

# Compendium of Relevant WBF Laws Committee Decisions (1998 – 2019)

Decisions made by the WBF Laws Committee when in session (as ratified by the Executive Committee) qualify as official interpretations of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge. This document is a compilation of those decisions (arranged in law number sequence) as sourced from previously published WBFLC minutes.

Because some sections of the original minutes had become obsolete with the passage of time, only those decisions that the WBFLC still consider to be relevant have been retained. Most of the included items are verbatim extracts however the law numbers in the older source documents have been updated so as to be consistent with the current Code.

The purpose of this compendium is to make available information that was until now only accessible via the perusal of more than 30 different WBFLC documents. It is designed to be an ongoing reference source for both Tournament Officials and Administrators.

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Laurie Kelso  
(Secretary – WBFLC)

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## WBFLC Authority

The function and duty of this Committee shall be to consider and take account of all matters relating to the Laws of Duplicate Bridge. The Committee shall make whatever changes in the laws it deems appropriate, subject to approval by the Executive Committee. The Committee shall interpret the laws; shall periodically review the laws; and at least once each decade shall make a comprehensive study and updating of the entire laws structure. [WBF By-Law 48.6]

Past decisions and recorded intentions of the Committee represent the position of the Committee unless and until it changes them. [Lille 1998]

## General

References to irregularities in the laws refer to irregularities committed by players. An action by a Director may be an error but this does not constitute an ‘irregularity’ within the meaning of the laws. [Paris 2001]

The law requires the Director at times to determine whether one action was or was not subsequent to another. For example, the question may be whether an action by the non-offending side was subsequent to the infraction so that the non-offending side caused damage to itself, in which case the non-offending side does not receive redress for that damage. The Director must determine the fact one way or the other. The timing of the action is a simple factual question, yes or no, and there can be no weighting in applying that law. [Veldhoven 2011]

## Law 9

Law 9A3 contains the authority for dummy to draw attention to an irregularity (subject to Laws 42 and 43) after play of a hand is completed. [Sao Paulo 2009]

## Law 12

In any situation when, as the result of an irregularity, a result cannot be obtained and an artificial adjusted score would normally be awarded: If a non-offending side would be disadvantaged by an award of average plus (60%, or higher where Law 88 allows), a higher percentage may not be awarded under Law 12C1. If the circumstances allow, the Director may assign a score under Law 12A1 or Law 84E. [Maastricht 2000]

When the Director is empowered elsewhere in the laws simply to “award an adjusted score” he refers to Law 12 to determine whether this will be an assigned or an artificial adjusted score. Law 12 intends that whenever he is able to award an assigned adjusted score he does so; if Law 12C1(d) or Law 12C2(a) applies the adjusted score is artificial. Note that 12C2(a) does not say “no result has been obtained” but “no result can be obtained”, so that if a board is incomplete but has reached a stage when completion of the board can be foreseen an assigned score is appropriate. [Beijing 2008]

What is commonly termed a ‘double shot’ is a gambling action within the meaning of Law 12C1(e) – as previously affirmed [Lille 1998]. In reference to this same law, the standard for judging a ‘serious error’ must be extremely high and the calibre of the player is also relevant. [Sao Paulo 2009]

## Law 16

Actions authorized in the laws: The Scope of the Laws states that the laws define correct procedure and anything not specified in the laws is, therefore, ‘extraneous’ and it may be deemed an infraction of law if information deriving from it is used in the auction or the play. [Lille 1998]

16A1(d) allows the player use of his memory of information in the laws and regulations. It does not authorize him to look during the auction and play at the printed regulations, the law book, or anyone’s scorecard or the backs of bidding cards etc. as an (Law 40B2(d)) aid to memory. For system card and notes see Law 20G3. [Beijing 2008]

A defender seizes the first trick and switches rapidly to a singleton in another suit, partner returning the lead for a ruff. The speed with which the lead was made is inappropriate; it is never necessary to make a play quickly. A player may not be mindful of the potential for unauthorized information but if on a rare occasion the creation of unauthorized information is deemed intentional an infraction has occurred. [Philadelphia 2010]

Any card accidentally exposed prior to the commencement of the auction is returned to hand, but information arising from its exposure is subject to Law 16. [Lyon 2017]

Law 16C2 is general in respect to withdrawn calls, even though no specific cross reference to Law 16C2 appears in Law 26B. [Lyon 2017]

A player who is subject to a lead penalty also remains constrained in respect to Law 16. [Lyon 2017]

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. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 20

20F1 defines the manner in which, during the auction and play, a player may request and receive an explanation of the opponents’ prior auction. At this time he is entitled to an explanation only of calls

actually made, relevant available alternative calls not made, and any partnership understanding as to inferences from the choice of action among the foregoing. (An ‘alternative’ call is not the same call with another meaning – for example, if the reply to an opponent is that “5♦ shows diamond preference”, any reply to a further question “what would it mean if 4NT were Blackwood ?” is given voluntarily and not as a requirement of Law 20F1.) [Beijing 2008]

The limits of enquiry as defined in Law 20F1 do not extend to exploration of hypothetical situations not related to the partnership understandings applicable in the current auction. [Philadelphia 2010]

There is no infraction when a correct explanation discloses that partner’s prior explanation was mistaken. The words “nor may he indicate in any manner that a mistake has been made” (in Law 20F5(a)) do not refer to compliance with the overriding requirement of the laws always to respond to enquiries under Law 20F with correct explanations of the partnership understandings. [Beijing 2008]

If a player knows that his partner’s call is artificial but says he cannot recall what was actually agreed the Director may in his discretion send the player away from the table and allow the partner to tell opponents in his absence what the agreement is. The Director must be called and no action may be taken before he arrives. The partner continues in the action on the basis that the player has understood his call, and does not use the unauthorized information that his partner is uncertain of the meaning. The Director is strongly urged to remain at the table whilst the hand is completed. This procedure is only for the exact circumstances described; it does not apply when the player says that the position is undiscussed or there is no agreement. [Lille 1998]

Addressing a question to the player who has made the call asked about is an abnormal procedure that can only be followed with the consent of the Director, who must be called, and at an appropriate time in the absence of the player’s partner. Furthermore the Director must be persuaded that the circumstances require it: it is to be avoided absolutely that a player should be allowed to verify from player A (who made the bid) whether the explanation of his partner B was correct. Players must correct their partner’s explanations voluntarily at the due time specified in the Laws. [Lille 1998]

If a player infers from information given that opponents have had a misunderstanding he is entitled to use that inference at his own risk. Opponents are entitled only to correct explanations of opponents’ partnership agreements. A player who hears partner give an explanation that does not conform with the partnership understanding is required to offer the correct explanation at the due time stated in Law 20F5(b). However if he is uncertain as to what is the correct partnership understanding he is under no obligation to speak immediately, the matter then being one to refer for resolution to the Director at the end of the play under Law 20F6. [Philadelphia 2010]

A declarer or dummy who corrects his partner’s explanation at the end of the auction must explain his partnership agreement. If his hand does not conform to the corrected explanation he must be especially careful to ensure that he is right in his understanding of his partnership agreements. Whilst no obligation exists he is free to be helpful to opponents with complete gratuitous information as to fact concerning his action (but not where such action is purposeful – e.g. psychic) [Lille 1998]

All players at the table are responsible for ensuring that a correct reply is given when a player asks, “Is it my opening lead?” (see Law 20C1). The Director may deem silence when a reply is made to constitute assent. Regulations may provide for situations when playing with screens. [Philadelphia 2010]

## Law 21

Law 21B1 applies in respect of a call that has been made; the Director is required to judge whether the call “could well have been influenced by misinformation given to the player”. Unless he judges that in

possession of the correct information (only) the player could well have made a different call no change of call under Law 21B1 is allowed nor is an adjusted score under Law 21B3. When under Law 20F4 an explanation is corrected before the auction has closed the Director is pointed to Law 21B. This law does not indicate how the Director should then proceed; the player may use both the misexplanation and the correct information. [Sao Paulo 2009]

In Law 21B2, when a player elects not to change a call because of misinformation, Law 16C will still apply. The situation is analogous to the withdrawal of an original call followed by the subsequent replacement of the same call. Information arising from inferences that only become available because of the correction of misinformation is authorized to the non-offending side, but unauthorized to the offending side. [Bali 2013]

## Law 25

When under Law 25A the Director allows a call to be changed the call withdrawn is deemed never to have happened. No unauthorized information is conveyed by it. Law 16C does not apply to the change of an unintended call. If the Director allows a call that should not be allowed under this Law it is a Director's error and Law 82C applies. [Veldhoven 2011]

A determination as between the application of Law 25A and the application of Law 25B is a matter for the Director. The first condition for application of 25A is that partner must not have called subsequently; this is a question of fact for the Director. Where they apply, bidding box regulations may contain a relevant statement and should be read. [Veldhoven 2011]

The term 'mechanical error' in using a bidding box applies to the case where the player intends to call 'x' and thinks 'x' but his fingers inadvertently pull out 'y' from the bidding box. As an example, 1♥-P-2♣-P-P where 2♣ shows Hearts support and is invitational. This Pass by opener was most probably intentional (i.e. not mechanical) and so cannot be changed. [Veldhoven 2011]

## Law 27

Law 27C contains no specific cross reference to either Law 16C or Law 72C, but both remain applicable. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 36

The effect of Law 36C is clear when the inadmissible action happens to be the last non-pass of the auction. 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). [Lyon 2017]

## Law 40

A Regulating Authority has unrestricted powers to regulate special partnership understandings under Law 40. They may ban the use of certain conventions, as by the WBF in category 3 events, or to ban the psyching of artificial bids in specified circumstances, as by the American Contract Bridge League in tournaments where its regulations apply and by the European Bridge League in pairs events. It is improper to apply penalties when players err in their use of, say, Ghestem except in the circumstances envisaged in the WBF Code of Practice. [Paris 2001]

Pre-arranged understandings in respect to subsequent actions following one's own infraction are prohibited. [Lyon 2017]

With regard to ‘play period’ it is considered that Law 40B2(b) specifically allows a player to consult his system card or an aidememoire in the interval between quitting one board and commencing another. Any relevant regulation should also be taken into account. [Sao Paulo 2009]

## Law 43

Law 43B2(b): The legal card which is substituted for the first card determines the ownership of the revoke trick. This card is played subsequent to the revoke. Law 64 is then to be applied, so that there may be a 2 trick penalty but not necessarily so. [Philadelphia 2010]

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. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 45

Law 45B: Being aware that declarers sometimes give an instruction to Dummy to run a suit and then leave him to do this without giving, as is procedurally correct, a separate instruction for each card. A question can arise as to when the second, or a later, card is played from dummy, since the Declarer is not able to stop play of the card once it is played. The card is deemed to be played when Declarer’s RHO follows to the trick. However, instructions given to Dummy in this irregular manner are deprecated. [Bermuda 2000]

In 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 Director should apply Law 64A when declarer was the revoking player, but apply 64C1 if the revoking player was a defender. [Lyon 2017]

Law 45F: The Director should not adjust the score if the player would have played the indicated card anyway. Dummy is liable to a procedural penalty. [Beijing 2008]

## Laws 48-49

Any card accidentally exposed (not led) during the Clarification Period is addressed by Law 48 or 49, depending on whether it is exposed by the presumed declaring side or the presumed defending side. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 50

If cards are exposed when a spectator ‘pushes past’ a table or stumbles into a player, then in such circumstances the Director is empowered by Law 50 to designate that the exposed cards are not penalty cards. [Philadelphia 2010]

The reference to ‘any card’ in Law 50D2(b) is subject to the provisions of Law 50E. [Philadelphia 2010]

## Law 53

The option for the player whose turn it rightfully was to make the normal lead (Law 53B) expires once attention has been drawn to the irregularity. The rectification as described in Law 53A then applies and any card led subsequent to the Director being summoned, but before rectification, may itself be subject to Law 57A. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 67

Law 67B3 authorizes the awarding of an adjusted score when it is too late to correct the illegal play, but there exists an over-arching pre-condition that both sides must have already played to the following trick. There is however no absolute time limit and the Director is allowed discretion as to the appropriateness of an even later correction. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 68

Law 68D2 permits play to continue after a claim but only if certain conditions have been fulfilled. [Lyon 2017]

Once a claim or concession is contested, the players may either elect to play on or alternatively, summon the Director. [Lyon 2017]

When the non-claiming side has (correctly) initiated the request to play on and the claiming side has concurred; all cards exposed at the time of the claim, or in the act of contesting the claim, are returned to hand prior to the resumption of play. [Lyon 2017]

Once the Director has been summoned, the option to play on is no longer available. [Lyon 2017]

If summoned, the Director should cancel any play that might have occurred after the claim and prior to his arrival. He then adjudicates the claim as per Law 70. [Lyon 2017]

If the claiming side [in violation of Law 68D2(b)] initiated the request to play on, the Director cancels any subsequent play and adjudicates a result based solely upon the original statement of claim. [Lyon 2017]

If a second claim or concession occurs subsequent to the (legal) recommencement of play, the Director only adjudicates the later claim (if contested). [Lyon 2017]

## Laws 69-71

In no circumstances can the application of Law 69, 70 or 71, lead to a weighted score. The law requires that “such trick” shall be transferred or not transferred as determined by the Director’s ascertainment of facts. In determining the number of tricks in a claim or concession the Director does not assign an adjusted score. A restriction applies generally that weighting under Law 12C1(c) is applicable only where an assigned adjusted score is awarded under the laws. [Veldhoven 2011]

Under Law 70 when there is an irregularity embodied in a statement of claim the Director follows the statement up to the point at which the irregularity (as for example a revoke) occurs and, since the irregularity is not to be accepted, he rules from that point as though there were no statement of claim but should take into account any later part of the claim that he considers still to be valid. [Paris 2001]

Declarer claims whereupon it is noticed that dummy at an earlier stage has failed to contribute a card to a trick and consequently has a card too many. No trick adjustment can occur (Law 64B3). The Director determines which card to remove from dummy and then resolves the claim deciding any doubtful point against the claimer. If the claim statement has been rendered invalid the Director should determine what would have happened if the board had been played out. [Philadelphia 2010]

If a defender revokes and Declarer then claims, whereupon a defender disputes the claim so that there is no agreement, the revoke has not been established. The Director must allow correction of the revoke and then determine the claim as equitably as possible, adjudicating any doubtful point against the revoker. [Philadelphia 2010]

In Law 70E, it is assumed declarer would see cards as they would be played and to take account of what he would see. [Paris 2001]

## Law 72

With reference to Law 72A the subject of so-termed ‘dumping’ is a matter belonging to regulations. The WBF asserts that players must play to win “at all times and in all circumstances”, reports suggest that the ACBL calls upon players to play to win every board, the English Bridge Union finds no objection to players who try to lose a match with the object of having the best chance of winning the event. A side that believes it has the upper hand in a match must surely be within its rights if its aim is to avoid swings. [Philadelphia 2010]

## Law 75

The WBF does not recognize ‘convention disruption’ as an infraction in itself. In situations where an obscure call is made and the partner informs an opponent that his side has no agreement, there is a requirement for the responder to give full information, including agreements relating to relevant alternative calls. The Director in forming an opinion as to the existence of a partnership understanding should take into account subsequent action in the auction. In relation to Law 75 the Director is required to determine what agreements the partnership has. [Bermuda 2000]

## Law 78

Players are not authorized to consult during the auction and play printed copies of the information given to them under Law 78D. [Beijing 2008]

## Law 81

Law 81C2 requires the Director to advise players of their rights and responsibilities under the laws. He confines such information to rights and responsibilities that are relevant to the situation he is dealing with. [Beijing 2008]

An appeals committee has the power in Law 81C7 to refer a matter to the ‘appropriate committee’. Where an appeals committee has a difficulty with the law as given to it by the Director, its first step should always be to invite the Director to reconsider his interpretation of the law as is provided in Law 93B3. [Paris 2001]

## Law 82

When Law 82C is applied the Director’s error may still allow a score to be obtained normally; a rectification may also allow normal play. In these circumstances should it then be necessary to adjust the score, the Director awards an adjusted score (either assigned or artificial as appropriate). [Paris 2001]

## Law 86

Law 86B1 is only applicable in those situations where a score has been obtained at one table, with no corresponding score available from the other table. Typical examples where this might occur are when the Director cancels a partially played board due to extraneous information received from an outside source (as per Law 16D); where a table plays a board to completion with one hand containing 14 cards and another containing only 12 cards; or when a table never commences a board due to slow play or misadventure. [Lyon 2017]

In the specific case of where a fouled board has been played to completion at both tables (in two different conditions), the board has by definition two separate, non-comparable results. In such circumstances both the results obtained are of equal validity and/or importance. Since a fouled board consists of two very

different results, the applicable law is Law 86B2 and not Law 86B1. See also Law 87C and Footnote 27, both of which specifically reference Law 86B2. [Lyon 2017]

Law 86B2 applies whenever more than one non-comparable result occurs between the same contestants. An NBO may exercise the RA powers conferred by Law 86B3 for all situations, save those which fall within the remit of Law 86B1. It is encouraged and recommended that each NBO regulate for what they consider to be the most appropriate approach within their geographic area of jurisdiction. [Lyon 2017]

## Law 91

Law 91B: The Tournament Organizer can give their approval in advance of the tournament for the Director to disqualify a player for cause. [Monaco 2003]

## Law 92

When there is a request for a ruling only just within the time limit (Law 92B), the Director should provide a ruling before bringing it to the appeals committee. Laws 84 and 85 are specific and take priority over any attempt to take the matter directly to the appeals committee. [Sao Paulo 2009]

## Law 93

The power of modification given in Law 93A is a right to modify the procedure in dealing with appeals. It does not extend to overriding the rights of contestants to appeal under Law 92A. If the Regulating Authority makes no arrangement for an appeal to be heard {see Law 80B2(k)} the Director in charge shall hear and rule upon it under Law 93A. [Beijing 2008]