

The Laws of Bridge 2007

Reg Busch

Remember that these Laws will not apply for 3-4 months. Don't use them yet!

Miscellaneous

In this section I'll cover a lot of areas in the new Laws in no particular order, and will add sections from time to time.

Dummy's rights

Laws 42,43 and Law 9

Laws 42 & 43 are essentially unchanged. But Law 9 has an important change. Law 9A3 says

3. When an irregularity has occurred dummy may not draw attention to it during the play period but may do so after play of the hand is concluded. However any player, including dummy, may attempt to prevent another player's committing an irregularity (but for dummy subject to Laws 42 and 43).

Until now, dummy could always prevent an infraction by declarer e.g. attempting to lead from the wrong hand. Now dummy may also prevent an infraction by a defender. For example, defender West has a major penalty card on the table, East has won the trick and looks like he is going to lead. Dummy may act to warn East not to lead until declarer exercises his options. Similarly under this Law, West may warn his partner East not to lead for the same reason.

Note that dummy's right extends only to preventing an infraction. Once the infraction has actually occurred it is too late and dummy is committing an infraction by drawing attention once the irregularity has occurred.

Correcting scoring errors

The new Law 79C states:

C. Error in Score

1. An error in computing or tabulating the agreed-upon score, whether made by a player or scorer, may be corrected until the expiration of the period specified by the Tournament Organizer. Unless the Tournament Organizer specifies a later time, this Correction Period expires 30 minutes after the official score has been made available for inspection.*

2. Regulations may provide for circumstances in which a scoring error may be corrected after expiry of the Correction Period if the Director and the Tournament Organizer are both satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that the record is wrong.

** An earlier time may be specified when required by the special nature of a contest.*

There have been a number of instances where scoring errors have been found, but too late because the expiry period (normally 30 minutes after posting of scores) has expired. For example, in a Qld Pairs Championship a few years ago, a pair failed to qualify for the Championship final because an error was discovered too late for correction. On this occasion, as I recall, the error was in the data entry. This raises a new issue. Taken literally, an ‘error in computing or tabulating the agreed upon score’ means an arithmetical error in working out the score or an error in entering the score on the wrong side (the word ‘computing’ has nothing to do with computers – it appeared in the Laws long before computers became part of the bridge scene). This Law says nothing about incorrect data entry. So a literal interpretation of this Law would exclude errors in data entry by the scorer. It seems our Lawmakers have not quite yet caught up with the massive computerisation of bridge. But I’m sure nobody is going to argue if we include data entry errors within the gambit of this Law.

So we may now regulate to allow for a special correction period for scoring errors. But note that both the TD and the organiser must both be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that the score was incorrect.

If I may interpose a personal view here: in a computer scored event, any director who fails to institute some sort of system for double checking data entry for accuracy is simply asking for trouble).

Law 7: Control of boards and cards

Note an important change affecting players. Now, before returning your cards to the board you **must shuffle** the hand.

This is particularly important when the board has been passed in. When I receive a board from the previous table with the hand still sorted, it is very likely that the hand was passed in. This gives me a lot of unauthorised information in both the bidding and the play if the hand happens to be opened at my table.

Definitions: what constitutes a session?

The new definition says this:

Session — an extended period of play during which a number of boards, specified by the Tournament Organizer, is scheduled to be played. (May have different meanings as between Laws 4, 12C2 and 91.)

The section in parentheses has been added. A few years ago, there was something of a furore at a UK club. From memory, this happened in Wales and the event was a teams playing a whist movement. One of the teams was a 5 person team. With four matches due to be played in this session, the TD allowed the fifth member of the team to replace one of the current players at match 3. Objections were raised that this was contrary to Law 4, upon which the TD then allowed him to play as a substitute (this he could not be, as he was an original member of the team as nominated).

Law 4 requires that a contestant (a pair or a team) must retain the same partnerships throughout a session, except where a substitute is authorised by the TD. This would mean that even in a Swiss teams event where a session of 3 matches is arranged, you could not vary your team line-up during a session. The new Law allows organisers to specify what constitutes a session for the purposes of Law 4 (e.g. a session could be one match). Similarly you may specify a session for the purposes of Law 12C2 (artificial adjusted scores) or Law 91 (director's powers to suspend a player).

Rulings on disputed facts – Law 85

You are often called to a table where the actual facts are in dispute e.g. was there a change in tempo or not? The new Law now instructs the Director to make his decision on the 'balance of probabilities, which is to say on the weight of the evidence he is able to collect'.

Law 92D

Law 92 covers the right to appeal. The present 92D requires that both members of a partnership must concur in an appeal before it can proceed, and that an absent member shall be deemed to concur. The new 92D has dropped the latter clause. Now it says simply that both members of a partnership must concur.

One can understand the reason for this change. Often one has seen partnerships disagree about lodging an appeal, and the dissenting partner simply leaves the scene rather than battle on. But this change leaves us up in the air. Do we simply assume that an absent partner does not concur? If the Law had intended this, surely it could have said so? One can only assume that the Law intended to allow the TD (or the Appeals Committee) to exercise their discretion.