

WBF LC Commentary

Law 27B – Insufficient Bid not Accepted

Law 27B1 is a little different in the 2017 code. The provision in Law 27B1(a) to allow a penalty-free correction of a natural call to the cheapest sufficient call in the same denomination is broadened. Now a penalty-free correction is permitted to the lowest sufficient bid which specifies the same denomination or denominations. Law 27B1(b) allows a penalty-free change to a comparable call.

For a call to specify a denomination, it should carry or impart information regarding the holding in that particular denomination. This can mean guaranteed length in a certain suit, or alternatively a control in a certain suit, or even shortage in a certain suit. The replacement call may be either artificial or natural. In respect to Law 27B1(a), for partner not to be barred, the replacement call needs to specify the same type of feature in that same denomination.

In the sequence 1♠ - Pass - 3♥ (splinter), 3♥ simultaneously specifies both length in spades and a shortage in hearts. Hence any non-barring replacement call would also need to guarantee length in spades and a shortage in hearts.

The intention is to allow the auction to continue normally if the insufficient bid does not carry disturbing unauthorized information. Laws 16 (UI) and Law 26 (lead restriction) do not apply to the 27B1(a) or 27B1(b) correction of an insufficient bid.

Law 27D has a similar purpose and application to the new Law 23C. If the offenders gained assistance from their insufficient bid in reaching an otherwise unobtainable contract, Law 27D tells the TD to adjust the score. Think of this as, “could what happened not have happened without the insufficient bid?” If the answer is yes, we apply Law 27D and adjust the score.

Let us look at some examples (West opening the bidding and the insufficient bid not accepted):

23. 1♣ - 1♠ - 1♥ (showing 4 or more hearts and 6+ high card points).
The TD accepts the substitution of a double which has either the same meaning, or in other partnership agreements, shows hearts plus diamonds and thus is contained in the meaning of the 1♥-bid, (which just shows hearts). He also accepts 2♥ under Law 27B1(a).
24. A take-out double normally does not show specified suits. When West opens 1♠ and North follows with 1♥, not accepted, we would not allow a change to double. We would allow a change to 2♥ with no further rectification. (If the convention card shows that such a double promises 4 hearts it is acceptable if the 1♥ opening bid - which North thought he was making – can be made with a 4-card suit, but not if it promises a 5-card suit)
25. If West opens 1NT and North bids 1♣ (meant as artificial opening showing 16+ HCP), not accepted. The replacement by a double showing the same strength (16+), is in accordance with Law 27B1(b).
26. 2NT – Pass – 2♣ (acting as if it was a 1NT opening; asking for majors, not accepted). A sufficient call asking for the majors, even when asking for 4- or 5 cards while 2♣ asked for 4 cards, is a comparable call (Law 23A3).
27. South asks for aces with 4NT followed by an overcall of 5♦ by West. North does not notice this and bids 5♣ which shows 1 or 4 key cards. If NS play the convention that pass now shows 1 Ace (or keycard) then the TD allows the auction to be continued without restriction. Both calls by South show the number of aces, but a call showing 1 Ace is more precise than a call showing 1 or 4 aces. (With 5♣ showing 0 or

3 key cards, a double now has the same effect).

Notice that a double or redouble is not automatically forbidden. This was a change made in the 2007 code.

28. 1NT - 2♠ - 2♦ (transfer to hearts, not accepted). If East now bids 3♥ the auction continues normally. This is a feature of the new Law 27B1(a).
29. 1NT - 2♠ - 2♦ (transfer to hearts, not accepted). N/S play lebensohl, which allows East to show the hearts by bidding 2NT, asking partner to bid 3♣ after which East bids 3♥. These two bids combined (2NT plus 3♥) do have a similar meaning as the insufficient 2♦ bid but the 2NT-bid in itself does not. Therefore it does not comply with the condition described in 27B1(b). We cannot allow a correction to 2NT without barring the insufficient bidder's partner.
30. 2NT - 2♠ (North thought he was overcalling a 1NT opening; it shows exactly 5 spades and an unknown 4+ minor suit). When 3♠ shows the same holding (i.e. they play the same agreement over 1NT and 2NT) the auction continues normally, but when 3♠ only shows spades, partner has to pass throughout.

31. 1NT - Pass - 2♦ - 3♣

2♥ (replying to the transfer, not noticing the 3♣ bid).

If 2♥ after the 2♦ transfer is automatic then it does not carry any information and it may be corrected by any legal call, even pass. But if 3♥ in the uncontested auction shows a maximum, while the 2♥ call denied that maximum then 3♥ would not be comparable. This is because the two calls are now mutually exclusive; i.e. 3♥ no longer qualifies under Law 23A2.

32. 1♣ - Pass - 1♥ - Pass

1♠ - 2♦ - 2♦ (meant as '4th suit' not having seen the opponent's call).

Bidding 3♦ now should allow the auction to continue normally. It has the same meaning (asking, forcing) as the 2♦ bid. It might be stronger but those hands are also included in the 2♦ call.

When a player attempts to replace the insufficient bid without the TD being called, the second call stands if it is legal, unless LHO accepts the insufficient bid. The TD then decides whether it is a comparable call. If it is not, partner has to pass throughout. Otherwise the auction continues normally. Doubles or redoubles not allowed in accordance with Law 27B1(b) are cancelled and partner is forced to pass for the rest of the auction.

Procedure after an Insufficient Bid

All of the above notwithstanding, after a player makes an insufficient bid his LHO gets the option to accept it. It might however be relevant for LHO to first discover whether the offender has a call available that would allow the auction to proceed undisturbed, hence Law 20F1 allows him to ask the offender's partner about the meaning of any potential replacement call, prior to deciding whether to accept the infraction.

The TD might also need to ask the offender what he meant to do when making the insufficient bid. The TD should do this away from the table, to avoid creating UI. If the offender wants to know whether a replacement call fulfills the conditions of Law 27B1 the TD should tell him, also away from the table.