



International Sport Federation (IF) recognized by the International Olympic Committee

**WBF SYSTEMS POLICY 2018**  
**(Adopted December 1994;**  
**amended October 1996, January 2000, August 2002, October 2007,**  
**October 2008 September 2009, October 2010, September 2013, June 2016 & June 2018)**

## 1. PREAMBLE

1. The objectives are to ensure that WBF Championships can be properly operated and adequately administered, with a fair and equal chance for all competitors, while at the same time affording proper consideration to progress and innovation; to ensure that players are in no doubt as to what is expected of them with regard to preparation and filing of systems material for WBF Championships.
2. Additions or amendments to this policy will normally be put into effect only after four months' notice.
3. References to High Card Points in this document are Milton Work Points.
4. In the following 'Weak' means 9 points or less and 'Strong' means 16 points or more.

## 2. POLICY

### 2.1 HUM Systems

For the purpose of this Policy, a Highly Unusual Method (HUM) means any System that exhibits one or more of the following features:

- a. By partnership agreement an opening call of Pass shows at least the values generally accepted for an opening bid of one, even if there are alternative weak possibilities
- b. By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be weaker than pass.
- c. By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be made with 7 high card points or less.
- d. By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more, or two cards or less in a specified suit
- e. By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more in one specified suit or three cards or more in another. **EXCEPTION:** one of a minor in a strong club or strong diamond system.



## 2.2 Classification of Systems

In order to facilitate recognition and handling, systems material will be identified by one or more of the following:

- i. a WBF coloured sticker;
- ii. the appropriate named (hand printed or typed) colour;
- iii. a check mark on a system card next to the appropriate colour - in keeping with the following descriptions:

**Green** Natural methods

**Blue** Forcing Club/Forcing Diamond, where one club/one diamond is artificial, shows a hand with 13 high card points or more and is always forcing.

**Red** This category includes all systems that do not fall under the classifications of Green, Blue or Yellow (as defined herein).

Red 1 would be a system where one club shows one of three types - a natural club suit, a balanced hand of a specific range, or a Strong Club opener; or which uses specialised and artificial responses to an opening bid of one club.

Red 2 would be a system in which the basic one level methods (other than the no trump range and minimum suit-length requirements) vary according to position, vulnerability and the like; or a system that uses conventional 'weak' or 'multi-meaning' bids (with or without some weak option) in potentially contestable auctions, or a system where the opening bids are transfers to another suit.

**Yellow** Highly Unusual Methods ('HUM') as defined above.

## 2.3 Brown Sticker Conventions and Treatments

The following conventions or treatments are categorised as 'Brown Sticker':

- a. Any opening bid of two clubs through three spades that:
  - i. could be made on 9 high card points or less AND
  - ii. does not promise at least four cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:** The bid always shows at least four cards in a known suit if it is weak. If the bid does not show a known four card suit it must show a hand with 13 high card points or more.

(Explanation: Where all the weak meanings show at least four cards in one known suit, and the strong meanings show a hand with 13 high card points or more, it is not a Brown Sticker Convention.)

**EXCEPTION:** a two level opening bid in a minor showing a weak two in either major, whether with or without the option of strong hand types containing 16 high card points or more, or with equivalent values. Defensive measures are permitted for opponents as in 6 below.

- b. An overcall of a natural opening bid of one of a suit that does not promise at least four cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:** A natural overcall in no trumps.

**EXCEPTION:** any cue bid suit that shows a strong hand.

**EXCEPTION:** a jump cue bid in opponent's known suit that asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in that suit.

- c. Any 'weak' two-suited bids at the two or three level that may by agreement be made with three cards or fewer in one of the suits.

- d. Psychic bids protected by system or required by system.
- e. None of the foregoing restrictions pertain to conventional defences against forcing, artificial opening bids or defences against 'Brown Sticker' or HUM conventions.
- f. For the avoidance of doubt an opening bid of one club which may be made on a doubleton or singleton club and which is ostensibly natural and non-forcing should be regarded as natural and not artificial.

Additional to the classification of systems in 2.2 above, any partnership using one or more 'Brown Sticker' conventions must indicate this alongside its system classification.

#### **2.4 Encrypted Signals**

Additional to the restrictions on bidding methods and conventions above, players may not use signalling methods by which the message or messages conveyed by the signals are hidden from the declarer because of some key available only to the defenders (i.e. encrypted signals are not allowed).

#### **2.5 Random Openings**

It is forbidden to open hands which, by agreement, may contain fewer than 8 high card points and for which no further definition is provided.

### **3. Systems allowed at WBF Championships**

In relation to the aspect of Systems to be allowed at WBF Championships, the events will be divided into three categories:

#### **Category 1: *Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup and World Mixed Teams held during the World Teams Championships***

For such events all classifications of systems will be permitted in the Knock Out stages only, subject to adequate disclosure, but teams using HUM systems or Brown Sticker Conventions must submit their System Cards and Brown Sticker Announcement Forms (appendix 1) in advance in accordance with the Conditions of Contest and will be subject to a reduction of seating rights, as follows:

Whenever a team with one or more pairs using a HUM system opposes a team that has no such pair, the HUM systems team will be the 'Away' team, and lines up first throughout.

No special seating rights or line-up restrictions shall apply when two teams containing HUM systems pairs (regardless of line-up) oppose one another.

#### **Category 2: *Specific Teams Championships as decided by the WBF Rules and Regulations Committee:***

The use of HUM systems is prohibited.

Up to three 'Brown Sticker' conventions per partnership will be permitted, subject to adequate disclosure, but players using them must submit their Systems Cards & Brown Sticker Announcement Forms (appendix 1) in advance in accordance with the Conditions of Contest. At the same time a viable suggested defence to any Brown Sticker convention must be filed. This will be deemed to be a part of the System Card and may be referred to by the opponents at the table.

#### **Category 3: *All other WBF Tournaments & Championships and stages of such events not covered by Categories 1 & 2 above***

The use of both HUM systems and 'Brown Sticker' systems is prohibited.

## 4. Systems Material

It is strongly recommended that before completing the System Card competitors study the "Guide to Completion" available on the WBF Website.

For all Category 1 Teams events, where Yellow (HUM) systems are permitted, any pair using a HUM system is required (in addition to the normal timely filing of the System card and Supplementary Sheets) to submit **the full system** in English in advance before the beginning of the Championship in accordance with the Conditions of Contest.

Pairs using Green, Blue or Red systems are encouraged to submit their full system in English at the beginning of any WBF Championship.

In decisions taken by Tournament Directors and in the Appeals Process, pairs who have submitted their full system will be given the benefit of any support this provides for an explanation given at the table, as far as this goes.

## 5. System Cards/Supplementary Sheets

The principle of adequate disclosure requires that competitors fully disclose all conventions and treatments requiring defensive preparation. In addition to the System cards, pairs will use Supplementary Sheets to achieve this objective.

The use of Supplementary Sheets is not strictly limited for all events, provided that the entries are properly numbered to correspond to appropriately cross-referenced numbers on the System card itself. The sheets must readily legible and the numbered entries must be separated by discernible heavy lines. While brevity is encouraged, particularly for Category 2 and Category 3 events, full disclosure must not be prejudiced in any way as a result.

All systems and treatments requiring defensive preparation must be listed on the front right part of the WBF Card. They must be explained and fully developed (including competitive agreements) either in the appropriate section on the outside or inside of the card, or, where there is inadequate space there, in the first numbered entries on the Supplementary Sheets.

The front right part of the System Card must include:

- i. All artificial openings (except strong one club/two club openings)
- ii. Response to natural openings which are weak and conventional
- iii. All conventional defensive bids used over natural openings of one of a suit (making sure that all two suited intervention is detailed precisely; the best way to do this is to write: 'Two Suiters' and include a reference number to an early Supplementary Sheet entry, which will provide the particulars).

If a pair uses any bid which should have been listed here, but which has been left out, and their opponents do not get to their best contract, there will be a strong presumption that the opponents have been damaged by not being able to prepare a defence. The offending pair may also be liable to incur a procedural penalty.

Any pair playing a HUM system or 'Brown Sticker' convention has a special obligation to present a complete description of both their bids and subsequent developments (especially competitive developments). If a pair uses an auction that is not fully described, then the same presumption of lack of advance notice (with adjustments and penalties as described in the preceding paragraph) shall apply.

For each tournament, the Conditions of Contest will state the date by which, and the address at which, systems material and System Cards (together with telephone and fax number or email addresses of the individuals best equipped to deal with queries regarding the system) must be received. The onus is jointly on the pair, the non-playing captain (where relevant), the NBO and the Zonal Organisation to obtain the

information required to meet this deadline. Failure to meet this deadline will result in automatic penalties, which will be fully described in the Conditions of Contest. Problems with systems should be referred to the Chairman of the Systems Committee or his nominee in accordance with details given in the Conditions of Contest.

After the closing date for submission of systems, the following will be the policy governing any changes to the System Card and Supplementary Sheets:

- g. Deletion of an item or a statement will be permitted upon application to the Chairman of the Systems Committee or his nominee
- h. A change replacing an agreement with another or to introduce a fresh agreement, where the new material is not Brown Sticker, will normally be permitted. The permission to use the new agreement will operate at the discretion of the Chairman, but will normally be from the morning of the second day after notification of the change is issued to other contestants
- i. Neither the replacement of a Brown Sticker convention with another Brown Sticker convention, nor the introduction of a new Brown Sticker convention will be permitted

It is strongly emphasised, and all contestants must note, that the policy stated above will be rigorously applied.

## **6. Defence against Yellow (HUM) Systems and Brown Sticker Conventions**

For Team events in Category 1, the following regulations will apply to defensive measures against HUM systems.

- i. A pair opposing a HUM system pair will submit two (clearly legible) copies of their defence to the HUM system at an appropriate time and place prior to the start of that segment, to be specified in the Conditions of Contest. Such defences are deemed to be part of the opponents' system card.
- ii. In preparing the defence against a HUM system, pairs using Green, Blue or Red systems are allowed to change their systems, including opening calls. Pairs using a HUM system are not allowed to change their opening calls.
- iii. The pair using a HUM system must inform the opponents in writing (two clearly legible copies) about their counter-defence at the table prior to the start of the session. In preparing their counter-defence, the pair using a HUM system is not permitted to change any of the highly artificial aspects of its system.

For Teams events in Category 1 and Category 2, the following regulations will apply in relation to defensive measures against Brown Sticker Conventions:

A pair may prepare written defences against the 'Brown Sticker' elements of any system. Such defences will have to be given to the opponents (two clearly legible copies) at an appropriate time and place prior to the start of that segment, to be specified in the Conditions of Contest. Written defences against Brown Sticker conventions are deemed to be part of the opponents' system card.

## **7. Number of systems allowed per team**

For Category 1 events, a maximum number of four Red or Yellow Systems, of which only three may be Yellow, will be permitted for each participating team. A System, for the purpose of this section, may include different methods for different vulnerabilities.

Both members of the partnership must agree to use the same methods of bidding and card play.

**Attachments:**

**Appendix 1: Brown Sticker Opening Bid Announcement Form**

**Appendix 2: Brown Sticker Overcall Announcement Form**

**Appendix 3: WBF Alerting Policy**

**Appendix 4: WBF Psychic Bidding Guidelines**

## APPENDIX 1

### 8. BROWN STICKER OPENING BID ANNOUNCEMENT FORM

This form is to be completed and sent, by email, to [anna@ecats.co.uk](mailto:anna@ecats.co.uk) by the closing date announced in the Conditions of Contest

Names:

Country

Event

Opening bid of                      in                      seat at

Shows:

Detailed Description:

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#### Responses and Rebids in Uncontested auctions

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With what hands will responder pass the opening bid?

Meanings of other responses and rebids:

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#### Competitive Agreements

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Responses after opponent's DBL                      (including Pass, RDBL and expected follow-ups)

Responses after opponent's overcall:

Rebids after 4<sup>th</sup> hand DBLs the response:

Rebids after 4<sup>th</sup> hand overcalls:

Proposed Defence

## APPENDIX 2

### 9. BROWN STICKER OVERCALL ANNOUNCEMENT FORM

This form is to be completed and sent, by email, to [anna@ecats.co.uk](mailto:anna@ecats.co.uk) by the closing date announced in the Conditions of Contest

Names:

Country

Event

After opponents opening bid of

showing

Our overcall of

at

vulnerability

Shows:

Applies: Opposite PH; Opposite UPH; All the time

Detailed Description:

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#### Responses and Rebids When Responder Passes

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With what hands will advancer pass the overcall?

Meanings of other advances and follow ups:

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#### Competitive Agreements

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Responses after opponent's DBL (including Pass, RDBL and expected follow-ups)

Responses after opponent's bid:

Rebids after opener DBLs the overcall (1X)-2Y-(P)-P-(DBL)-?

Rebids after opener DBLs advancer's bid:

Rebids after opener's suit rebid:

Proposed defence

**APPENDIX 3**  
**WBF Alerting Policy**  
**(Adopted July 1997, revised August 2002)**

**Preamble**

5. The objective is to have a uniform WBF policy which is applied to all WBF events.
6. It is not intended that this should over-ride Alerting Policies developed by the Zone or NBOs.
7. Full disclosure is vital. However, players who participate in WBF events are expected to protect themselves to a large extent. They are also expected to observe the spirit of the Laws as well as the letter.
8. The Policy has been made as simple as possible. Players are, however, expected to alert whenever there is doubt. (N.B. Where screens are in use, an alert on one side but not on the other does not necessarily imply an infraction.)

**Policy**

The following classes of calls should be alerted:

1. Conventional bids should be alerted, non-conventional bids should not.
2. Those bids which have special meanings or which are based on or lead to special understandings between the partners. (A player may not make a call or play based on a special partnership understanding unless an opposing pair may reasonably be expected to understand its meaning, or unless his side discloses the use of such call or play in accordance with the regulations of the sponsoring organization). See Law 40(b).
3. Non-forcing jump changes of suit responses to opening bids or overcalls, and non-forcing new suit responses by an unpassed hand to opening bids of one of a suit.

If screens are not in use, do NOT alert the following:

1. All doubles.
2. Any no-trump bid which suggests a balanced or semi-balanced hand, or suggests a no-trump contract.
3. Any call at the four level or higher, with the exception of conventional calls on the first round of the auction.

Nevertheless, players must respect the spirit of the Policy as well as the letter.

**APPENDIX 4:**  
**Psychic Bidding**  
**(Adopted July 1995, revised August 2002)**

Psychic Calls and similar actions based upon partnership understandings.

The Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge 2017 permit a player to make a psychic call “provided that such call is not based upon a partnership understanding”. If a call is based upon a partnership understanding it ceases to be psychic. In its minute of 30<sup>th</sup> August 2000 the WBF Laws Committee ruled that a partnership understanding exists when the frequency of occurrence is sufficient for the partner of the player who makes the call to take his awareness of psychic possibilities into account, whether he does so or not; or, of course, it may be a matter explicitly agreed. There are also relevant statements in the WBF Code of Practice. Such an understanding must be disclosed beforehand.

The understandings in question are to be disclosed in World Championships and other tournaments conducted under the auspices of the WBF in accordance with the following requirements:

1. Explicit agreements that psychic calls are expected, or providing systemic protection for them, are classified as Brown Sticker. One example of the kind is when, third in hand at favourable vulnerability, a player is expected to open the bidding on anything at all.
2. Understandings whereby from time to time there may be gross violations of the normal meanings of calls, and where the nature or type of violation can be anticipated, must also be disclosed on the convention cards. The understandings may be explicitly agreed or they may have developed from partnership experience or mutually shared knowledge not available to opponents. They must be listed on the card amongst the conventions that may call for special defence and the supplementary sheets must give full detail of situations in which these violations may occur and of the relevant partnership practices and expectations. Subject to satisfactory disclosure methods of this kind are permissible in any category of event.
3. It continues to be the case that random psychics may occur as the laws allow, without warning, so long as these can no more be anticipated by the partner than by the opponents.
4. Similar principles apply in the case of psychic actions in defenders’ play of the cards.