



WORLD BRIDGE FEDERATION

## Minutes of a Meeting of the WBF Laws Committee held in Monaco on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2003

**Present:** Ton Kooijman, Chairman  
Ralph Cohen, Co Vice-Chairman  
Grattan Endicott, Secretary  
Max Bavin, WBF Chief Tournament Director  
Joan Gerard  
Jim Kirkham  
Jeffrey Polisner  
William Schoder  
John Wignall

A number of guests also attended to observe the proceedings.

**Apologies:** It was agreed to enter apologies on behalf of all remaining members of the Committee.

1. The Chairman raised the question of the practice of the English Bridge Union in discouraging questions by players when the answer to the question would not affect their immediate action on the hand. He felt that this is contrary to the laws. The Secretary provided copies of the regulation in question' this does not prohibit a question but reminds players of the risk of passing unauthorised information to partner and urges that questions be left until the player needs to know that answer and, wherever possible, until after the opening lead has been selected (or the questioner is about to select an opening lead).

It was agreed by all present that the laws allow a question to be asked. Members present offered a wide variety of opinion on the subject generally. Two members stated that if it is announced that a question is asked very time there is an alert there can be no unauthorised information to partner, but allowed that the manner of asking the question could still create information. It was also pointed out that a player who said he would ask about every alert and then failed to do so from time to time defeated his object of not conveying unauthorised information.

The Secretary expressed his concern about the potential of questions to mislead opponents and drew attention to the requirement where this is alleged to have happened (and the questioner could have known that asking the question might work to his benefit) to show (Law 73F2) that he had a "demonstrable bridge reason" for asking the question. The Chairman expressed his opinion that Law 73F2 should only be

used in extreme situations when a player asks about the meaning of a call. He thought that normally a desire to know what is happening at the table is a good enough "bridge reason". Mr Schoder cited his experience of a case where, in his opinion, it was appropriate to apply that law and, likewise not convinced of the Chairman's argument, the Secretary maintained his position that the occasion for applying 73F2 is a matter for the Director and the Appeals Committee to judge.

Mr Wignall spoke of the possibility of asking questions randomly whether interested or not. He felt there needed to be some scope for asking questions even when not interested in the reply Mr Schoder referred to the possibility of replacing alerts with announcements. There was no final resolution of the differences of opinion and no agreed interpretation of the Law. It was acknowledged that it is a matter that the laws drafting subcommittee will have to consider and its proposals for the future should be presented clearly in its drafts.

2. The committee considered the proposition that when there has been misinformation and a damaged side is to receive and adjusted score this should be assessed on the basis that the non-offending side is entitled to know the partnership understanding and to draw logical conclusions, given the information it received. The adjusted score, the Chairman suggested, should be assessed on the action likely to be taken by the non-offending side in the circumstances. It was observed that if given the correct information the partnership might or might not be aware that a misunderstanding had occurred, depending on the situation. There is, of course, the possibility of backing up the auction if declarer or dummy corrects an explanation as Law 75D requires (see also Law 21B).
3. The committee received a copy of a draft revision of screens regulations prepared by Mr Schoder that he would present for consideration to the Rules and Regulations committee. It was agreed that the Laws Committee would eventually express a view, if asked, on the correspondence of any future revised regulations to the Laws.
4. The committee confirmed that it is a correct interpretation of Law 91B that the Tournament Committee or sponsoring organisation can give its approval in advance of the tournament for the Director to disqualify a player for cause.

The meeting then concluded.

**Schedule to the Minutes of the WBF Laws  
Committee,  
9<sup>th</sup> November 2003**

The following statement by the Secretary was put in writing to the Committee. The Chairman noted the importance of distributing the Minutes of the committee to NBOs in order that they may be aware of its decisions and interpretations:

**< < Some misconceptions do exist with regard to the nature and function of the WBF Laws Committee. Its remit is to “consider and take account of all matters relating to the International Laws of Bridge”, to “make whatever changes in the laws it deems appropriate subject to the approval of the Executive”, and it “shall interpret the laws”. At least once in each decade it is required to “make a comprehensive study and updating of the entire laws structure”.**

**The committee reports to the Executive in the course of each world championship, and its minutes are received by the Executive. Promulgation of those minutes to NBOs (and of any changes in, or interpretations of, the laws) is not the responsibility of the committee but of the Executive. The NBOs are the bodies responsible for informing players and directors within their domains. What the WBF LC has done in recent years is to assist the dissemination of the information by making the information available on the Internet, via in particular Anna Gudge and David Stevenson. But it is not our role to come between NBOs and their areas of responsibility.**

**The WBF LC deals with the principles and the meaning of the laws. Its domain does not extend to the application of that meaning to the circumstances of specific cases, except if asked for advice by the Appeals Committee. It is the latter standing committee that the By-Laws ordain is to “function as a judicial body to rule on protests from the decisions of other contest authorities, to determine disputed facts, and to act as an investigative body in its discretion”. > >**