

- **Law 25 – Changes of Call**

Players are not allowed to change an intended call. If a player has already done so, then Law 25B1 applies. A TD should not give a player the opportunity to change an intended call.

This leaves us to deal with unintended calls, a regular phenomenon when playing with bidding boxes, where a wrong card is pulled out of the box and put on the table. As long as partner has not made a call after such an irregularity the mistaken bidding card can be put back and replaced by the intended call. Such action in itself does not create unauthorized information since the wrong card doesn't carry bidding information. It is deemed never to have happened. However, if LHO has already called over the unintended call (mechanical error) he may retract that call without penalty. The information related to the withdrawn call is unauthorized for his opponents and authorized for his partner.

Normally if no player bids the auction ends after four passes. If however either the third or fourth pass was unintended, then it can be corrected until all four hands are put back into the board (Law 17D2).

It is sometimes not easy to determine whether a call is unintended. The TD should only decide it was unintended if he is convinced that the player never, not even for a split second, wanted to make that call. The mistake has to be entirely one of fingers, not brain! An example of a call that certainly is a big mistake but nevertheless was intended is the following:

Example 19:

North opens 1♥, Pass by East and South bids 4♣, a splinter showing slam interest in hearts.

West passes and North thinks for a while, before coming to the conclusion that he is not going to make a move towards slam. But he forgets that no one has bid 4♥ yet and passes, immediately discovering his mistake and calling the TD.

North will tell the TD that he never intended to pass, but the TD should not accept this statement. For a split second North thought that his pass was closing the auction in 4♥. He never intended to play in 4♣, but that is not the relevant consideration. A theme in the 2017 Laws is improvement in wording. Law 25A2, and its play-period cousin Law 45C4(b), now use phrases such as “loss of concentration” to help Directors explain why they have or have not allowed a player to change a call.

In previous editions of the laws another condition was that there could not be a pause for thought. That condition was removed because it was difficult to interpret. The question whether the call was unintended is not related to the duration of a pause. It is possible that a player might pull a bidding card out of the bidding box without even having decided what call to make. If such a call would be a surprise to the player himself, then in the 2017 laws he is now allowed to change that call.

Returning to the subject of unintended vs. intended; the TD, not normally being a mind reader, is not always able to make that distinction. Still it is part of his job to judge and interpret the facts and circumstances and to decide what has happened. If a partnership has specific calls to artificially describe their holdings and use fre-

quent asking bids or relays, mistakes in the bidding are easily made and a player should not escape by claiming that he made an unintended call. But if the TD really cannot find any reason to explain why a player could have decided to make the disputed call it is not unreasonable to decide that it was unintended. Such things happen.

That brings up the question about what exactly the procedure should be when deciding whether to allow a Law 25A change. Compare the discussions of how to avoid giving information to the table in rulings with UI and MI; we try not to give away a player's hand with our comments. It is different with Law 25; if the call was unintended it never carried any meaningful information. If it was intended, the TD won't allow a change. So applying Law 25 the TD will make his judgement immediately, applying the provision for intended or unintended.

The previous footnote that an unintended call may be changed irrespective of the way the player became aware of it has now been incorporated into the body of the laws (as Law 25A3).

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