LAW 50 - DISPOSITION OF PENALTY CARD

A card prematurely exposed (but not led, see Law 57) by a defender is a penalty card unless the Director designates otherwise (see Law 49 and Law 72C may apply).

A. Penalty Card Remains Exposed

A penalty card must be left face up on the table immediately before the player to whom it belongs, until a rectification has been selected.

B. Major or Minor Penalty Card

A single card below the rank of an honour exposed unintentionally (as in playing two cards to a trick, or in dropping a card accidentally) becomes a minor penalty card. Any card of honour rank, or any card exposed through deliberate play (for example in leading out of turn, or in revoking and then correcting), becomes a major penalty card; when one defender has two or more penalty cards, all such cards become major penalty cards.

C. Disposition of Minor Penalty Card

When a defender has a minor penalty card, he may not play any other card of the same suit below the rank of an honour until he has first played the penalty card, but he is entitled to play an honour card instead. Offender's partner is not subject to lead restriction, but see E following.

D. Disposition of Major Penalty Card

When a defender has a major penalty card, both the offender and his partner may be subject to restriction, the offender whenever he is to play, the partner whenever he is to lead.

1. (a) Except as provided in (b) below, a major penalty card must be played at the first legal opportunity, whether in leading, following suit, discarding or trumping. If a defender has two or more penalty cards that can legally be played, declarer designates which is to be played.

(b) The obligation to follow suit, or to comply with a lead or play restriction, takes precedence over the obligation to play a major penalty card, but the penalty card must still be left face up on the table and played at the next legal opportunity.

2. When a defender has the lead while his partner has a major penalty card, he may not lead until declarer has stated which of the options below is selected (if the defender leads prematurely, he is subject to rectification under Law 49). Declarer may choose:

(a) to require[13] the defender to lead the suit of the penalty card, or to prohibit[13] him from leading that suit for as long as he retains the lead (for two or more penalty cards, see Law 51); if declarer exercises either of these options, the card is no longer a penalty card and is picked up.

(b) not to require or prohibit a lead, in which case the defender may lead any card and the penalty card remains on the table as a penalty card[14]. If this option is selected Law 50D continues to apply for as long as the penalty card remains.

E. Information from a Penalty Card

1. Information derived from a penalty card and the requirements for playing that penalty card are authorized for all players for as long as the penalty card remains on the table.

2. Information derived from a penalty card that has been returned to hand [as per Law 50D2(a)] is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the penalty card (see Law 16C), but authorized for declarer.

3. Once a penalty card has been played, information derived from the circumstances under which it was created is unauthorized for the partner of the player who had the card. (For a penalty card which has not yet been played, see E1 above.)

4. If following the application of E1 the Director judges at the end of play that without the assistance gained through the exposed card the outcome of the board could well have been different, and in consequence the non-offending side is damaged (see Law 12B1), he shall award an adjusted score. In his adjustment he should seek to recover as nearly as possible the probable outcome of the board without the effect of the penalty card(s).

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[13] **If the player is unable to lead as required see Law 59.**
[14] **If the partner of the defender with the penalty card retains the lead, and the penalty card has not yet been played, then all the requirements and options of Law 50D2 apply again at the following trick.**