

Dummy's Limitations

Question

Declarer called for a diamond from dummy when he should have played from his own hand. Before anybody played a card, dummy drew declarer's attention to the irregularity. The opposition demanded a diamond be played from declarer.

Under Law 42B2, is dummy allowed to attempt to prevent an irregularity? Under Law 43A1b, should dummy not have called attention to the irregularity during play? Has the opposition the right to request a diamond be played by declarer?

Answer

During play, dummy has the right to attempt to prevent an irregularity occurring, unless he has breached any of the limitations described in Law 43. (If he has done so, there may be general or specific penalties – these are also described in Law 43.) Once the irregularity has occurred, dummy should not draw attention to it during play. Therefore, if dummy sees declarer go to play a card from his own hand when he should be in dummy, or go to call for a card from dummy (eg. "I'll have a...") when he should be in his own hand, dummy has the right, subject to Law 43, to try to prevent him from doing so. However, if declarer has called for a card from dummy, or faced a card from his own hand, dummy should make no comment.

In the scenario you described, it would not have mattered whether dummy or any of the other players had first drawn attention to the fact that the lead should have been from declarer's hand. Either defender has the right to accept the lead from dummy, or require declarer to lead a card from his own hand (Law 55A). If the defenders require that the lead come from declarer's hand, declarer may lead any card. Any confusion you may have observed in this area may arise from the fact that until the Laws were changed (way back!) in 1985, declarer was required to lead a card of the same suit, if possible. This however is no longer the case.

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