



## EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

### 4<sup>th</sup> EBL TOURNAMENT DIRECTORS COURSE

31<sup>st</sup> August – 5<sup>th</sup> September 2001  
Tabiano di Salsomaggiore Terme, Italy

#### E B L Systems Policy and system regulation

#### Seminar notes

#### **Introduction**

The first formal Systems Policy in the European Bridge League was instituted under the guidance of Karl Rohan over twenty years ago. Karl introduced it from Europe to the World Bridge Federation. In Europe today the Policy is supported by Systems Regulations at every EBL Championship. In recent years the policy of the EBL has been to conform to the Systems Policy of the World Bridge Federation. This continues to be the attitude of the EBL.

#### **General Basis**

The Systems Policy classifies players' systems in four categories. These are labelled 'Green', 'Blue', 'Red', and 'Yellow'. The classification of a system is defined by the nature of its opening action at the level of one:  
Green : its one openers are natural bids, not conventional.

Blue : the artificial openers at the one level include a one opener in a minor suit that is artificial and strong; one of a major and One No-Trumps are natural; the one opening in the other minor may be artificial with various possibilities not covered by other opening bids.

Yellow: the opening action is 'HUM' as later described.

Red : one or more of the opening one bids is artificial but not conforming to any of the foregoing classifications.

#### **'Average hand'**

The Systems Policy gives definitions for a few of the pieces of jargon amongst the many expressions it uses. The definition of an 'average hand' relies upon a measure of common sense in the reader – apart from what it says we must also assume a hand of nondescript distribution since thirteen cards in a suit would not constitute an 'average' hand (with as many stronger hands possible as there are weaker ones).

## **HUM ('Yellow') Systems**

The designation 'HUM' was the choice of Edgar Kaplan. It is an acronym from 'Highly Unusual Method'. The yellow tag attached to HUM systems was taken from the flag of quarantine, with connotations of plague.

A system is classified as 'HUM' if it exhibits *by partnership agreement* any one of the following characteristics:

- a pass in the opening position may have twelve or more high card points ('HCP')
- an opening bid at the one level may be weaker than Pass
- an opening bid at the one level may be made on seven or fewer HCP
- an opening bid of one has alternative possible meanings that the hand may be long or short in a specified suit
- an opening bid at the one level has alternative possibilities that it shows length in one suit or length in another suit.

When a Director comes across the apparent use of any such opening action his first step should be to check that it is a matter of partnership agreement.

If not, he may be dealing with psychic action?

## **Conditions of use of HUM methods**

The only EBL competitions in which HUM systems may be used are the Open Teams Championship and the Ladies Teams Championship. In these competitions pairs using HUM systems are:

- (a) to submit their convention cards in advance as specified in the Supplementary Conditions of Contest;
- (b) to lodge the FULL system file (in English) at the beginning of the Championship;
- (c) to make themselves available fifteen minutes before the start of each match to supply any information or clarifications requested by opponents
- (d) if playing against a team that does not include a HUM pair, to place themselves first for each session (along with their team mates since their team is the visiting team for each session)
- (e) to receive a copy in writing of opponents' defences to the HUM system (the opponents must file three such copies at the CC Desk thirty minutes before the scheduled line-up time for the match – opponents using green, red or blue systems are allowed to change their systems, including the opening calls, but pairs using HUM systems may not change their opening calls).
- (f) to provide at the table, prior to the start of the session, two copies of their counter defences to the defences in (e). The counter defences must not involve any alteration to the highly artificial aspects of their HUM system.

## **Other classifications**

Green, Blue, Red systems may be played in any EBL event in categories 1,2 or 3. Currently all events other than the Open and Ladies Teams Championships are in Category 3.

## **Conventions**

All partnerships incorporate in their systems a number of conventions. The EBL requires a convention card ('CC') to be prepared by each pair in the format of the official WBF Convention Card. Various programs available for the purpose are listed in the Systems Regulations.

Full disclosure of system via the CC and supplementary sheets is required. Careful reading of Law 40E1 helps us to realize that the requirement for a partnership to list their conventions and other agreements on the CC, if one is prescribed, is a matter of law; the power to regulate given in Law 40E enables regulating authorities to add to this basic requirement of the law, but not to override it.

EBL regulations specify that competitors must fully disclose all conventions and treatments against which opponents will require to prepare defences. In general terms the only conventions that may be listed by name alone are those used exactly as described in the 'EBL Conventions Booklet' (sic) – this is to be interpreted as a reference to the WBF Conventions Booklet that is incorporated in the Guide to Completion; otherwise explanation of each convention must be fully developed, inclusive of disclosure of competitive agreements. Two-suited intervention over natural opening one bids must be detailed precisely – naming the suits shown in each variation. [It may be noted that the WBF regulations for Bali say that in the case of initial action whether offensive or defensive, showing two or more specified suits, the suits involved must be specified on the CC.]

The EBL regulations continue by requiring partnerships to list on the *front* of their CCs (i) all artificial openings except strong one club/two club openings (but no exemption of strong one/two diamond openings), (ii) responses to natural openings when these responses are weak and conventional, and (iii) all conventional defensive bids used over natural openings of one of a suit. Details may be set out on supplementary sheets with appropriate cross-referencing.

## **Use of the information in this paper.**

This paper deals with EBL regulation of systems, conventions and partnership agreements. Regulations made by NBOs and other sponsoring organisations may be expected often to be different. Nevertheless where regulating authorities act by reference to EBL regulation or definition this paper will assist the Director.

## Brown Sticker Conventions

Certain types of conventional calls or treatments are considered to place exceptional demands on opponents' defensive preparations. The conventions/ treatments in question are categorised as 'Brown Sticker' ('BS'). They may be played in Category 1 events (the Open and Ladies Teams Championships) but not in Category 3 events. (Currently there are no Category 2 EBL events, in which they would be allowed subject to adequate disclosure and advance submission of CCs.)

Identification of BS conventions is an exercise calling for close attention. Some of the qualifying factors can easily be missed. If a matter of partnership agreement, any one of the following characteristics qualifies a convention/ treatment as BS:

1. It is an opening bid of two clubs through three spades that does not promise at least four cards in a known suit and may be made on a hand of less than average strength ('weak').

[Note: this does not apply to a bid that always shows four cards in a known suit if weak, with all other possibilities entailing hands of at least 13 HCP. A bid fitting this description is not BS.

Also the bid is not BS if it is a two clubs or two diamonds opener showing a Weak Two in an unspecified major with no other not-strong possibilities, the addition of strong alternatives being optional. The Systems Policy defines 'strong' as a hand with high card strength a King or more greater than that of an average hand.]

2. It is an overcall of a natural opening bid of one of a suit, does not promise at least four cards in a known suit, and is not a natural overcall in no trumps.
3. It is a weak two-suited bid at the level of two or three, whether offensive or defensive, and *by agreement* one of the suits shown may be of three cards or fewer.
4. It is a psychic bid that is either required by or protected by the system; a bid is classed as such if it grossly misstates the honour strength or the suit length that it would show absent the systemic partnership agreement requiring or protecting purportedly psychic action.

**Exclusions:** Conventional defences against strong artificial opening bids, as also defences against BS or HUM methods, are never classified BS.

## Footnote to Law 40 E2

This footnote authorises regulations designating methods that are considered 'unusual' and allowing players to refer at the table to their defences against these. Written details of such defences must be presented to opponents at a prescribed time. The EBL has determined that both HUM and BS methods are 'unusual' within the meaning of the footnote and that players may consult their defences to these at the table. This is stated in the Systems Policy. Both the WBF and the EBL have extended the provisions of the Systems Policy also to counter defences to the defences against HUM methods; this extension is to be found in the WBF Supplemental Conditions of Contest (17.10) and in the EBL Systems Regulations (2.5).

Note, however, a difference between the WBF regulation (which allows of reference to these written defences throughout the auction and the play) and the EBL regulation which allows of reference to them when the screen is closed but only for the purpose of answering a question when the screen is open. Bear in mind that in both the EBL and the WBF regulations players are only allowed to receive explanations and information from their screenmates throughout the auction and play periods. (Before the end of the play no player may raise any question with his partner or his opponent on the other side of the screen.) Both sets of regulations also say that the screen aperture must be closed while a player asks a question and receives an answer during the play period.

### Additional regulations concerning disclosure

1. Pairs must list all conventions requiring defensive preparation on the front of the CC, to the right hand side.
2. The system classification must be shown on the front of the CC. Those partnerships that use BS conventions must enter an indication of this alongside the system classification.
3. Partnerships using BS conventions must provide one or more *separate* supplementary sheet(s) to list all their BS conventions, with details of their use, showing the continuations, development and competitive action that follow from them. This requirement was overlooked by a number of partnerships in Tenerife.

### Control of Systems

In Category 1 events (Open and Ladies Teams Championships) a team is only allowed a maximum of four red and yellow systems, of which not more than three may be yellow.

Both members of a partnership must agree to play identical methods. But whilst the meaning of their calls and plays must be the same they are not restricted as to individual style or judgement.

The EBL receives and distributes CCs and Supplementary Sheets. In doing so it does not warrant that the content of these complies with the Systems Regulations. The responsibility for the full and correct completion of CCs and Supplementary Sheets rests with the players at all times.

### **Changes to Convention Cards and Supplementary Sheets**

In general terms conventions listed on the CC may be fully explained in a supplementary sheet plainly cross-referenced from the CC. Again, be careful to ensure that any BS conventions duly listed on the CC are set out in full on a supplementary sheet that is separately devoted to the purpose.

The EBL specifies a closing date, well in advance of each tournament, by which changes to CCs/Supplementary Sheets may be submitted. The Implementation of changes to system material already lodged and their notification to other contestants is subject to EBL approval.

After the above closing date partnerships may apply at the site of the tournament to make changes in their announced methods. They may also be required to make changes in their systems if these do not conform to the regulations. These matters are controlled on site by the Chairman of the EBL Systems Committee or his nominee(s).

Deletion of an item or a statement will be allowed.

Approval for a change may be given or withheld; a change that is not a change to a BS convention or from one BS convention to another will normally be allowed. Conditions may be attached to any approval. It is unlikely that a change will be effective in any case until time has elapsed after the requisite notification of the change, duly signed as authorized on behalf of the EBL, to other contestants. It is for contestants to ensure that they do not introduce a change until these procedures and any required time lapse are duly completed

Permission will not be given for changes from one BS convention to another or for the introduction of a BS convention not previously on the card.

Clarification or improved presentation of information already on the CC is not regarded as a substantive change.

It is the current policy of the EBL Systems Committee not to allow changes on site to HUM Systems. It is clear that such changes to the Highly Unusual parts of a HUM System are not to be allowed. However,

for the better understanding of players, it may require some addition to the Systems Regulations if no changes of other conventions played with HUM systems will be allowed in the way they are allowed for other systems generally.

### **Other regulations**

In Pairs events the EBL forbids the psyching of *any* conventional opening bid. Note that the prohibition is *not* limited to the psyching of strong conventional opening bids. (This prohibition is enabled by the ruling of the WBF Executive, jointly with its Rules and Regulations Committee, that regulations authorised under Law 40D are not subject to the limitation in Law 80F.)

Neither the WBF nor the EBL allows the use of encrypted signals. The WBF describes these as signals in which the message is hidden from declarer by some key available only to the defenders. The Director has to judge whether the intention of a signalling method is to conceal the message from Declarer by varying meanings of signals in reference to information which *in principle* is not accessible to Declarer at the time.

**Grattan Endicott**

**August 2001**