



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU LAWS & ETHICS COMMITTEE
HELD AT 2 BLOOMSBURY STREET, LONDON WC1B 3ST ON WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 11TH 2012**

Present:	Jeremy Dhondy (JD)	Chairman and Elected Member
	Mike Amos (MA)	Elected Member
	Max Bavin (MB)	Chief Tournament Director
	Sally Bugden (SB)	EBU Chairman
	Barry Capal (BC)	EBU General Manager
	Frances Hinden (FH)	Vice Chairman and Elected Member
	Neil Morley (NM)	Elected Member
	Martin Pool (MP)	Elected Member
	Tim Rees (TR)	Elected Member
	Gerard Faulkner (GF)	Vice-President
	John Pain (JP)	Secretary

1A The Secretary opened the meeting and called for nominations for Chairman for 2011-12 . FH proposed Jeremy Dhondy as Chairman. With no other nominations JD was declared elected and took the chair. JD proposed Frances Hinden as Vice Chairman. With no other nominations FH was declared elected.

JD wished it placed on record the contribution made by David Stevenson over the years while he was on the Committee.

JD congratulated FH on being a member of the winning Gold Cup team.

1B Apologies for Absence

David Burn (DB)	Elected Member
Grattan Endicott (GE)	Vice-President
Andrew Petrie (AP)	EBU Vice Chairman
Gordon Rainsford (GR)	Co-opted. Assistant Chief TD.

1C JD advised committee members of a change to the terms for Members of Standing Committees passed by the Board on Nov 2nd 2011 which would apply to all new members from 2012 onwards and which was now in force for existing committee members:

Successful applicants must ensure that they avoid situations which may cause them to be found guilty of a disciplinary offence as stated in the EBU appendix A disciplinary rules, bye laws 3.2.v. Such actions may create a conflict of interest in the work carried out on behalf of the union and, in addition may reflect badly on fellow directors or standing committee members.

2.1/2 Minutes of the previous meeting

There was one correction to hand 11.024 where a double by North had been omitted. The minutes of the meeting of September 21st 2011 were approved and signed.

2.3 Matters arising

2.3.1. Appeals from non-affiliated clubs to the EBU acting as Regulating Authority

JD said that the Board had considered this and confirmed the decision taken by the previous L&E meeting that non-affiliated clubs could appeal to the EBU as Regulating Authority. It was also agreed that a charge would be made for such a service. The level of charge would be decided at the time that an appeal was received.

2.3.2 Player being woken up by an alert or announcement

The WBF had considered this at the Laws Committee Meeting in Koningshof in October and issued the following footnote to Laws 25A to take effect immediately:

A player is allowed to replace an unintended call if the conditions described in Law 25A are met, no matter how he may become aware of his error.

TDs and Referees were asked to amend their law books accordingly.

2.3.3 The EBU Mediation Service

JD introduced this item. He said that although counties had been given power to deal with disciplinary matters they had so far proved reluctant to do so. One case had taken over a year to come to a hearing and another was being referred to the EBU (see 4.4). The Committee agreed that the proposal put forward to offer a further way to resolve disputes without the need for full disciplinary hearings was a good one and, subject to some minor rewording, would be rolled out at the County Chairman's conference and through the Club Committee.

2.3.4 Members psyche record (7: 11.019)

The Committee looked at the recorded psyches by a member going back to 2003. The Committee was surprised to find only four others recorded and surmised that there were likely to be others which had not been recorded. The Committee concluded that there was no systematic pattern to the ones available so there was nothing further to pursue at this time.

TDs are reminded to record psyches if asked (OB6C1)

2.3.5 Response to request (7: 11.013/027/049)

The Committee noted that the member had responded as requested. The member explained that he always encouraged his opponents and partner to report psyches to ensure there is no evidence of anything untoward. He also said that in one of three cases he reported the psyche himself as the opponents had not wished to.

2.3.6 Any other matters arising

4.4 SB wished to thank JD, GF and MP for overseeing the disciplinary bye law changes to County Constitutions. She informed the committee that all counties had been made aware of these proposed changes via a letter sent on 15th December 2011.

5.1 GF asked about the advice on claims. JD said he had written a piece for the latest Appeals Focus. Attached as Appendix A

5.2 GF asked about the publication of Split Tie regulations. JD said it would be referred to the TC.

5.6 FH had responded to Mike Fisher. The response is attached as Appendix B.

5.10 GF asked about this item now that Mr Stevenson was no longer on the Committee. The Committee did not wish to continue with the review.

3 Appeals to the National Authority

None this time

4 Disciplinary Cases

4.1 Wroxall

The secretary reported that the matter was ongoing and that the Club had not completed its own procedures. Consequently the Laws and Ethics committee would take no action at this stage.

4.2 Doors

The Chairman reported that the matter was not yet resolved. Since the last meeting there has been correspondence between EBU Honorary Counsel and the Chairman of the County Disciplinary Committee and it is hoped that the matter will be concluded in the near future with the county taking the appropriate action.

4.3 Great Northern Swiss Pairs

An incident from the Great Northern Swiss Pairs had led to a complaint from a participant. The matter was dealt with by a disciplinary committee formed Yorkshire CBA and had been concluded. See also item 5.3

4.4 Incident at the Brighton Summer Meeting (11.062)

The Secretary reported that he had received responses from both members of the partnership expressing regret at what had happened. The Committee considered the matter to be closed and papers were put to file.

4.5 New case – Eagles

The Committee considered papers relating to a case forwarded by a County Association. The County had received a complaint, formed a Conduct Committee to consider whether there was a case to answer and concluded there was. They had now run into difficulty over forming a Disciplinary Committee to deal with the matter and had asked the L&E Committee to take over the case. The L&E Committee noted that they had correctly followed their county procedures to reach the current stage.

The L&E Committee considered that there must be members of the County association with expertise in dealing with disciplinary matters, e.g. magistrates, members of service boards etc who could be approached to take on the role.

The L&E Committee concluded that the matter should be dealt with by the County if at all possible. JD offered to act as their disciplinary secretary and would approach the county with that offer.

Action: JD

5 Technical Matters

5.1 Agreeing the score

FH said that there were numerous instances where the use of electronic scoring devices (BridgeMates, Bridge Pads, Bridge Scorers) had led to local difficulty where players did not show the scores to the opposition or where the EW players pushed the 'accept' button without really looking at what had been entered. This led on to discussion about when was it too late to change a score that had been incorrectly entered (e.g. wrong polarity declarer, incorrect number of tricks).

The Committee confirmed that electronic scorers were no different to paper travellers in that they merely recorded what had happened so the usual rules for changing errors on paper travellers should apply. This meant that the Correction Period laid down in Law 79 C1 should apply. Clubs

(acting as Tournament Organizers) were recommended to define their own Correction Periods as the law allows.

MB said that there was now a section in each congress programme which gave the preferred protocol for using electronic scorers and is copied here:

- *North (or South) is responsible for entering the contract & result into the Bridgemate, and East (or West) must be shown it to verify its accuracy by pressing the Accept button.*
- *It is best to enter the contract, declarer and lead at the end of the auction – this saves time, reduces the risk of entering the wrong board number, and ensures the lead is fresh in your mind.*
- *Entering the lead accurately can assist the scorer in resolving errors of data-entry.*

It will be included in the 2012 White Book, the next Club Focus and the Club Committee will be informed.

5.2 Logical alternative

Correspondence from Richard Fleet was considered concerning hand 09.047 in the 2009 Appeals Booklet. He had queried the statement in the write up 'I would have thought that once a player has made a limit bid, it would always be a logical alternative to pass on the next round'. The Committee said it was too much of a generalisation to be taken as its view without any context.

5.3 Responsibility for Disciplinary Procedures in licensed and delegated events

Arising from the incident at the Great Northern Swiss Pairs (4.3) the Committee considered who was responsible for dealing with the matter. As it happened Yorkshire had dealt with it and the disciplinary committee was thanked for doing so. The GNSP was not a licensed event; it was a *delegated* event – the EBU had agreed that Yorkshire would run it on the EBU's behalf. Other examples of *delegated* events were the 2011 Women's Teams run by Warwickshire and the 2012 Northern Easter Festival which was being revived by Yorkshire.

After discussion it was confirmed that in accordance with Law 80A3 where an event was *delegated* by the EBU, the EBU remained the Regulating Authority for the event and any disciplinary incidents that arose should come to the L&E Committee. In *licensed* events the licence holder was the Regulating Authority and disciplinary incidents should be dealt with by them. It was agreed that the licence document ought to be amended to reflect this. The Chairman would inform the TC chairman of this.

It was further confirmed that in heats of the National Pairs the club or county (as appropriate) remained the Regulating Authority, in simultaneous pairs the Regulating Authority is the club holding the heat. In the Portland Pairs the Regulating Authority is the EBU itself.

Action: JD

5.4 Minutes of the WBF Laws Committee meetings October 18 and 20 2011.

The Committee noted the minutes. They can be found at

<http://www.ecatsbridge.com/documents/wbfinfo/WBFlawscommitte/default.asp>

5.5 Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017

The WBF Laws Committee has issued an open invitation to individuals, TDs and NBOs to send any thoughts they may have as to desirable changes in the laws for the next revision due in 2017. Suggestions are invited in two categories

- (a) Those which propose a change in the effect of the law; and
- (b) Those which retain the current effect of the law but target an improvement in wording and/or layout of a law.

The WBF Laws Committee hopes to institute very few in (a) but to concentrate on (b). But all suggestions will receive consideration.

Responses should be sent to the Laws Secretary Grattan Endicott grandaeval@tiscali.co.uk. The subject line should include the words 'Duplicate Bridge Law' followed by a law number if applicable. The invitation to respond is open until December 31st 2012.

The EBU may decide to make its own submission as an NBO. Suggestions following the same protocol as above should be sent to the L&E Secretary john@ebu.co.uk by August 31st 2012 for consideration at the September L&E meeting.

The Chairman has made a submission asking for the return of a table of contents in the next edition.

5.6 *Claim diagram*

The assistant Chief TD has produced a new form for use by TDs for recording the play in claim situations. It is attached as Appendix C.

5.7/5.8 *failing to correct Misinformation during the auction at the correct time*

FH introduced this item by giving an example. Player A gives misinformation during the auction. Player B (his partner) becomes declarer and fails to correct the misinformation before the opening lead. The contract makes, but would have gone off on a different lead. At the end of the hand all is revealed and the TD is called. The TD believes the following to be true:

- There was misinformation given during the auction. Player B knew the partnership agreement, knew there was misinformation and his failure to correct it before the opening lead is made is a breach of Law 20F5(b)(ii) (also Law 75B).
- If the opening leader knew that there had been a misunderstanding i.e. had heard both the original misinformation and the correction he might have found the winning lead.
- If all the opening leader knew was the actual agreement, he would not have found the winning lead.

GR commented on an example case with details of the hand via email as follows:

The position has always been, as far as I am aware, that players are only entitled to the correct information and not the knowledge of a misunderstanding, but if the misunderstanding comes to light in the process of disclosing the correct information, the non-offending side may use that information. In this instance, had the offending side not committed a further infraction by failing to correct the misinformation, the opening leader might well have made a different lead – maybe about 25% of the time [in the circumstances of this particular example].

In this case I think it is reasonable to adjust under Law 23 for the breach of Law 20F5(b)(ii). The problem seems to me that if we not able to adjust in this way (or a similar way) we put non-offending players in a worse position when their opponents commit a second infraction and appear to reward offenders for committing a second offence. Of course we can fine the offenders (and might do so in addition to adjusting), but this would be of no help to the non-offending side and, in any case, fines are not there to give redress.

None of this assumes that the player deliberately chose not to correct the misinformation – he didn't hear it – but as always we adjust for an inadvertent infraction in the same way as for a deliberate one in order not to have to decide (or state) whether the breach was intentional. Where a player doesn't hear partner's explanation clearly he should ask for it to be repeated at the end of the auction so that he can correct it if it is incorrect. A player who failed to take such care to protect his opponents should expect to be adjusted against when it damages them.

The committee agreed that Law 23 was the applicable law to enable an adjustment to be made and that could include a weighted ruling under Law 12C1(c). A procedural penalty up to the amount of the gain by the offending side could also be made if that was thought to be appropriate.

It was noted that in some cases the laws give insufficient incentive to own up to ones own mistakes.

5.9 Referees Panel

It was agreed to add Jason Hackett to the panel of referees. David Martin (who no longer plays regularly in EBU events) was thanked for his service and deleted from the list of active referees.

The committee confirmed its current position of not allowing Panel Tournament Directors to sit on Appeals Committees unless there were exceptional circumstances.

5.10 Committee screeners for TD reports

FH and TR were appointed the screeners for current year.

5.11 Time limits for holding appeals

A situation had arisen at the end of the Middlesex Congress where a player had been given a ruling, indicated he wished to appeal, withdrawn it and then reinstated it. The player was not in contention. The organizer (not the TD) had indicated that any appeal would have to wait until equipment had been packed away which could have been about an hour. The player withdrew the appeal.

The Committee considered that such a situation was completely unacceptable and that delaying 'in the hope it might go away' should not happen. Appeals should be held in as timely a manner as possible.

5.12 Explanations – Correspondence from Sarah Dunn

The Committee considered correspondence from Sarah Dunn regarding the following scenario:

(extract) Player A makes a call. Partner B explains its meaning. The explanation accords with the system file that B has given to A but A has either temporarily forgotten the agreement or never really knew it. A intended his call to have a different meaning. The opponent's rely on B's explanation and are damaged. B is pleased to announce at the end of the hand that his explanation was correct and can prove it because he has a copy of the system file to hand. A may confirm B's explanation is correct because it suddenly rings a bell as being something he once read in the system file.

It seems generally accepted by the bridge population that the opposition are just fixed and this is just a windfall which we allow those who cannot remember their systems.

The Committee commented as follows:

- Just because it is in a system file does not 'prove' that there is an agreement. It might be supporting evidence of such.
- It is up to the TD to investigate the situation as completely as possible using all available evidence.
- Extract from Law 75C. The TD is to presume mistaken explanation, rather than mistaken call, in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

It was agreed to refer the correspondence to GE (see 5.5).

5.13 Standard Penalties

FH distributed an updated draft of the proposed schedule of standard penalties. It was agreed to circulate amongst the committee and other interested parties any final changes with a view to finalising the document in time to be implemented in August and be included in the next edition of the White Book.

There was a long discussion about whether what the penalties should be for being rude, abusive or swearing at partner. MP in particular felt strongly that the penalties should be the same whoever bad behaviour was aimed at. The majority view of the committee was that a player could choose

his partner and that arguments between partners away from the table would generally not be considered subject to penalty. The TD would still impose BB@B penalties if other players were disturbed or inconvenienced.

Action FH

6. Applications for new permitted methods

None this time.

7. Reports from Tournament Directors

General Comments:

- A form had been received from a County Association. Whilst it is not a *requirement* for such forms to be forwarded to the L&E Secretary, counties and also clubs were encouraged to do so. It was noted that had this been done there might have been more evidence to conduct an investigation in agenda item 2.3.4.
- The Committee noted one form where the AC Chairman had simply written ‘as stated by the director’ in the section *Reasons for Appeals Committee Decision*. AC Chairmen were reminded to complete the sections as fully as possible and, in particular, to give reasons for their decisions.
- TDs are reminded to ensure that players are aware of the Appeals Advisor service where it is published in congress programmes as being available. Even in events (e.g. Tollemache Qualifier) where it is not specifically provided there are usually players available who will perform the role.

11.076 Tollemache Qualifier

<p>♠ J94 ♥ AQJ ♦ QJ873 ♣ Q4 ♠ KQ1087 ♠ 652 ♥ 873 ♥ 10654 ♦ 105 ♦ A ♣ 532 ♣ A10986 ♠ A3 ♥ K92 ♦ K9642 ♣ KJ7</p>	<p>Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>West</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>North</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>East</i></th> <th style="text-align: left;"><i>South</i></th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♦</td> <td>Dbl(1)</td> <td>Rdbl</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>4♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>5♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">All Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">(1) Take out, not alerted</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="4">Result 5♦ - 1 by N = -50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>		1♦	Dbl(1)	Rdbl	2♠	Pass	Pass	3♠	Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦	All Pass				(1) Take out, not alerted				Result 5♦ - 1 by N = -50			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>																										
	1♦	Dbl(1)	Rdbl																										
2♠	Pass	Pass	3♠																										
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦																										
All Pass																													
(1) Take out, not alerted																													
Result 5♦ - 1 by N = -50																													

The Committee agreed that very low point take-out doubles (very low was defined as fewer than 9 HCP if by an unpassed hand) by agreement should be alerted because of their unusual nature(OB5E2) and noted prominently on the convention card.

The Secretary to write to East/West to remind them of the fact.

Action: JP

11.079 London Year End Swiss Pairs

<p>♠ KQ1042 ♥ 3 ♦ J942 ♣ 1096</p> <p>♠ A987 ♠ J63 ♥ J74 ♥ 10652 ♦ 653 ♦ AQ8 ♣ 753 ♣ Q82</p> <p>♠ 5 ♥ AKQ98 ♦ K107 ♣ AKJ4</p>	<p>Board 30 : Dealer East : Love all</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">West</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">North</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">East</th> <th style="text-align: left; width: 25%;">South</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Pass</td> <td>1♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1♠</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>All Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Result 3NT – 1 by N = -50</p>	West	North	East	South			Pass	1♥	1♠	Pass	Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT	All Pass	
West	North	East	South														
		Pass	1♥														
1♠	Pass	Pass	3♣														
Pass	3NT	All Pass															

The TD said he was called at the start of the next board by N who said he felt that due to the action by West he was lured into playing the hand incorrectly and went off. He asked the TD to review West's overcall on Axxx and 5 HCPs. He also queried East's failure to raise. The EW method is to overcall usually on 5-card suits but can also do it on 4-card suits, which was not on the convention card. East said he took no action because he had a flat hand and was going nowhere.

Knowing that EW were a regular partnership the TD considered classifying a psyche but decided against it, preferring to record the hand only.

L&E Comment: EW should be reminded that if they make overcalls on 4-card suits by agreement this and the potential for very slender values should be prominently displayed on the convention card.

Action: JP

11.082 Year End Swiss teams

<p>♠ 10 ♥ 1042 ♦ KJ942 ♣ KJ93</p> <p>♠ Q ♠ AKJ962 ♥ AQ9853 ♥ J7 ♦ A875 ♦ 3 ♣ 102 ♣ AQ54</p> <p>♠ 87543 ♥ K6 ♦ Q106 ♣ 876</p>	<p>Board 11 : Dealer South : Love all</p> <p>Bidding not recorded. Contract 6♠ by E. Contested claim.</p> <p>TD ruling: 6♠ + 1 AC ruling: 6♠ - 1</p>
--	---

The TD was called after all the boards had been completed and the cards returned to the board. Declarer had claimed with a trump outstanding but still with a master trump. The TD was told that no claim statement had been made but that this had been the norm for the match. Initially North had agreed the last 5 tricks to declarer but after returning the cards to the board and some discussion South disagreed. When asked East said she had not forgotten a trump but did not know why she claimed then and not when ♠ 10 fell, save that she didn't tend to claim early. Both sides had been claiming without statements. When asked declarer said she knew she could draw trumps and had good hearts on the table with ♦ A as an entry.

The TD ruled that because of the way in which claims had been made in the rest of the match and that he was called late he thought East had not had the opportunity to state a claim or clarification statement and on balance he believed she had not forgotten. So he allowed the claim.

The Appeal Committee ruled under Law 70C. The fact that four out of the five trumps had been drawn followed by a claim without stating the fifth trump would be drawn gives sufficient doubt that declarer was aware of the outstanding trump. If declarer believes that all trumps had been drawn a diamond to the ace followed by a top heart is a normal play resulting in the contract going one down.

L&E Comment: Whilst the correct result is to rule 6♠ - 1 this should have been given under Law 69 A/B rather than Law 70C as the round had in fact ended.

8 ***Date of next meeting***

Wednesday May 16th 2012 at 1pm.

Venue is Baker Tilly offices, 2 Bloomsbury Street (near to Tottenham Court Road tube station).

The meeting closed at 5.20pm.

Claims and Concessions

Appendix A

The L&E are considering re-writing some of the advice in the White Book regarding Claims and Concessions. The law has not changed but the material could be better organised and the committee is keen to give some more detailed advice to assist.

Gordon has produced a Claim Diagram to go with appeal forms (see Appendix C) to indicate the line of play and position reached at the time of the claim. This should assist both appeal committees and the L&E follow what has gone on at the table.

Here is an example:



Contract: 6NT by West

Lead: ♠5

West claimed 6 diamonds, 5 spades and 2 clubs.

The TD rules that the claim was deficient and awarded 6NT-3.

The committee confirmed that a statement of intended tricks did **NOT** necessarily mean that this was the line of play to be adopted. Announcing that he had 6 diamonds, 5 spades and 2 clubs is a statement of the total number of tricks being claimed rather than the order of them.

Dear Mr Fisher

Appendix B

Apologies for taking rather too long to follow up on my commitment to get back to you. I'm going to give you quite a lot of philosophy, but bear with me.

One of the hardest things about starting to play duplicate bridge is when you move away from the small group of people you learned with, and play against a wider range of people. If you've taken a course of lessons, then you will have been playing mainly with people who have taken the same course, so you will know and generally understand what their bidding means. It can be a bit of a shock when you first play against a strong club system, or Standard American, or Nottingham Club, or any of the various home grown systems people have invented. Of course, that's also part of the attraction and enjoyment of the game for many people, that they can make up their own bidding system and try it out, and certainly for me the fact that no-one can prove that any one system is 'right' is what keeps the game interesting.

That leads us to what is actually a fundamentally insoluble problem: designing an alert system. The objective when playing bridge is not to have "hidden" agreements i.e. to make sure your opponents know as much about your system as you do. You could just have a rule that you have to explain every agreement you have about every bid you make, but that would slow the game up enormously if you had to do it all the time (there's a computer programme called 'Full Disclosure' that tries to do this when you play online). It would also give all sorts of ethical problems to your partner, as he hears everything you think you have agreed to play, not just each of your bids. Instead we have a compromise, where if your opponents might be surprised at the meaning of a bid, it's alerted. If it's not alerted, your opponents are supposed to know what it means without needing to ask any questions.

We could just have a one-line regulation for alerts, saying only "Alert if your opponents won't understand it without an explanation". This is pretty much an ideal rule, except for the very important point that if you don't know your opponents, you don't know what they will understand. This is a horrible hurdle when you start to play duplicate against strangers, because you really have no idea what they will understand and so have no idea what to alert – and they have the same problem. The more experienced you become – particularly if you play abroad, or online - the more you understand how much of what you play is 'normal' or 'expected' and how much is surprising. Reading about bridge on the internet is a massive eye-opener, because you see questions from various corners of the world saying 'what is the standard meaning for this bid' and getting totally different answers depending on where people play.

That one-line alert regulation won't help newcomers to duplicate get things right, because they don't yet know what their opponents might expect their bids to mean. When you play in a world championship, the WBF regulation is very short indeed, because these players are expected to have a good idea what is unexpected and what isn't. However, when we write regulations for club play, we need to give guidance to help people know what might be considered unusual and what isn't. As a consequence, alerting regulations worldwide vary, depending on what has become the most common meaning for a bid in that country: in France, you have to alert a weak 1NT opening because it's so unusual, while in the USA you alert an Acol two because nobody plays them there. These regulations have nothing to do with the "best" or "correct" meaning for a bid; they partly derive from the idea of whether a bid is 'natural' or not (the basic idea is that natural bids aren't alerted), but mainly derive from the objective of not surprising your opponents. When questions arise, it is initially the TD's role, and eventually it's our job as the L&E, to decide if something should be alerted or not.

To take the sequence that started this whole correspondence, as you point out if you respond 1NT to 1♠ it doesn't say anything about your hand other than you have enough to respond, not enough to respond at the 2-level, and you don't have spade support. This isn't really 'natural', in that you might be totally unbalanced and not really 'want' to play in 1NT, but it's not alerted because nobody will be surprised to find you play it that way. By contrast, if you respond 1NT to 1♣, it's actually a

completely different meaning: it is much more precise, because it usually promises a balanced hand, frequently has 4-card club support and certainly denies a 4-card major. If partner opens 1♣, the next hand overcalls 1♠, and you bid 1NT then the expected meaning for most experienced players is again quite precise: it shows about 6-9 HCP, an approximately balanced hand, and a spade stop. If you don't have that hand, you can pass (or make a negative double if you have learnt about them), and partner will get another go. It's a different auction to the one where RHO passed over partner's opening, because you know you are not ending the auction. If you want to agree to play that 1♣ – (1♠) – 1NT is still a 'bucket' bid, just showing high cards and nothing about a spade stop, then of course you can: but everyone on the L&E agrees that this is unexpected and should be alerted.

I understand and sympathise that if you are fairly new to bridge you may not yet have learnt about how to deal with overcalls, so you haven't yet worked through why 1NT might have a different meaning after intervention, and hence you wouldn't understand or see the need to alert it. The problem comes when you play against someone who has had different lessons and they hear the auction start 1♣ on their right, 1♠ from them, 1NT not alerted on their left. They end up defending and are surprised and upset when they discover that the 1NT bid wasn't at all what they expected. Their reaction might equally be to say that they don't want to join the club because they don't understand other people's bidding. It's simply not possible to make everyone happy without having to have some, possibly somewhat arbitrary, alerting rules. In order to allow bridge to be played consistently across the country without too many surprises we have to make a decision about what is 'standard' or 'natural' and what isn't, we cannot just ignore it because otherwise someone will eventually get upset.

It should be very unusual for anyone playing against a new duplicate player to ask for an adjustment because of the lack of an alert, but it's a good time to learn about the alerting rules. The TD should be able to say there's nothing wrong with the way you choose to play 1NT, but your opponents aren't expecting it, so you have to warn them. You couldn't have known about that beforehand, but it's a good thing to remember for the future. There's no reason that should discourage anyone from playing again when it's explained simply as a way to allow strangers to play happily against each other. Unfortunately I can't personally control the small minority of bridge players who can be unpleasant or obnoxious to anyone they play against, but to be honest they will find something to be rude about however we write the rules.

In one of your emails you mention how it can be unpleasant or deterring for the TD to 'called on' a player. There is no way that the TD is ever called **on** any other player. The TD is there to help, advise and educate and most TDs are especially careful with new players. Every EBU club that I have played at welcomes and positively encourages new duplicate players, frequently by having 'supervised play' or 'novice duplicate' or similar sessions, to get people used to the way duplicate works. There's a lot more than just the alerting rules to get used to – I remember the biggest problem when I first started playing at the club was just how fast I was expected to play. I played at a club's first ever matchpoint pairs evening last week (they used to play only rubber), and the biggest difficulty everyone had was with the idea of having a pair number and following directions on a movement card. Alerts, or lack thereof, were not the problem.

I hope this helps you understand why we have taken the view we have.

Appendix C – new claim diagram form

