



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EBU LAWS & ETHICS COMMITTEE HELD
AT TGRS BRIDGE CLUB, 19C CRAVEN RD, LONDON W2 3BP
ON THURSDAY 6TH OCTOBER 2022**

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| Present: | David Burn (DBu) Chairman & Elected Member |
| | Steve Green (SG) Vice Chairman & Elected Member David Bakhshi (DBa) Elected Member Robin Barker (RB) Deputy Chief TD <i>Peter Hasenson (PH) Elected Member</i> Peter Grice (PG) Elected Member Ian Payn (IP) EBU Chairman Gordon Rainsford (GR) EBU Chief Executive <i>Gayle Webb (GW) Appointed Member</i> |
| | Heather Sanderson (HS) Secretary |

1. Procedural Matters

- 1.1 Apologies for Absence: William Clennell and Tim Rees
- 1.2 Attendance via Zoom: Gayle Webb and Peter Hasenson

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 The minutes of the meeting of 19th May 2022 were approved and signed with one minor correction.

2.2 DBu announced that he intended to stand down as Chairman from the AGM. It was noted that committee officers' posts formally stop at the AGM.

2.3 Updating Terms of reference for the L&EC was discussed. Typos and out of date references will be removed.

3. Appeals to the National Authority

None

4. Disciplinary Matters

4.1 – 4.4 The status of cases that were discussed involved unfair play online, violations of the [Best Behaviour at Bridge](#) policy and other misconduct falling below the accepted standards required of player members.

It was noted that in a number of cases, defendants had made submissions regarding mitigation re sanction which appropriately resulted in lesser sentences. It was further noted that the new rules

mandated a two-thirds reduction in cases where members admitted to the offences at the letter for comments stage, before receiving a formal charge letter.

There was a discussion about behaviour type cases. It was noted that TDs may fine players during a competition for rudeness, but it requires aggrieved players calling the TD. Players may not wish to do this at the time. Moreover, not every event has a TD present. TD fines do not preclude the L&EC from pursuing disciplinary action. It was noted that whilst the L&EC deal with online cheating in clubs that behavioural issues occurring in club events should be dealt with by the club. It was also noted that sentencing guidelines for bad behaviour recommend lesser sentences when compared to cheating. Because complaints during the pandemic were mainly concerned with online cheating, the prosecution panel may lack people with experience dealing with bad behaviour cases.

There was a discussion about updating complainants about disciplinary cases. It was noted that in general the L&EC will not be back in touch due to issues of confidentiality.

5. Disciplinary Procedures

5.1 Nicolas Hammond Reports

Reports from Nicolas Hammond have proven extremely valuable for disciplinary cases involving online cheating. It was noted that although the reports were very convincing and, in some cases, led to confessions, prosecutions nevertheless required a great deal of work. The L&EC will consider calling on Mr Hammond on a case by case basis in future. It was noted that Jon Cooke also provided clear analysis on opening leads. It was agreed that statistical reports were extremely useful for online cheating cases.

5.2 Monitoring players

The L&EC has a spreadsheet of players that are periodically monitored to check if sanctioned players are playing in EBU and/or EBU affiliated games. There are also checks made on players who have been warned for either bad behaviour or suspicious play.

5.3 EGM Feedback

It was agreed that the following changes suggested at the EGM would be made to the disciplinary rules:

1. Rule 8.1(iii) - change “committee member of any bridge related organisation” to “officer of any bridge related committee”. This is aimed at not calling someone who is co-opted onto a committee to, for example, run a raffle, “experienced”. Better to just name the officers of the committee as “experienced”.
2. Rule 8 – Inexperienced Players Procedure will only apply to cases where the alleged offence is cheating (unfair and/or dishonest play)

SG will email the amendments for the Shareholders to vote on at the AGM in November.

5.4 Updating Guidance

Geoff Smith is the chair of the Disciplinary Panel and thus in charge of updating the Disciplinary Panel Manual. The current manual on the website is out of date due to the changes in the new rules and decisions made by the L&EC. SG will write to Geoff Smith requesting that the guidance for the disciplinary panel be updated.

6. Technical Matters

6.1 Blue Book

RB reported that Frances Hinden provided helpful, detailed feedback on changes. Typographical errors were fixed without consulting the L&EC. However, substantive changes required committee approval. The email address bluebook@ebu.co.uk was set up for questions and comments relating to the Blue Book. SG reported useful feedback was received via email. It was decided that a

subcommittee would examine the substantive suggestions and report back. It was noted that it was not necessary to wait a year to adopt the changes.

SG stated that a number of people who previously played Two Level opening bids as Natural 4+ cards were disappointed by the changes. Whilst that was unlikely to change, SG said that a three suited option ought to be added to the natural section.

GR commented on the point-count limits for opening third in hand. He had heard that the EBL and WBF may be considering the minimum point count requirement, which would provide us with an opportunity to consider our own regulations in this regard.

SG questioned whether the L&EC should increase the number of strong options to two and limit the number of weak options to two. DBu noted that, at the moment, players are allowed any number of strong options and only one weak option when playing a mixture of weak/strong options. DBa noted that players will want to prepare defenses depending on the frequencies of strong options vs weak options. RB stated that a definition of *option* is required. The aforementioned subgroup will review and report with the aim to make changes sooner.

RB asked if you make an alertable call online, is it sufficient to simply alert without writing anything? Discussion re alerting and announcing on BBO and RealBridge ensued. The L&EC will aim to clarify online procedures.

6.2 Alerting Doubles

A post from the EBU TD forum was discussed. The member's point was that even people who know what the regulations are fail to alert doubles in certain cases just because they feel that it should be entirely obvious. The examples given in the post were doubles at the Three Level. Another common example is a penalty double following a redouble. The regulation says that you should alert even if it leads to a counterintuitive outcome. However, it is unlikely that we would consider someone to be damaged by the failure to alert. It was noted that the EBU regulations are based on simple rules and principles even if they lead to sometimes anomalous outcomes. At the Three Level many pairs might not have agreements. However, the rules are that anything that might have an alertable meaning, should be alerted. SG suggested:

1. If the first call by your side is a double then it is only alertable if it is not takeout of a natural suit, penalty of a NT or values of a non natural bid.
2. Specific meaning doubles are alertable (i.e. Game Try, Support, Double showing 4 or 5 spades)

It was agreed that the subcommittee would consider changing the alerting double rules.

7. Applications for new permitted methods

None at this time

8. Reports from Tournament Directors

8.1 Knottenbelt v Li (2nd Div PL)

- It is not allowed to use signalling as an excuse for breaking tempo in situations where it is misleading for declarer
- Rulings should consider the time taken before a player presents a different line of play that they say they would have made in the absence of a misleading break in tempo. However, we do try to protect someone whose thinking has been derailed by the break in tempo.
- “I am not thinking about this trick,” should not be said. It does not erase a break in tempo and moreover UI is passed to partner.
- At trick one, if declarer plays quickly from dummy, then the third hand opponent may pause to consider the whole hand. If declarer takes time before playing a card from dummy, then pausing further may still convey UI. It is fine to hold up play at the end of trick one to consider the hand.

8.2 Plumley in EBU BBO tournament

- In a two card ending, the opponent dithered 23 seconds and declarer finessed and lost to the Jack. It was decided that the L&EC should establish a precedent. Dbu suggested that if a player thinks, declarer is allowed to conclude that it is not a singleton. If we only adjust when there is an intent to deceive, then TDs will have to try to ascribe intent. It was agreed to establish a precedent going forward that if a player is thinking then, the opponent can assume that there was something to think about. It should be added to the White Book.

8.3 Castner v Dyson (Spring Foursomes)

- It was noted that currently the rules require players to alert in situations where a bid may potentially be alertable even when they have no agreement.
- Traditionally, the principle is that it is better to create unauthorised information for partner rather than misinformation for opponents because partner can deal with UI. Whereas the opponents cannot deal with misinformation if they do not know it.
- Rule 75 D 3 - *When there is an infraction (as per B1 or D2) and sufficient evidence exists as to the agreed meaning of the call, the Director awards an adjusted score based upon the likely outcome had the opponents received the correct explanation in a timely manner. If the Director determines that the call has no agreed meaning, he awards an adjusted score based upon the likely outcome had the opponents been so informed.*
- It was decided that the issue of alerting bids that may be alertable would be discussed at a future meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

It was decided that a meeting on Zoom with a very short agenda to elect the officers and perhaps discuss further changes to the Blue Book would be scheduled for early December.

Heather Sanderson
Secretary to the Laws & Ethics Committee
October 2022