

RULINGS and REVIEW

Most players are reasonably aware of the process that takes place when there has been a potential infraction of the laws. The Tournament Director (“TD”) is called and told why a player believes that there may have been an infraction. The TD will ascertain what has occurred. Simple problems such as revokes, leads out of turn and similar are dealt with immediately and the game continues.

Occasionally there may be some hesitation which can constitute unauthorised information and now the spotlight will focus on the actions of the player who may have been in receipt of that unauthorised information. Inevitably the question arises as to whether that player might have been influenced in some way and in some circumstances whether *PASS* was a logical alternative. A slow *DOUBLE* could suggest doubt and if the partner then successfully bids on questions will be asked and a ruling sought. Incorrect explanations and failure to *ALERT* may also lead to a ruling being sought from the TD.

The TD who is called to the table will collect the evidence of what occurred. The TDs then discuss the matter between themselves before deciding if an infraction has taken place and that it resulted in damage to the non-offending side. Where the matter involves bridge judgement the TD will consult 5 players of an appropriate standard and typically ask “What would you do/bid on the following hand after the bidding has gone . . . ?” The answers given by

the players then assists the TDs to determine what the ruling should be. Sometimes this may lead to a weighted ruling where one result may be obtained one third of the time and another result two-thirds of the time.

The ruling is then notified to the players who have previously been told that they have the right to appeal the ruling to an Appeals Committee. The Appeal Committee, generally made up of about 5 people, hear the facts of the case and the basis why the Appellants say that the TD's ruling was wrong and should be overturned or varied to some extent. The burden of proof lies with the Appellants who must convince the Appeal Committee that the TD's ruling was incorrect. Appeals that are without merit are subject to financial penalty.

The level of Tournament Directing and the calibre of TDs in EBL Championships is regarded as amongst the best in the World. The TDs undergo rigorous training and testing and are part of a process of continuous development. The process by which rulings are determined is one that will provide a fair determination in circumstances where there cannot be a perfect solution.

The European Bridge League has decided that in these Championships there will be no Appeal Committee. Instead the recipients of a ruling will be entitled to ask for the matter to be reviewed by a person who was not involved in the original decision. The Reviewer will check that the TD has gathered the necessary evidence of what occurred when the infraction arose. The

Reviewer will then need to be satisfied that the correct law was applied and that other TDs were consulted where appropriate. In matters involving the judgement that was exercised by a player following unauthorised information, incorrect explanation or failure to alert, the Reviewer will clarify that suitable players have been asked appropriate questions to enable a judgmental view to be obtained. Finally the Reviewer will check that ruling that was issued based upon all the information available to the TDs was within the bounds of reasonableness. The fact that the Reviewer might have determined a slightly different ruling would not be good reason for the ruling to be varied. In the event that the process had not been followed properly in some material way, the Reviewer will ask the Chief TD to correct the failings and issue a new ruling.

What is the method by which a review can be sought? When the TD notifies the players of a ruling, they will be told of their right to seek a review. The usual time limits for appealing a ruling will apply to seeking a review of a ruling. If a review is sought the matter will be referred to the Reviewer who will consider the matter in accordance with the protocol outlined above. The player challenging the ruling may write a simple statement as to which part of the process they believe was flawed and how that would have affected the ruling. The Reviewer has the power to impose a sanction in the event that a request for a review was without merit. The sanction will be quantified in IMPs or VPs as appropriate to the type of event being played.

TDs have been made aware of the importance of following the approved process before delivering a ruling. Players must also be conscious of the need to notify the TD of relevant information when the evidence is being gathered.

It is hoped that players will accept that rulings that are given by TDs are arrived at following a proper consideration of all relevant facts and consultation between TDs and the polling of appropriate players. It is expected that requests for a review of the TD ruling will be rare but it provides a safeguard to avoid failures in the process.