stands on the fact that South was a very strong card player and that he would have made 6♦ even playing the ♦A instead of a small♦. But that case came to a disciplinary committee who imposed heavy penalties.

Finally:

## Law 16C2/27

N	E	S	W
1♥	P	1♥	
South has, say, 13HCP with 3541 but didn't see the opening bid.; then			
		2♥	P
4♥	P	P	P

Is North allowed to bid 4♥ with : ♠K3 ♥KQ863 ♦KJ43 ♣109 ?

In my opinion, yes. Law 27B1a) specifies that Law 16C2 does not apply, which means that the information is authorized.

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