

Remember that these Laws will not apply for 2 - 3 months. Don't use them yet!

What the players should know

I was planning to write this article myself. But I came across an excellent article by Richard Hills of Canberra, and can do no better than to reproduce it here, with Richard's permission. Richard has been closely involved with the production of the 2007 Laws, as he has been a sort of semi-official aide to Grattan Endicott, Secretary of the Laws Committee. But bear in mind that this summary is unofficial and represents Richard's views.

A small but significant change has been made to Law 7C:

C. Returning Cards to Board

After play has finished, each player should shuffle his original thirteen cards, after which he restores them to the pocket corresponding to his compass position. Thereafter no hand shall be removed from the board unless a member of each side, or the Director, is present.

This is to reduce unauthorized information, since if a hand is not shuffled before returned to the pocket the next player to hold those cards may be able to make an informed guess as to what the previous contract was, which may help that next player to plan their own auction.

There has been a "nicer to novices" change to Law 9B1(a):

B. After Attention Is Drawn to an Irregularity

1. (a) The Director should be summoned at once when attention is drawn to an irregularity.

In 1997 the strongest word "must" was used instead. So now experts can be kind to beginners and simply say, "Don't worry about it," when a beginner is feeling very guilty and embarrassed about their unintentional infraction of Law.

The key Law on authorized and unauthorized information, Law 16, has been completely rewritten. If there is only one Law in the Lawbook that a player chooses to read, it should be this one.

LAW 16 AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED INFORMATION

A. Players' Use of Information

1. A player may use information in the auction or play if: (a) it derives from the legal calls and plays of the current board (including illegal calls and plays that are accepted) and is unaffected by unauthorized information from another source; or

(b) it is authorized information from a withdrawn action (see D); or

(c) it is information specified in any law or regulation to be authorized or, when not otherwise specified, arising from the legal procedures authorized in these laws and in regulations (but see B1 following); or

(d) it is information that the player possessed before he took his hand from the board (Law 7B) and the Laws do not preclude his use of this information.

2. Players may also take account of their estimate of their own score, of the traits of their opponents, and any requirement of the tournament regulations.

3. No player may base a call or play on other information (such information being designated extraneous).

4. If there is a violation of this law causing damage the Director adjusts the score in accordance with Law 12C.

B. Extraneous Information from Partner

1. (a) After a player makes available to his partner extraneous information that may suggest a call or play, as for example by a remark, a question, a reply to a question an unexpected alert or failure to alert, or by unmistakable hesitation, unwonted speed, special emphasis, tone, gesture, movement, or mannerism, the partner may not choose from among logical alternatives one that could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the extraneous information.*

(b) A logical alternative action is one that, among the class of players in question and using the methods of the partnership, would be given serious consideration by a significant proportion of such players, of whom it is judged some might select it.

2. When a player considers that an opponent has made such information available and that damage could well result he may announce, unless prohibited by the Regulating Authority (which may require that the Director be called), that he reserves the

right to summon the Director later (the opponents should summon the Director immediately if they dispute the fact that unauthorized information might have been conveyed).

*3. When a player has substantial reason to believe that an opponent who had a logical alternative has chosen an action that could have been suggested by such information, he should summon the Director when play ends**. The Director shall assign an adjusted score (see Law 12C) if he considers that an infraction of law has resulted in an advantage for the offender.*

C. Extraneous Information from Other Sources

1. When a player accidentally receives unauthorized information about a board he is playing or has yet to play, as by looking at the wrong hand; by overhearing calls, results or remarks; by seeing cards at another table; or by seeing a card belonging to another player at his own table before the auction begins, the Director should be notified forthwith, preferably by the recipient of the information.

2. If the Director considers that the information could interfere with normal play he may, before any call has been made:

(a) adjust the players' positions at the table, if the type of contest and scoring permit, so that the player with information about one hand will hold that hand; or

(b) if the form of competition allows of it order the board redealt for those contestants; or

(c) allow completion of the play of the board standing ready to award an adjusted score if he judges that unauthorized information may have affected the result; or

(d) award an artificial adjusted score.

3. If such unauthorized information is received after the first call in the auction has been made and before completion of the play of the board the Director proceeds as in 2(c).

D. Information from Withdrawn Calls and Plays

When a call or play has been withdrawn as these laws provide:

1. For a non-offending side, all information arising from a withdrawn action is authorized, whether the action be its own or its opponents'.

2. For an offending side, information arising from its own withdrawn action and from withdrawn actions of the non-offending side is unauthorized. A player of an offending side may not choose from among logical alternative actions one that

could demonstrably have been suggested over another by the unauthorized information.

* i.e. unexpected in relation to the basis of his action.

** it is not an infraction to call the Director earlier or later.

For many years the United States has been using the term "convention card", but Australia has been using the more accurate term "system card". The US of A has now finally caught up with us Aussie sophisticates, so now "system card" is the official term used in the Laws.

The use of system cards has also been clarified in the new Law 40B2:

2. (a) The Regulating Authority is empowered without restriction to allow, disallow, or allow conditionally, any special partnership understanding. It may prescribe a System Card with or without supplementary sheets, for the prior listing of a partnership's understandings, and regulate its use. The Regulating Authority may prescribe alerting procedures and/or other methods of disclosure of a partnership's methods. It may vary the general requirement that the meaning of a call or play shall not alter by reference to the member of the partnership by whom it is made (such a regulation must not restrict style and judgement, only method).

(b) Unless the Regulating Authority provides otherwise a player may not consult his own system card after the auction period commences until the end of play, except that players of the declaring side (only) may consult their own system card during the Clarification Period.

(c) Unless the Regulating Authority provides otherwise a player may consult his opponent's system card

*(i) prior to the commencement of the auction,
(ii) during the Clarification Period, and
(iii) during the auction and during the play but only at his turn to call or play.*

(d) The Regulating Authority may restrict the use of psychic artificial calls.

Another significant change affecting players is the new Law 75 Introduction and consequential Law 75A:

LAW 75 - MISTAKEN EXPLANATION OR MISTAKEN CALL

After a misleading explanation has been given to opponents the responsibilities of the players (and the Director) are as illustrated by the consequences of this following example:

North has opened 1NT and South, who holds a weak hand with long diamonds, has bid 2D, intending to sign off; North explains, however, in answer to West's inquiry, that South's bid is strong and artificial, asking for major suits.

A. Mistake Causing Unauthorized Information

Whether or not North's explanation is a correct statement of partnership agreement, South, having heard North's explanation, knows that his own 2D bid has been misinterpreted. This knowledge is "unauthorised information" (see Law 16A), so South must be careful to avoid taking any advantage from that unauthorized information (see Law 73C). (If he does, the Director shall award an adjusted score.) For instance, if North rebids two no trump, South has the unauthorised information that this bid merely denies a four-card holding in either major suit; but South's responsibility is to act as though North had made a strong game try opposite a weak response, showing maximum values.

This now makes clear that if a player has forgotten their own system, but are reminded of what their system is by an explanation by partner, that player is dooooooooooomed. The player must continue kamikaze bidding on the basis of their original misunderstanding of the system.

In a worst case scenario, a player may be reminded by pard's explanation that systemically 7S should be bid (scoring +2210), but Law 75A requires them to knowingly misbid to Seven No Trumps Redoubled Minus Thirteen for Minus Seven Thousand Six Hundred!

Richard Hills