



EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

4th EBL Tournament Directors Seminar
16th to 18th February 2017
Prague – Czech Republic

Law 86B

by Maurizio Di Sacco

Here it is:

B. Result Obtained at Other Table

1. Single Result Obtained

In team play when the Director awards an adjusted score and the result at the other table between the same contestants is clearly favourable to one side, the Director shall award an assigned adjusted score [see Law 12C1(c), but for multiple adjusted scores see B2 following].

2. Multiple Results Obtained at One or More Tables¹

In team play when two or more non-comparable results have been obtained between the same contestants or when these Laws otherwise require the Director to award more than one adjusted score:

- (a) If no contestant was at fault, the Director shall cancel the board(s) and award one or more artificial adjusted scores [see Law 12C2] or, if time permits, play one or more substitute boards (but see A above).*
- (b) If only one contestant was at fault, the Director shall award to the non-offending side, for each board in question, either an artificial adjusted score of average plus [see Law 12C2(b)] or an assigned adjusted score, whichever is more favourable. The offending side shall receive the complement of the score awarded to their opponents.*
- (c) If both contestants were at fault, the Director shall cancel the board(s) and award one or more artificial adjusted scores [see Law 12C2].*

The Regulating Authority may provide differently for circumstances where boards have been played at only one table between the same or multiple contestants. The score awarded for each such board may be varied by regulation from that prescribed in B2, however in the absence of a relevant regulation, the Director proceeds as above.

¹ including results from a fouled board

To understand the principles which led to the Law as it is written now - it was Law 86D before - we have to go back to 2003, when a real life case was brought to the attention of the WBF Laws Committee. The case involved my team, and I brought it as a player (I was not a member at that time).

This is what had happened in the Italian Premier League:

At my table, on the hand, the auction had reached the five level, I bid 5♥ and LHO (my screenmate) was pondering whether to save in 6♦ or pass (we were vulnerable, they were not). We could not bid on: we had asked for aces, and it was known we were missing two key cards, thus only three results were realistically possible: 5♥ making, 5♥ -1, 5♦ x -2.

At that exact moment, someone screamed from a nearby table: "If you underlead ♦AK they don't make 5♥".

There's no doubt that the board became unplayable at that point, so the TD had to cancel it. Correct? (Yes. But as you suspect, there was a better answer.)

Unfortunately, Law 16C of the time, called for "an Artificial Adjusted score", something that can be totally wrong in a Teams event once the board has been played at the other table. And there are cases where even in a Pairs event this can be extremely wrong, as I'll prove to you later.

How so? Well, let's consider what happened at the other table first, then we'll look at what had happened at the other eight tables of the Premier League, and at all the other tables where this board was played (in total, 9 Premier League, 30 First League, and 90 Second League).

Other table: the opponents holding our cards had bid 6♥, my teammates had doubled, underled the ♦AK, and collected 500.

Premier League: at 2 tables NS played 5♥ making (no underlead); 7 tables EW sacrificed in 6♦x. Actually the hand is straightforward: big double fits and highly competitive bidding.

All around: the result achieved by teammates +12 IMP on Butler.

So, the best the opponents could have achieved was -9 (5♥ -1 from passing and then underleading ♦AK), or -7 (unlikely possibility of 5♥x -1), but realistically, -13 or -15 likely. Thus, even an Artificial Adjusted Score would have been extremely unfair to both sides, to say the least (ridiculous fits better).

Even back then there was a solution, which I proposed (Max Bavin later confirmed this to be his habit, too): the TD allows play to continue, then uses the TD error law (belatedly applying the Law which would have stopped the auction) to permit an adjusted score. Clever, but unsatisfactory, as very few TDs followed that path.

In Menton, when I was directing, I offered the problem to Max and Ton, and they promised to work on Law 16C (canceling the hated "artificial") and look for solutions elsewhere. This is where Law 86B originated (another principle was also applied there: we'll go through that in a minute). And you're ready now to understand why the WBF Laws Committee issued a comment on Law 86D in

Beijing 2008, specifying that this Law was not meant to be applied only to the cases where there was an offending side, but also to cases where there was none, or both sides were at fault.

The point is: there are scores which once achieved, cannot simply be cancelled, because to do so would be unfair to one side or both, and it doesn't matter whether there's an offender or not, as the above example clearly shows.

Just for argument's sake, here is an example which applies to Pairs, (thus, it is not Law 86B we are talking about). It too comes from an Italian Championship.

At some tables, the auction has reached the level of 6♥ (trumps) and a player is thinking about whether to raise to 7. At that moment, someone at a nearby table comments that “7♥ are laydown” (true, and with no need for a finesse or anything fancy).

Well, looking at the frequency, 6♥ was already worth 87%, while 7♥ had been bid three times only. As you can see, awarding 60% / 60% is quite a punishment for the bidders, and a huge gift for their opponents. Do you really think this is fair? That's why the word "artificial" was one of the most stupid ever put in the Laws, and has now been cancelled almost throughout.

Let's now go back to our topic, and address the other reason for Law 86D as it was written (forget, for the moment, the 2008 WBFLC interpretation): it was possible – it happened a few times around the world, and of course in Italy too – that someone, after a very bad result, voluntarily fouled a board.

Now, the word "offending side" in the 2007 Law was also extremely wrong, and not only for the reason I showed above (where there was no offender), but also because a clever player, with skill at manipulation and no shame, instead of messing up just his side's cards, could very well do the same to the opponents' (this is what happened in Sicily, for example; the guy did it several times until he was caught and expelled from the Federation).

That's why Law 86B is the way it is: no artificial scores, no worry about who is the offender, if any. The only argument that should be of interest to the TD, is whether the score obtained at the other table is worth keeping or not, or, to use the Law's wording, is "clearly favourable to one side" or not. But note: it does say "one side"; doesn't matter whether there's an offender.

The most common case where there are no offenders is the one showed above: some incautious comment overheard. However, whenever there is a vast use of duplicate boards, as in many modern championships, fouled boards can easily be the cause too, and the blame can often be placed on the organisation.

When you are operating in a large field you can get a lot of help from the frequencies, both to establish whether the result is a relevant one and / or calculate the final outcome. In doing so, you should now consider whether there's any clear offender (I mean, the fact that EW cards are 14-12 does not necessarily qualify them as offenders, as already explained, but the fact that they played the hand throughout without realising it does).

Does this procedure ring any bell? Does it really have some peculiarity?

Well, no!

What you're called upon is to award an adjusted score, trying to guess what could have happened without the infraction, something that is very normal under Law 12, and something an experienced TD should be very familiar with.

After all, the case is exactly the same as where you have a board which became de facto impossible to be scored regularly due to misinformation. Here is an easy example, just to warm up:

Board 16	NORTH		
Vul: EW	♠ A 10 9		
Dealer West	♥ K J 10 5 3		
	♦ 10 8 3		
	♣ J 6		
WEST		EAST	
♠ Q 6 4 3		♠ K J 8 5	
♥ Q 9		♥ 8	
♦ K 6		♦ A 9 4	
♣ K 10 8 4 3		♣ A Q 9 5 2	
	SOUTH		
	♠ 7 2		
	♥ A 7 6 4 2		
	♦ Q J 7 5 2		
	♣ 7		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♣	2NT* ¹
3♥* ²	DBL	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

- ¹ South to West = Reds (correct)
North to East = Majors (wrong)
- ² West to South = Take out, 4+ ♠
East to North = ♣ fit, ♥ stopper, looking for ♠ stopper

Easy, but not so very. In fact, when you try to analyse the possible variations giving East the right information from the beginning, you immediately realise it's not so easy:

To begin with, North would enquire about the meaning of 3♥, and once he does, he immediately realises that what he thought about 2NT must be wrong, so he may bid 4♥, or even jump to 5♥.

If he bids 4♥, it is clear that EW would bid 4♠, but it is also fairly possible for North to eventually save in 5♥, where the number of tricks to be achieved by the defenders is not obvious (they need to find the diamond ruff, which is not so easy, though possible). Furthermore, with such a good double fit EW might well climb to 5♠, which is defeated by the club lead (or club switch, after the ♥K lead), but not by other defensive lines (for example the not so unlikely ♦Q lead).

When you look at the frequency, you find out that almost all possibilities are represented, each one with its own weight. And mind you: you have a "simple" MI case, and a clear offending side! However, you cannot cancel the board (perhaps you wish you could), nor can you simply award an

artificial adjusted score if you're playing Teams (if it is Pairs, however, and feel like awarding 60% / 40% you have my blessing).

But it can be worse:

Board 16	NORTH		
Vul: EW	♠ A 10 9		
Dealer: West	♥ K J 10 5 3		
	♦ 10 8 3		
	♣ J 6	EAST	
WEST		♠ K J 8 5	
♠ Q 6 4 3		♥ Q	
♥ 9 8		♦ A 9 4	
♦ K 6		♣ A Q 9 5 2	
♣ K 10 8 4 3	SOUTH		
	♠ 7 2		
	♥ A 7 6 4 2		
	♦ Q J 7 5 2		
	♣ 7		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♣	1NT* ¹
2♣* ²	2♠	3♦* ³	Pass
3♠* ⁴	Pass	4♥* ⁵	All pass!

- *¹ South to West = Reds (correct)
North to East = Blacks (wrong)
- *² West = Natural
East = Diamonds
- *³ East = Support
West = Natural
- *⁴ West = Strong diamond support
East = Cue-bid
- *⁵ East = Cue-bid
West = Looking for the best spot

Now we are exactly where we would be in a Law 86B case: you have no indication whatsoever about how the bidding could have gone without the infraction, since the MI screwed up the whole auction from the very beginning. In fact, the board was "fouled".

So in many cases you must award an assigned adjusted score, whether or not you have guidance from the frequencies. What you are called upon to do is not special: use whatever means you have available – frequencies, judgment, expert's interviews – to come up with the best possible assigned adjusted score.

So to prove to you that we're not asking for any special procedure, nor for the unknown.

I'll now prove you that it is also silly to think that only cases where there's an offender should be taken into account.

Do you remember our first case?

Well, here it is again:

Board 16	NORTH		
Vul: EW	♠ A 10 9		
Dealer: West	♥ K J 10 5 3		
	♦ 10 8 3		
	♣ J 6		
WEST		EAST	
♠ Q 6 4 3		♠ K J 8 5	
♥ Q 9		♥ 8	
♦ K 6		♦ A 9 4	
♣ K 10 8 4 3		♣ A Q 9 5 2	
	SOUTH		
	♠ 7 2		
	♥ A 7 6 4 2		
	♦ Q J 7 5 2		
	♣ 7		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	1♣	2NT* ¹
3♥* ²	DBL	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

- ¹ South to West = Reds (correct)
North to East = Majors (wrong)
- ² West to South = Take out, 4+ ♠
East to North = ♣ fit, ♥ stopper, looking for ♠ stopper

As you remember, we had to award a weighted score, which would take into account several possibilities. Just to resume, let's say that in the other room the result had been 5♠ -1, and after calculation you come to the conclusion of awarding 5 IMP to the non-offenders. Your conscience is in peace: those worthy won the points.

But now you face the same problem - your field is haunted - because in the other room, the non-offenders had a misunderstanding, ending up in 4♠x played by North! After the trump lead, the result was down 8, 2000 to EW. I'm sure you would not worry: you'd do the same calculation as before, awarding 18 IMP to the offenders (more or less). Would you not? Obviously yes, the big damage had been caused by the silly result of the other room, and not by the infraction.

In a Law 86B case, the principle you're applying is exactly the same. There's no reason to see a bad result cancelled just because the board was fouled, or in any case made unplayable at the other table. What had been done, will stay, and should be subjected to proper evaluation.

And the objection that this is fine when you have a large field playing the same hands, but not so easy when you have few comparisons, or none, is also silly. I mean, not enough to justify the pretence of not wanting to apply Law 86B.

Because I already proved you that in many other cases you must award an assigned adjusted score, whether or not you have any guidance from the frequencies.

What you are called upon to do is not special: use whatever means you have available – frequencies, judgment, expert's interviews – to come up with the best possible assigned adjusted score.

Let's now clear up another important point: the meaning of "clearly favourable". Does it mean it has to be a large number of IMPs? Not at all. It means that the result achieved at the other table cannot be easily replicated or, in other words, it is not "normal".

It may well be, for example, that in an otherwise flat 3NT, with 10 easy tricks available and no more, nor less, someone revoked. Cost: 1 IMP.

Now another point? In the scenario where you have a large field, do you really have to rely on the frequencies to say how odd a result is? Not at all. Frequencies must be read and interpreted, but this should not be new to you either. Easy example: you look at a frequency where 4♥ is bid by North at all tables, and always failed after the ♦Q lead which trapped dummy's King. All right, however, at the table where the board had to be cancelled, the NS pair uses transfer responses, so the lead would have been with West, and from that side 4♥ is ironclad (you would ask information about NS's system, wouldn't you?). This means, in an MI case, as well as in a UI case, as well as in a Law 86B case, that to have frequencies does not necessarily help, and that sometimes you are on your own.