



EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

4th EBL TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS COURSE

31st August – 5th September 2001
Tabiano di Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy

The WBF Code of Practice

Lecture notes

Conception

In September 1999 the President of the WBF, Jose Damiani, called together a group of the 'great and the good' in world bridge (dubbed the 'Lausanne Group') and asked them to consider how consistency could be achieved worldwide in the conduct of appeals. He was gravely concerned by the wide and widening schism between the approaches adopted in different WBF Zones and at times even between NBOs within the same Zone.

By agreement with the President a draft Code of Practice was prepared and brought to the meetings of the group where it was considered line by line. A few major changes were made and there was some tidying up of the words in which the views of the group are presented.

The Code was first applied in the World Championships in Bermuda in January, 2000. Immediately after the Championships the European Bridge League adopted the Code without alteration, save in one respect*, and has urged its member NBOs also to do the same.

Composition of Appeals Committees

Small committees are advocated. It is not considered that more than five members are to be desired. It is recognised that for certain intra-national competitions NBOs may wish a single referee to exercise the powers of an appeals committee, but the group feels such occasions should be limited and the practice should not be adopted where competitions are international.

The Code looks for committees to be made up of people with diverse know-how. It sees a need for a mix of players able to judge the bridge aspects of an appeal, along with others with an insight into the laws and those able to bring to the deliberations a broad balance of experience and reason.

The Code insists that no member of the committee should serve if he has discussed the matter with interested parties or is too close to any of them to be perceived as impartial. It does allow of a 'small minority' of the committee to comprise co-nationals of the parties involved – each side is not expected to have more than one co-national in a committee of five. *The EBL insists that co-nationals shall not be members of a committee and in this respect the agreed text exhibits a major change from the original draft.

Procedure

The requirement for an appeals committee ('AC') to listen is given emphasis in the Code. The Director should be allowed to state what facts have emerged, the ruling given, and the basis for it. The appellants must have a proper opportunity to state their reasons for objecting to the ruling and to show why it is flawed or inequitable. Following this the responding side has its turn to be heard. The Code stresses that members of the committee must not debate with the players but should proceed by asking questions and listening to answers. Everything should be done in a relaxed and courteous manner.

Appeals Committee Decisions

It is important that a committee member who votes shall have heard all the evidence. ACBL members of the Lausanne Group, and perhaps some others, were surprised by the view expressed by the author of the draft that, a Chairman's casting vote is desirably given in favour of the Director's ruling, notwithstanding that the Chairman may have voted the contrary with his first vote.

Appealing to the National Authority.

The Code calls for separate arrangements for Law 93 appeals. EBL regulations conflict with this in making the Tournament Appeals Committee both AC and 'national authority'. One may suggest that the EBL should review this.

Score Adjustment

Attention should be given to the definition of 'damage' in this section of the Code. The other notable point is that the WBF Laws Committee has more recently clarified that references to 'irrational' in the laws are to be understood as applying to what is irrational for the class of player involved. The statement concerning a revoke subsequent to the infraction is arguable but it stands for the time being as the official WBF position.

Law 12C3

This is the subject of a separate lecture during the present seminar. In these notes I propose to refer to three matters only.

The first is to applaud the agreement of the WBF to recommend what remained the policy of the EBL all through the Kaplan years: Directors are expected to exercise their bridge judgement and to give what they believe to be the ruling that the laws call for.

Second, the Lausanne Group mostly believed that a favourable response could be expected to its request to the WBF Laws Committee to amend Law 12C3 so that it could be exercised, perhaps under regulation, by Directors in Charge. Such anticipation was perhaps optimistic. Not being favoured with a change in the law, the WBF Appeals Committee took a different route to this objective. With the authority of the WBF Executive and the acquiescence (minute of January 11th, 2000) of the WBF Laws Committee, the same route is opened to affiliated bodies.

Third, the Laws Commission of Zone Seven has expressed reservations about consultation of players before a Director makes a judgement ruling. They fear that players consulted may have an interest in the outcome of an appeal. The Director should seek not to consult, I suggest, players for whom the outcome can have a significant effect; also, it should not be the case those consulted are made aware of the identities of the players or teams involved.

Inclination of Committee

The Code takes a stance on the practice of ACs in some places of treating Directors' rulings as though they had not occurred. With strong support from the WBF Chief Tournament Director, the Code specifies that the ruling is the given point from which the AC's duties originate. Nothing changes unless the AC is persuaded that it is right to change it and it is for the appellant side to present convincing evidence that the Director's ruling should be changed. Otherwise it stands.

There was one appeal in Sorrento when the Director had ruled that the appellants had received correct information and had not been misinformed. The appellants concentrated on demonstrating why they had gone wrong in the light of what they had been told, something that the AC had no difficulty in understanding; the appellants made no attempt to show that the information they had been given did not explain the systemic agreements of the partnership correctly. Their case and their deposit were lost with hardly a blow struck.

Ethics

The paragraph on ethics reminds Directors and ACs that for a penalty to be imposed there must be a specific breach of law. Where we speak of 'law' it is to include regulations made under the laws.

Unauthorised Information ('UI')

Directors should observe the differentiation between spontaneity and habit. The identification of the latter matches to the view of the WBF Laws Committee on psychic actions: "a partnership understanding exists when the frequency of occurrence is sufficient for the partner of a psycher to take his awareness of psychic possibilities into account, whether he does so or not."

Use of unauthorised information

The Code dealt with this subject a little superficially. That is to say, the subject is well explored to a certain depth and the Code has largely confined itself to what is established. Two comments can be added:

- (a) the sequence of the numbered steps in establishing the case for score adjustment was altered from the draft by the group;
- (b) a little explored area concerns the position when a player believes he knows what has occasioned a break in tempo by his partner, and allows it to influence his action, but the Director/AC does not consider the UI demonstrably suggests the action taken. This does constitute a seeming violation of Law 73C, a law which may be thought not to sit easily with the insertion of 'demonstrably' in Law 16. There is room here for fresh clarification. The existence of this kind of irregularity may often be difficult to establish.

Discrepancies between explanations and related hands

The only problem for the Director here, such as it is, lies in a need to link any ruling with the statements on score adjustment and procedural penalties.

Psychic calls

The definition could perhaps add usefully 'by reference to the partnership's announced agreements'.

The sub-paragraphs (a) through (d) are intended to suggest to the Director/AC the kinds of evidence that may lead to the opinion that the existence of a partnership understanding has been demonstrated. Directors should recognise that there is a judgement to be made and the

application of these potential indications is not mechanical. There have been some doubts as to (b) and it would be readily agreed that a single preceding occasion can rarely be said to show a pattern. But occasionally the facts may be so striking that a partnership understanding can be considered to be present; one should not rule out such a possibility on grounds of rarity alone.

Disclosure of psychic tendencies

The right of opponents to have *prior* knowledge of a partnership understanding should not be disregarded. An alert after a call is made does not give prior disclosure as Law 40A requires. The exception is that law does not require prior disclosure if the opponents may reasonably be expected to understand the meaning of the call. Regulations to which Law 40B refers should be framed to call for prior disclosure where it is evidently inequitable for the opponents not to have it.

False carding by defenders

The statement on false carding seeks to express the extent to which false carding may occur before it crosses the line and becomes a partnership understanding.

‘Special’

The law book makes much of what is a ‘special’ partnership understanding. It was felt that ‘special’ deserved a definition. Where the Code of Practice is adopted it has one.

Action behind screens

The intent in introducing screens was to eliminate unauthorised communication between partners. Although the effect was marked, total elimination, even with screens, has not been achieved. As far as humanly possible the desire is that only legal, authorised, information shall pass through the screen. Anything that the Director can return to normality on the one side of the screen without the other two players being informed what has happened, even though they know the Director has been called for some reason, should be rectified and the tray passed to the other side with only the legal auction on it.

Behind screens players can more easily be generous in giving helpfully expanded information to their screenmates. This is to be strongly encouraged as fitting with the sportsmanlike ambience of the game. It is one of the unforeseen benefits that the players have gained from the introduction of screens.

A weakness in screen procedures has been the knowledge that can often be gained from a delayed return of the tray. It is the strong wish of the WBF that players co-operate with measures to confuse the reading of the tempo of returning the tray. The Code speaks of varying the tempo. This can be done intelligently so that there are delays when no player has needed time to think but it could have been the case that one player or the other could well have had a tricky decision to make. Additionally such delays are always desirable when a player has to deal with an unusual situation, unfamiliar treatment or convention, or with a skip bid – especially a particularly high pre-emption. Over-quick return of the tray should also be avoided except when it is clear that the auction is routine. If players do not choose to create these desired conditions they should not be complaining too greatly if Directors/ACs are not wholly sympathetic when a situation arises that might have been avoided.

Procedural Penalties

The general statement is so evident one might wonder why it is made. However, the added request for appeals committees to cite the section of the law that has been breached offers a clue: there have been too many instances when it has not been apparent what the offence was for which a penalty was awarded.

‘Convention Disruption’ is a concept that has proved controversial. At this time it is not an offence when a player misbids to the equal surprise, and maybe dismay, of both opponents and partner. The WBF Laws Committee did promulgate, in Albuquerque (1994), its opinion that “one cannot devise a law which says that deliberate infringement of partnership agreement is acceptable but accidental infringement is punishable”. At the same time it did note that there are circumstances in which forgetting of agreements and consequent ‘convention disruptions’ can be disciplined under Laws 74A3, 74B1, or 74A2. For the record, this subject is again on the agenda (of the WBF Executive) at the coming world championships.

Reporting of Appeals

The work of scribing and reporting appeals is to be further encouraged.

Future Developments

A remnant of the disbanded Lausanne Group has been charged with settling a first tranche of ‘jurisprudence’ to be added to the Code of Practice. The quadrumvirate (Auken, Endicott, Gerard, Wignall) has put together a selection of appeals and some advisory memoranda and it is planned to bring these to the light of day in Bali. If the Executive agrees, the material will be added to the Code of Practice in a ‘second edition’.

Thereafter it appears possible some arrangement may be made for the accumulation of further material from later experience.

Lastly, it is the avowed aim of the WBF that it shall lead by example. There is no suggestion that the world authority should try to impose its views in these matters on affiliated bodies, but it is actively pursuing its goals by persuasion.

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Please note change of email addresses for Grattan Endicott. These are now:

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