

Law Interpretation, Regulation and Guidance

Promulgated Jointly by the ABF and NZBridge

The 2007 Laws of Duplicate Bridge provide for the Regulating Authority (**ABF/NZ Bridge**) to select certain Law options and to regulate their usage within its geographical region.

The following interpretations have been made by **the ABF/NZ Bridge**:

Law 12C1(b) For the purpose of this law a “serious error” by the non-offending side should be judged according to the calibre of player.

Law 12C1(c) Directors are permitted to award a single weighted score that endeavours to restore the balance of equity on the hand in the instant prior to the infraction. The calculation of the weightings relates to the expected outcomes from that point forward in an auction unaffected by any irregularity. Any residual doubt that exists in the assessment of the relative weightings should be resolved in favour of the non-offending side.

Example: As a result of misinformation a pair defends 4♥X. If they had been correctly informed they will certainly bid game in spades and possibly slam, making eleven or twelve tricks depending on declarer’s line of play.

The Director may conclude that equity is best served by substituting a single weighted score as follows:

	40% of +1430	(6♠ =)
Plus	30% of +680	(4♠ +2)
Plus	20% of +650	(4♠ +1)
Plus	10% of -100	(6♠ -1)

Weighting a Score at Teams:

Assume the score in the other room was N/S +680

<u>Net Score</u>	<u>IMPs</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Adjust</u>
+1430 – 680 = +750	+13	40%	5.2
+ 680 – 680 = 0	0	30%	0.0
+ 650 – 680 = -30	-1	20%	-0.2
- 100 – 680 = -780	-13	10%	-1.3
		Total	3.7

The IMP total is rounded to the nearest whole number and the board is scored as +4 IMPs to the non-offending side. Any result of 0.5 IMPs or above is rounded upwards, any less is rounded down.

Weighting a Score at Pairs:

Assuming there are 13 tables, the score sheet might look something like this:

Table	Cont.	Tricks	Score
1	6♠	12	+1430
2	6♠X	12	+1660
3	4♠	12	+680
4	4♠	11	+650

5	Our score – To be weighted		
6	6♠	12	+1430
7	4♠	11	+650
8	4♠	12	+680
9	7♠X	12	-200
10	4♠	12	+680
11	6♠	11	-100
12	6♠	11	-100
13	6♠	12	+1430

If the result at Table 5 was +1430, N/S would get 19 MPs

If the result was +680, N/S would get 13 MPs

If the result was +650, N/S would get 8 MPs

If the result was -100, N/S would get 4 MPs

The weighted score is then calculated by multiplying the assigned percentages by the matchpoints each possible contract would have obtained:

$$(0.4 \times 19) + (0.3 \times 13.0) + (0.2 \times 8) + (0.1 \times 4) = 13.5 \text{ MPs}$$

Unlike IMPs, we do allow for decimal places in matchpoints, so a single score of 13.5 MPs is assigned to N/S. A board with 13 scores has a top of 24 MPs, so E/W receive the remaining 10.5 MPs.

Alternative Manual Calculation Method for Pairs Tournaments Scored by Computer

Clearly to make one of these weighted adjustments for Matchpoint scoring without the aid of computer software would be tedious, if not impossible, particularly in large fields. Many software packages do not currently cater for this type of adjustment. Until a software modification is implemented the following procedure shall, by regulation, be deemed the correct one:

Enter the scores into the software as normal, substituting average to both sides at the table to which the ruling applies. Then calculate the weighted score using the match-points assigned by the software (a board print out will provide this).

Finally correct the match-points for both sides, rounded to one decimal place, using the adjusted score (penalty) routine. Since the average on the board is 12 and has already been assigned, the director will add 1.5 match-points to N/S and deduct 1.5 match-points from E/W.

Law 12C1(d) Although this is essentially a matter of judgement for the director (and subsequently the appeals committee), in general if more than four possible outcomes exist, then the director should consider applying this provision of the Laws and award an artificial adjusted score.

Law 12C1(e) None of the provisions of this Law apply in [Australia](#)/[New Zealand](#).

Law 12C2(b) For IMP play - see Law 86A

Law 16A1(d) This law 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, anyone's scorecard, or the backs of the bidding cards – all of which are classed as aids to memory [Law 40C3(a)].

Law 16B1(b) For the purpose of this Law, a significant number is defined as more than one in four players. This would mean that up to three logical alternatives might exist as, in order to be defined as a logical alternative it should be judged that more than 25% of players would take the action. In this situation the director will need to consider [under 16B1(a)] if the extraneous information would provide additional reasons for choosing the logical alternative selected at the table.

On the other hand if it is judged that more than 75% of the class of players in question using the same partnership methods, would select the same action as that taken by the player in receipt of the unauthorised information, then the Director shall proceed on the basis that no other logical alternative actions exist. This would lead to a ruling that the table result stands.

Law 16B2 The preferred procedure is to summon the Director at the end of the hand but only if it becomes apparent that an opponent may have acted upon extraneous information made available by his partner. The Director need only be called if the non-offenders believe they may have been damaged.

Whenever a player believes there is a possibility that an opponent may have acted on unauthorised information from their partner's gesture, comment, hesitation, or the like, he should immediately try to establish the facts about what has occurred. This should be done as pleasantly as possible, stressing that if the director needs to be called at the end of the hand, there will now be no dispute about the facts. The director should only be called earlier if there is no agreement about what has occurred. If at the end of the hand, the non-offending side believe they have been disadvantaged, the director can then be summoned.

Law 20F 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 override the requirement of the laws always to respond to enquiries under Law 20F with correct explanations of the partnership understandings

Law 25A The 2007 Laws now use the word unintended (rather than inadvertent). In applying this Law the director must still be satisfied that the player never had it in his mind to take the action he took. For example, opening 1♥ with one heart and five spades clearly suggests some sort of inexplicable mental aberration. By contrast a player who opens 1♣ with a 4-card suit and then quickly changes it to 1NT because he/she has remembered that he/she is playing a strong no trump, should not have the first call considered as unintentional, no matter how quick the change was. The acid test is the players incontrovertible intention, not the speed of the change.

A bid may be treated as unintentional under this law even if the player's attention is drawn to it by the action of his/her partner alerting the bid or an opponents' question. Once again the clear intention of the player is the guideline the director should use. Cue bidding 2♠ over 1♠ with a hand that has only 13 points and a 6-card club suit clearly suggests it is appropriate to allow a change under this Law. By contrast, bidding 2♥ in response to 1NT with a heart suit when playing transfers, would not qualify.

The accidental removal of the wrong bidding card from a bidding box is another example of an unintended action. The most common situation is where the mis-pulled call is adjacent to the intended call (i.e., 2NT or 2♥ instead of 2♠, or the removal of a 'Double' card instead of a 'Pass' card). The director should however be more reluctant to allow a change (on purely mechanical grounds) if the prospective alternative call comes from a distinctly different part of the bidding box (such as the attempted replacement of a 3♣ bid with a Pass).

Law 27B1(a) Players are still permitted to replace an insufficient bid with a bid in the same denomination at the lowest legal level without restriction provided that, in the opinion of the Director, neither the insufficient bid nor the substituted bid are artificial. The auction continues normally and the information that the bid was intended to be natural is authorised to all players at the table and therefore Law 16D does not apply.

Law 27B1(b) Players are also permitted to substitute other legal calls without restriction (irrespective of any artificiality) provided that in the opinion of the Director the selected call has the same meaning or a more precise meaning as the insufficient bid (i.e. the replacement conveys the same or more precise information).

In order for the Director to correctly exercise this discretion, he must first determine the offending player's original intent at the time of the infraction and then investigate the pair's methods. This will often entail quizzing the players away from the table and/or an examination of the pair's system card. Only after these investigations should the Director then explain the options.

Note that:

- A truly unintentional action may be corrected via Law 25.
- Occasionally it will be unclear whether to allow the correction without restriction under Law 27B1(b), or to require the offender's partner to pass throughout the remainder of the auction under Law 27B2. In those cases the Director is advised to err on the side of applying Law 27B1(b) (i.e., attempt to get a normal bridge result).

Law 27D Whenever the Director allows the correction of an insufficient bid without restriction he should advise the non-offending side to call him back at the end of play if they consider the outcome of the hand may have been different had the offender's partner not had the assistance of the withdrawn bid. In situations where the Director considers the non-offending side has been damaged, he applies Law 27D.

Any such adjustment should be based upon the most likely outcome(s), had the original infraction (i.e., the insufficient bid) not occurred. Under no circumstances may an adjusted score be awarded that gives any weight to the perceived benefit that might have accrued to the non-offending side if the Director had elected to apply Law 27B2 (even if subsequently it is considered that this may have been the more appropriate action, i.e., Law 82C is not applicable).

Examples

(a)	West	East
	1♠	3♠
	4NT	4♦

If the Director is satisfied that East was answering Blackwood but at the wrong level, then East will be allowed to correct to 5♦ without any restriction.

(b) **West North East**
 4NT 5♥ 5♦

Similarly if E/W are playing DOPI over Blackwood interference, then East could now Pass (to show one Ace) and the bidding would again proceed without further restriction. Conversely, if E/W are playing PODI (Pass = None, Double = One), he would replace his insufficient bid with a double for the same effect.

(c) **West North East**
 1♦ 1♠ 1♥

If 1♥ was intended to show at least 4 hearts and enough HCP to respond then a replacement of 2♥ is permitted under Law 27B1(a) without any further restriction.

Alternatively if a negative double by East would systemically guarantee at least a 4-card heart holding then East could also replace the 1♥ with a double under Law 27B1(b) without restriction.

A pass, however, would not convey a heart suit and therefore Law 27B2 applies, i.e. partner will have to pass whenever it is his turn to call and Laws 23 and 26 may also apply.

(d) **West North East**
 1NT 2♠ 2♦

If East's intention was to transfer to hearts (he did not see the 2♠ bid) then a replacement bid of 3♥ would not bar his partner.

(e) **West North East**
 1NT 2♦ 2♣

2♣ was intended as simple Stayman. A Lebensohl-type cue bid replacement of 3♦ (asking about a 4-card major), would now have the same meaning as the original insufficient bid and thus not bar West.

Alternatively if the director is satisfied that the player intended to bid 3♣ naturally, he allows that change without restriction under Law 27B1(b)

(f) **West East**
 2NT 2♥

Similarly if 2♥ was intended as a transfer, then a bid of 3♥ (still transferring) would permit the auction to continue without constraints.

(g) **West North East**
 1♠ 2♥ 1NT

Here the replacement of 1NT with 2NT is permitted without restriction under Law 27B1(b) if the Director is satisfied that this was East's original incontrovertible intention.

In other circumstances (e.g. if East did not see the 2♥ bid) the substitution of 2NT is permitted without restriction under Law 27B1(a) if both 1NT and 2NT are natural. The information that East's HCP range might well be different to an original 2NT response is authorised to both sides but Law 27D will apply if the offending side achieves a favourable result that would not have been possible without the infraction (such as stopping in 2NT when it only makes 8 tricks if played by East).

(h) **West North East**
 1♣ 1♥ 1♦

E/W are playing a strong club system and East did not see the 1♥ bid. If 1♦ was intended to show 0-7 HCP then the substitution of a Pass (showing 0-4 HCP) would not bar West. Note that a call which specifies a narrower HCP range is actually more precise (i.e. it contains more information) than a call with a wider HCP range.

Summary:

Most insufficient bids arise either from a failure to observe the call of RHO or a general confusion about the current level of the auction. Therefore in applying Law 27 the Director should proceed as follows:

- 1) Remove the offender from the table and determine his original intent and the specific meaning of the intended call.
- 2) Verify the general methods of the partnership and if necessary consult the offender's system card or any other system notes.
- 3) Determine the possible replacement calls available and their meaning.
- 4) Return to the table and explain all the options to the players (including that LHO has the option of accepting the insufficient bid as per Law 27A).
- 5) Allow the (fully informed) player to select a replacement call and then, based upon the investigations detailed in steps (1-3), apply either Law 27B1 or Law 27B2.
- 6) If Law 27B1 was applied, the non-offending side are informed of their right to re-call the director at the end of play if they believe the outcome of the board would have been different without the assistance of the insufficient bid.

Note: When bidding boxes are in use, the director should always be aware of the possibility that a player might simply have mis-pulled the incorrect bidding card from the box. If the director is of this opinion, then he should apply Law 25A and not Law 27.

Law 40B2(a) This Law is the basis and authority for the classification and restriction of certain partnership methods as outlined in the [ABF/NZ System Regulations](#). It is also the authority for the procedures as described in the [ABF/NZ Alerting Regulations](#).

Both members of a partnership must play the same system, including bidding and card play agreements. Where, as a matter of style, members frequently adopt different approaches from each other, that difference (or those differences) must be disclosed on the system card.

Law 40B2(b) [The ABF/NZ Bridge](#) does allow written defences to Yellow Systems and Brown Sticker Conventions to be referred to at the table in many events.

Law 40B2(d) [The ABF prohibits the psyching of conventional opening bids that are forcing and made by agreement on strong hands \(e.g., a Game Forcing 2♣ or a Precision 1♣\)](#)

Law 40B3 Prior agreement by a partnership to vary its understanding during the auction or play following a question asked, a response to a question or an irregularity committed by its own side is prohibited.

Law 41A The opening lead should be made face down. A lead made face down is not an opening lead until faced and may thus be retracted without penalty, but only upon instruction of the director (i.e. when the lead was made from the wrong side or following the correction of misinformation).

Law 45C4(b) The designation of a card in dummy can only be changed if the Director is satisfied that declarer incontrovertibly never intended to play that card.

Example: Declarer leads towards the AQ in dummy, LHO plays the King and declarer plays the Queen. The Director will not allow the Queen to be changed since declarer cannot now claim that they never intended to play that card (i.e. LHO may have played low).

Law 61B3 Defenders may make enquiries of each other or declarer regarding a possible revoke.

Law 70A In adjudicating a contested claim or concession the director is required to use his bridge judgement to determine, as equitably as possible for both sides, what in his opinion would have happened if play had continued normally [giving no weight to irrational (silly) lines].

There is however no option to award a split or weighted score, since the margin of doubt that might remain after consultation with colleagues (or if appropriate, players) must be resolved in favour of the non-claiming side.

To assist directors in making this distinction, please refer to the examples in Sections 70C and 70E2 below.

Law 70C A declarer who is unaware of a missing trump is ‘careless’ rather than ‘irrational’ in failing to draw that missing trump or stating how he will take care of it. Thus if a trick could be lost by playing other winners first then the director should award that trick to the non-claimers.

Examples

(a) Declarer claims all the tricks with a good trump (the ♦9), two spade winners and a heart winner. The defense can ruff the heart with their outstanding small trump. Despite declarer swearing on a stack of bibles that he knew there was a trump out, if he was too careless to mention it, then he may easily have forgotten it, and the defense is allocated a trick.

(b) Declarer is in 7♠ with thirteen tricks so long as spades (trumps) are not 5-0. He cashes one round and says “All mine” when both players follow. He clearly has not forgotten the outstanding three trumps and the claim is good.

Law 70E2 In adjudicating disputed claims involving an unstated line of play the following guidelines apply:

(a) Top down

A declarer who states that he is cashing a suit is normally assumed to cash them from the top.

Example

Suppose declarer claims three tricks with AK5 opposite 42, forgetting the jack has not gone. It would be normal to give him three tricks since it would be considered irrational to play the 5 first.

(b) Different suits

If a declarer appears unaware of an outstanding winner, or losing line of play [but see (a) above], and a trick could be lost by playing or discarding one suit rather than another, then the director should award that trick to the non-claiming side.

Example

Declarer has three winners in dummy and must make three discards. He appears to have forgotten his ♦J is not a winner. It is careless rather than irrational that he should discard some other winner to retain the ♦J.

Law 73A2 The use of Stop Cards is authorized for [ABF/NZ Bridge](#) controlled Tournaments and recommended for use in all other tournaments.

Law 76A2 The Tournament Organiser shall be responsible for deciding which matches should be broadcast on BBO. The Tournament Organiser is also responsible for the prior training of the operators and the efficient delivery of the service on site. BBO must not intrude on the players' amenity or impede the rate of play. It is the responsibility of the BBO operators to keep pace with the play, not the reverse.

Law 76C2 The right to penalise an irregularity may be forfeited if attention is first drawn to the irregularity by a spectator for whose presence at the table the non-offending side is responsible.

The right to correct an irregularity may be forfeited if attention is first drawn to the irregularity by a spectator for whose presence at the table the offending side is responsible.

Laws 78 & 79B Printed copies of the information given under these laws (i.e., the Scoring and IMP tables) may not be consulted during the auction or play.

Law 79C2 No change in score may occur after expiry of the score correction period.

Within the correction period, the director may adjust an inconsistent score (e.g. 4♥ making 11 tricks = 620) to a consistent score (i.e. 650) if both pairs agree that it is the correct result. The director may not alter an inconsistent score if the pairs are unavailable for consultation or where there is no agreement as to the correct result.

The director can also adjust a consistent score if attention is drawn to a possible error within the same time frame. However in this case, before any change in made, the director must have complete confidence in the recollections of both pairs, bearing in mind such factors as (a) the time elapsed between the board having been played, (b) the nature of the scoring query, and (c) the possibility of a more experienced pair forcefully stating their version of events thus intimidating a less experienced pair into compliance. If the director has any doubts at all about what has occurred then the consistent score as originally recorded shall stand.

Law 80A3 [The powers of the Regulating Authority within Australia rest with the ABF, as provided for in its Constitution, unless they are subsequently assigned or delegated to another entity \(such as a State Association or the ABF Tournament Unit\).](#)

Note:

[The Bridge Associations of each State and Territory \(as constituent members of the ABF\) have been assigned Regulating Authority powers for an initial period of five \(5\) years commencing June 1st 2008. This assignment is only in respect to State-controlled Red and Green Masterpoint sessions played within their current geographical boundaries.](#)

No such assignment of powers has been made in respect to any Gold Masterpoint event (including licensed events), nor for any other ABF event.

- Law 80B** The Tournament Organiser is the official, recognised by the Regulating Authority (see the Code), responsible for organising the tournament (also known as the Convenor). Where a committee or body is responsible for organising the tournament, the Tournament Organiser is deemed to be the Chairman of that committee or body.
- Law 80B1** Where responsibility for a Tournament run under the auspices of the ABF/NZ Master-point Scheme is delegated to a Tournament Organiser, (be it a State/Regional Committee, Club or Individual), these entities are not permitted to draft or implement regulations, written or otherwise, that are in conflict with the rules, regulations or requirements as promulgated by the ABF/NZ Bridge.
- Law 80B2(j)** Although this administrative function may be performed by the Tournament Organiser, ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of the scoring is vested in the Director.
- Law 81** The term “Director” means the Director in Charge appointed by the Tournament Organiser under Law 80B2(a).
- Law 82(c)** This Law makes no suggestion that a Director should automatically cancel a board when he (or his assistants) has made an error. Play should continue such that a result may be obtained. If it is then necessary to adjust the table score, this will usually lead to an assigned score.

If the Director can confidently predict what would have happened if he had given the correct ruling originally then he should just correct it. If he cannot predict the true outcome on the board then he should award an assigned adjusted score, treating each side for that purpose as non-offending. In doing so he may need to use his powers under Law 12C1(c) to substitute an equitable weighted score that reflects all the possible outcomes had the correct ruling been given.

An artificial adjusted score should only be required in those instances where a result could not be obtained (e.g. when a board has been prematurely cancelled) or when too many possible outcomes exist for a weighted score under Law 12C1 (see above).

Any clear error should be corrected, but a ruling which was essentially a matter of judgment, or one where there is a strong argument in favour of the original ruling, should not be corrected. Review of matters of judgment or resolution of arguments as to the correctness of a ruling that was thought to be close, are proper matters to be dealt with via an appeal against the ruling.

Examples

- (a) A TD gives an adjustment to 2♠ making. He later realises that it will always make nine tricks. Despite the obvious embarrassment he must return to both sides and explain that the ruling has now been amended to 2♠ +1.
- (b) A TD initially fails to recognise that a particular explanation is misinformation. He later realises that he should have amended the score from 6♣ doubled making in one direction to 6♦ doubled making in the other direction. He must now bite the bullet and give the correct ruling (6♦ doubled).
- (c) A TD incorrectly cancels a board part way through the auction, believing a pair to be playing an illegal agreement. This is wrong since the board should always be

completed. However, worse is to follow when he discovers the agreement was not actually illegal. Since the board was not completed Law 12C1(d) applies and the best he can do is to give each side Average plus.

- (d) RHO leads a spade out of turn. Declarer forbids LHO from leading spades. Unfortunately the Director tells LHO he may not lead spades again. Later in the play LHO gets in and fails to find the killing spade switch. If the Director had not got this wrong then perhaps he would have found the switch, perhaps not. Since the spade switch was reasonable but not automatic, the best approach is to weight the possibilities using Law 12C1(c):

	60% of 3NT=	NS +400
Plus	40% of 3NT-1	NS -50

- Law 86A** For matches of less than 11 Boards, the score awarded (as average plus or average minus) shall be plus or minus 2 IMPs.
- Law 86D** The Director should always strive to award an assigned, rather than an artificial adjusted score. This will sometimes require the use of an equitable weighting to reflect the range of possible outcomes – see Law 12C1(c).
- Law 92A** When an appeal against a decision of the director at a tournament conducted under the auspices of [the ABF/NZ Bridge](#) or its Master-point Scheme is unsuccessful, the appeals committee shall consider the merit of the case. If the grounds for appeal or the charges brought against another contestant are held to be without merit, the committee should assess a penalty taking into account the circumstances of each individual case.
- Law 92B** For all tournaments run under the auspices of [the ABF/NZ Bridge](#) or its Masterpoint Scheme, unless a different time is promulgated by the Tournament Organiser, the time for requesting a ruling from the director or for filing an appeal expires 30 minutes after the official end of the stanza to which the ruling applies. The time for filing an appeal of a late ruling expires for each party 30 minutes after they were officially advised of the ruling.
- Law 93C1** [Any request for a qualified review by the ABF National Authority of an appeal committee ruling made at a tournament conducted under the auspices of the ABF shall be forwarded in writing to the ABF General Counsel.](#)
- Law 93C3(a & b)** [The ABF National Authority may review any Appeals Committee decision arising from any tournament run under the auspices of the ABF. The National Authority will however limit its functions to the interpretation of the said Laws of Bridge and will not decide facts or change or purport to change any ruling that has been made under those Laws. It follows that the Authority will not overturn the result of an event but may issue an opinion in order to establish or confirm a legal precedent or procedure.](#)