

Minutes of the WBF Laws Committee Meeting Held in Lyon, France on Tuesday 15th August 2017

Present:

Ton Kooijman (in the Chair)
Laurie Kelso (Secretary)
Maurizio Di Sacco
Al Levy
Chip Martel (left after item 12 in order to resume play)
Howard Weinstein
Adam Wildavsky

1. The Chairman opened the meeting at 2.10pm welcoming those present. He also noted with regret the absence of Max Bavin, but intimated that Mr Bavin had already forwarded his opinions regarding the items listed on the pre-circulated agenda.
2. Mr Kooijman suggested that much of the scheduled meeting time would be devoted to an examination and discussion of the various examples that had been prepared by the Chairman in regard to the forthcoming Commentary on the Laws.
3. The Chairman indicated that it was his wish that the current composition of the Committee remain unchanged; at least until after the completion of the Commentary. The Chairman went on to say that those who had been involved in the drafting of the 2017 Laws were, in his view, best placed to complete the Commentary.
4. The Secretary encouraged the Committee to first turn its attention to the agendised items, since many of these were the result of either requests for clarification or more general enquiries about the new Laws from both NBOs and individuals. It was his view that some of the items might be best addressed via the formal issuing of an interpretation, which could be separate from what might later appear in the official Commentary.
5. Law 23A1 uses the words "same or similar". A discussion then ensued as to the Committee's view as to what discrepancies would be considered acceptable in respect to the meaning of a withdrawn call, and its corresponding replacement call, for it to still be considered 'comparable'.

Mr Di Sacco said that he would like a call to be considered 'comparable' whenever the Director was satisfied that the likelihood of needing to subsequently apply Law 23C was low. He also reminded the Committee of its 2008 decision to allow 'liberal' interpretations of Law 27B1(b) in respect to the 2007 Laws.

Mr Kelso indicated that he favoured a more literal reading of the 2017 Laws in that small variations in either strength or distribution would surely fall within the bounds of 'similar', but larger variations would not. He also suggested that if the Committee had wished to allow an even greater number of calls to be corrected without restriction, then the Law would have been drafted differently. He went on to say that under the new Laws 30-32,

even when a player did not have a comparable call available, the chances of his side arriving in a viable contract remained extremely high. In contrast to the previous (2007) regime, the player would now be in a position to make an informed decision rather than a blind guess.

Mr Martel suggested that the determining factor in regard to 'non-comparability' should be the existence of 'substantial differences' in either strength or shape between the withdrawn call and the replacement call.

The Committee went on to discuss a number of specific sequences without reaching a firm conclusion. Further discussion in respect to possible Commentary examples was then deferred to the next meeting.

6. The Committee turned its attention to Law 23C. It was decided that the Commentary should include examples of when it would be both appropriate and inappropriate to award an adjusted score following the substitution of a 'Comparable Call'.
7. The Committee considered a question posed in regard to the status of a card accidentally exposed (not led) during the Clarification Period. The Committee noted that after the close of the auction there exist both a presumed declarer and defenders. As such any card accidentally exposed by the declaring side should be addressed via Law 48 and any exposed card of the defending side becomes the domain of Law 49, and thus ultimately a penalty card. The Committee also reaffirmed that any card accidentally exposed prior to the commencement of the auction should be returned to hand, but information arising from its exposure would be subject to Law 16.
8. The Committee reaffirmed the generality of Law 16C2 in respect to withdrawn calls, even though no specific cross reference to Law 16C2 appears in Law 26B. In response to an enquiry from an NBO, it confirmed that a player who is subject to a lead penalty also remains constrained in respect to Law 16.
9. The Committee noted the absence in Law 27C of any specific cross reference to either Law 16C or Law 72C, but agreed that both remain applicable.
10. The Committee noted that the effect of Law 36C is clear when the inadmissible action happens to be the last non-pass of the auction. The Committee confirmed that for those situations where the inadmissible call occurs earlier in the auction, the final contract obtained at the table stands (and is not subject to later adjustment).
11. The Committee addressed a question regarding the removal of the 2007 Regulating Authority option to prohibit variations of agreement following questions, answers to questions, or infractions by one's own side. To vary one's agreement because partner has asked a question of the opponents or because of partner's answer to a question, remains an infraction of Law 16. Pre-arranged understandings in respect to subsequent actions following one's own infraction are also prohibited.
12. The Committee addressed an enquiry regarding the words "no immediate rectification" as they appear in Law 43B3. When dummy draws attention to a defender's irregularity, play continues without recourse to the normal remedial actions, i.e., declarer should not be

offered the options that would normally be available to him, e.g., any lead out of turn is now accepted by default, and any other card exposed as a result of the infraction may be returned to hand without attendant restrictions.

13. The Committee examined the effect of Law 45D2 where only one player revokes by playing a card of the suit declarer asked for, while everyone else has followed to the card dummy incorrectly placed in the played position. The Committee agreed with the Mr Kooijman, who suggested that the Director should apply Law 64A when declarer was the revoking player, but apply 64C1 if the revoking player was a defender.
14. The Committee turned its attention to the inter-relationship between Laws 53A and 53B. This was in response to a question from an NBO regarding a situation following a lead out of turn; the player whose turn it rightfully was had wished to still make his normal lead. The Committee agreed with Mr Kooijman who drew an analogy with Law 28, which uses the words “before rectification”. He suggested that the same limitation should apply in the play as in the auction, namely that once attention has been drawn to the irregularity the rectification as described in Law 53A applies, the prior Law 53B option having expired. It was also observed that any lead made subsequent to rectification might itself be subject to Law 57A.
15. Law 67B3 authorises the awarding of an adjusted score when it is too late to correct the illegal play. In response to a request for guidance as to what constitutes being ‘too late’, the Committee observed that there exists an over-arching pre-condition that both sides would have already played to the following trick. The Committee decided that it did not wish to impose an absolute time limit, preferring instead to allow the Director discretion as to the appropriateness of a later correction.
16. The meeting was adjourned at 4.50pm, with an agreement to reconvene on the 18th August at 2.00pm.