

14 August 2024

A recent complaint to the New Zealand Bridge Conduct, Discipline and Disputes Committee

The Conduct, Discipline and Disputes Committee recently dealt with a complaint of discourteous conduct contrary to Law 74 of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge. The complaint has been resolved in a way acceptable to the parties – by sincere apologies. Because the matter has been settled it is not necessary to identify them or give information that could identify them. But the committee considers that it may be useful for other players to know how the committee applies Law 74 and accordingly it has issued this statement.

Law 74 of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge 2017 says:

A. Proper Attitude

1. A player should maintain a courteous attitude at all times.
2. A player should carefully avoid any remark or extraneous action that might cause annoyance or embarrassment to another player or might interfere with the enjoyment of the game.

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That is reinforced by the Code of Conduct of the New Zealand Bridge Manual:

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to foster a high standard of both social and ethical behaviour at Tournaments, in addition to and without limiting the requirements of conduct and etiquette as per Law 74. These standards are relevant to Contestants, spectators and officials.

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Best Behaviour and Expectations at the Bridge Table

Keep in mind that, although some will say "it is only a game", to others it is more than that. Either way, playing Tournament bridge should always be enjoyable, and *courteous behaviour is an exceptionally important part of that enjoyment.*

(Emphasis added)



- Greet others in a friendly manner prior to the start of play of each round.
- Be a good "host" or "guest" at the table.
- Make the necessary effort to make bridge enjoyable for yourself, your partner and your opponents.

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- Avoid the use of language that others may find offensive or even socially unacceptable.

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- Enjoy the company as well as the game.
- Try not to do anything that might annoy anyone or stop whatever it is if anyone suggests that you are annoying them.

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Unacceptable Behaviour at the Bridge Table

- Arguing or raising voices with partners, opponents, Directors or officials.
- Being rude, sarcastic, belittling, insinuating, intimidating, profane, threatening or violent.

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- Negative and/or sarcastic comments concerning opponents' or partner's play or bidding.

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- Conduct that is less than polite.

The complaint to the committee arose out of a match in a recent open teams tournament. The complainant and their partner used a distinctive bidding system, albeit one allowed under the regulations for the tournament. Both sides are very experienced players.

During the match one of the opposition complained after one game about the bidding, saying words to the effect that its purpose was to cause opponents to have misunderstandings. The other opponent commented that it was unbelievably rude



to play the system. During the match further comments followed that it was improper to use that bidding system. At the end of the match the other opponent addressed the complainant and their partner. While acknowledging that the complainant and their partner were within the rules, it was unfair and rude to play the system. “Unbelievably rude” was repeated. They finished by telling the complainant, “So now p... off”.

The committee found that both players breached Law 74.

The first opponent’s suggestion that the purpose of the bidding system was to create misunderstandings implies that there was something underhand in the system. Added to that is that both opponents claimed that it was rude and unfair to use an unusual bidding system in the tournament. Allegations that a pair is not playing fairly, even if within the rules, are offensive, as they imply that they are less than sporting. As such they are discourteous, when, as here, there was no basis to allege rudeness and unfairness. The comments were calculated to cause annoyance or embarrassment to the other pair and to interfere with their enjoyment of the game.

The other opponent’s statement, “So now p... off.” is obviously rude, coming as it did after criticising the other pair. It was not a light-hearted jest. What was said before was also offensive, in claiming that it was unbelievably rude, improper and unfair to play a system allowed under the rules. These comments were not justified and had the apparent aim of deterring the other pair from using their system. If the other opponent wanted to comment on their system, there were other ways to do so, without implying unsporting behaviour. Alleging rudeness, impropriety and unfairness without a sound basis is offensive and is discourteous contrary to Law 74. It is likewise calculated to cause annoyance and interfere with enjoyment of the game.

