

New Ruling and Review Procedures for all ABF Events

As of 1st January 2020, any request for a review of a Director's ruling at an ABF event will now be heard by an individual specifically appointed for that purpose (i.e., 'The Reviewer'). Hearings that previously employed ad-hoc player-based committees have now been discontinued.

Most players are reasonably aware of the process that takes place when there has been a potential infraction of the laws. The Tournament Director is called and listens to why a player believes that there may have been an infraction. The Director will then ascertain what has occurred. Simple problems such as revokes, leads out of turn and similar are dealt with immediately and the game continues.

In more complex situations such as those involving unauthorised information, incorrect explanations or a failure to alert, the Director who is called to the table will collect the evidence of what occurred. The Directors then discuss the matter amongst themselves before deciding if an infraction has taken place and whether it resulted in damage to the non-offending side. Where the matter involves bridge judgment the Director will consult approximately five (5) players of an appropriate standard and typically ask, "What would you bid/do on the following hand after the bidding/play has gone...?" The information provided by the players then assists the Director to determine what the ruling should be. Sometimes this may lead to a weighted score adjustment that reflects the probabilities of a number of potential results.

Recipients of a ruling from the Director will be entitled to ask for the matter to be reviewed by a person who was not involved in the original decision (rather than by a committee). The Reviewer will check that the Director has gathered the necessary evidence of what occurred when the infraction arose. The Reviewer will then need to be satisfied that the correct law was applied and that other Directors were consulted where appropriate. In matters requiring the exercise of bridge judgment the Reviewer will clarify that suitable players have been asked appropriate questions to enable a clear judgmental view to be obtained. Finally the Reviewer will check that the ruling issued (based upon all the information available) was within the bounds of reasonableness. Note however that the mere fact that the Reviewer might have determined a slightly different adjustment will not be a good enough reason in itself for the ruling to be varied.

The time limits previously applicable for the lodging of an appeal will now apply to the seeking of a review. If a review is sought the matter will be referred to the Reviewer who will consider it in accordance with the protocol outlined below. The contestant challenging the decision will be required to write a simple statement on the Review Form as to which part of the process they believe was flawed and how that would have affected the ruling. In the event that the Reviewer determines that the process has not been followed properly or that the ruling is defective in some other material way, he will instruct the CTD to correct the previous failings. The CTD may then in turn need to re-poll players, prior to issuing a new ruling.

It is hoped that players will understand that rulings given by the Director are arrived at only after a proper consideration of all relevant issues and consultation between fellow Directors, followed by the polling of appropriate players. The opportunity to request a review has been instituted in order to provide a safeguard and thus avoid any failure of process.

It should also be noted that in cases where a request for a review is deemed to be without merit, the Reviewer has the power to impose a penalty, which will be quantified in either MPs, IMPs or VPs as appropriate to the stage of event being played. Contestants are therefore encouraged to first approach one of the duly appointed 'Review Consultants' prior to the lodging of an official request.

Summary:

TDs are required to adhere to the following procedures prior to making a ruling:

1. Correctly ascertain the facts when at the table, including the bidding, the play, questions asked and explanations received.
2. Determine whether there has been an infraction of Law or Regulation, and whether the non-offending side has been damaged.
3. Determine whether the damage is directly related to the infraction.
4. Formulate question(s) for consultation with uninvolved players if items (2) or (3) require bridge judgement.
5. In judgement situations they must poll players of a standard similar to that of the participants, who (preferably) have not played the hand in question.
6. The final ruling should be consistent with the established facts, the Laws and the information obtained via the consultation process.

It should also be noted that each ruling is the product of a consensus and never just the opinion of a single individual.

The review process requires the Reviewer to:

1. Ensure that the TDs have followed the entire process correctly prior to making the ruling.
2. Ensure that the questions posed to the pollees were proper and complete.
3. Ensure that players of the relevant standard have been consulted.
4. Ensure that the final ruling is consistent with the facts and opinions expressed by the pollees.

When the Reviewer determines that the ruling is in some way defective, it is returned to the CTD so that the deficiencies in the process may be corrected and a new ruling issued.