

What You Need To Know About The New 2017 Laws

SCBA has transitioned to the new 2017 Laws of Contract Bridge. Here are some of the changes that you may want to take note of.

Law 43A3 - A Defender may not show dummy his hand.

Law 43A2C - Dummy may not look at the face of a card in either defender's hand

Self explanatory. It is therefore the responsibility of both dummy and defenders to ensure dummy does not see either defenders' hands

Law 26B - Lead restrictions from withdrawn calls

The previous laws were particularly harsh in comparison to the infraction, pretty much allowing declarer to force a defender to lead a particular suit. The new law is simpler and more fair, simply allowing declarer to disallow the lead of any one suit that has not been shown by the offending player.

Law 68D2b - "Play on" after a claim

Previously this was not allowed, but is now allowed if all 4 players (including dummy) agree to play on. Play goes on as if the claim never happened and the end result is final. Note that L16 (unauthorized information) and L50 (exposed cards) do not apply

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Law 86B - Team Scoring

An adjusted score shall be awarded if a result cannot be obtained by a table (due to slow play, for example), and a result clearly favourable to one side was obtained at other table(s). With this law, we will no longer award 3 IMPs per board to the non-offending side if boards are cancelled due to late starts.

Law 23 - Comparable Calls

This is probably the most major change. In the 2007 Laws, an early form of Comparable Calls was introduced to deal with L27 (Insufficient Bids). Comparable Calls has been expanded and has now been moved into L23 and now applies also to L30-L32 (Bid/Pass/Double out of rotation).

This is a good change as previously a bid out of turn on partner's or LHO's turn led to a penalty that was overly harsh and often led to ridiculous results on the table. With the new laws, bidding will go on as per normal as long as the offending player makes a "Comparable Call". Generally this means a bid that repeats the denomination of the withdrawn bid (even if the point range shown would be inconsistent) or a bid with the same or more specific meaning (or subset of meanings) than the withdrawn bid.

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Although it is not specifically stated in the new laws, the WBF Laws Committee intends for the definition of Comparable Call to be interpreted “liberally”. This means you will generally be allowed to make a bid that is consistent with the withdrawn bid, even if you replace a bid with a limited point range to one that is unlimited (e.g. replacing a pass out of turn with 2C stayman after partner opens 1NT), or a bid with one that shows one of multiple meanings if one of the meanings is consistent with the withdrawn bid (e.g. a natural 2H opening bid out of turn being replaced by Multi-Landy 2D showing either major after RHO opens 1NT).

If you are not sure if your bid will be acceptable as a Comparable Call, please ask to talk to the TD away from the table and ask if the bid you want to make will be acceptable.

Note that as per L23B there is no further rectification if a Comparable Call is made. All information, even regarding the withdrawn call, is authorized information to all players. However, L23C allows the TD to award an adjusted score if the non-offending side has been damaged in certain situations.

For example, if partner opens 1D and you respond 1NT without noticing that RHO has already overcalled 2C, you may correct 1NT to 2NT without penalty, and the fact that you have only 6-9 instead of 10-11 for the 2NT is authorized information for the whole table and partner may pass even with 15 HCP. However if you score well in 2NT and the TD deems that without the infraction the bidding might have gone 1D - 2C - all pass, then the score may be adjusted to 2C by your RHO.

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