

Law 45 – Card Played

The criteria for a card to be deemed played by a defender and by declarer are quite different.

Law 45C1 A card from a defender is deemed to be played when it is possible that his partner has seen it. The question is not whether his partner did see it, only whether it was possible that he could have seen it. This means that if both declarer and dummy have seen the face of the card, then it is almost certain to have also been visible to partner.

Law 45C2 For declarer the manner in which he exposes the card is very important. Declarer is allowed to discover that he detached the wrong card from hand and attempt to retract it. Such a card is not necessarily played, even if it has become visible to one or both of the defenders. Bringing the card to the table and retracting it in the same movement also does not make it ‘played’. The definition of a declarer’s played card is only fulfilled at the moment when the card comes to rest.

Law 45C4(b) The option to change a designated card in dummy is restricted to cases where declarer has named the card. If he has played the card by touching it or by placing it in a played position on the table, the card cannot be changed. The conditions are comparable with those in Law 25A. Declarer must not for even the shortest possible moment have considered playing the card, and the declaring side must not have played a card thereafter.

The reason for the difference in wording is that the bidding proceeds in strict rotation, while the play to every trick starts with the winner of the previous trick. It is thus possible that dummy could play two cards in a row without declarer playing a card in between.

Clearly a defender may withdraw a card he has played after the unintended designation and before attention is drawn to it. The information from such a card is unauthorized to declarer.

Law 45D1 This law tells us that it is possible that five cards may have to be withdrawn in the case where dummy plays a card that declarer did not designate to be played. That is because the play must be corrected if attention is drawn to it before both sides have played to the following trick. Declarer calls for a card from dummy, but a wrong card is played; the trick is completed and the lead to the next trick is put on the table. If declarer now notices the mistake he is allowed to play the intended card from dummy.

The TD should carefully explain to RHO that if he does not change his card, neither will declarer be allowed to change the card he previously played to the trick. LHO will however always be allowed to withdraw his original card and substitute another, irrespective of the actions of his partner and declarer. Though the laws don’t mention it explicitly, the card led to the next trick can be retracted.

Since the declaring side is considered to be offending, information arising from any card withdrawn by a defender is unauthorised to declarer (as per the reference to Law 16C).

Law 45D2 The laws are no longer silent about the situation where declarer does not notice in time that dummy failed to follow his instruction and instead played a wrong card; ‘in time’ being before both sides have played to the next trick. Now the trick stands and play continues, no card being withdrawn. When the lead was from dummy, any player who did not follow suit is now considered to have revoked, but only if they possessed a card of the same denomination as that ‘played’ by dummy. The TD, if called upon to rectify this type of irregularity, applies Law 64A when declarer is the revoking player, but 64C1 when the revoking player is a defender.

Law 45F When applying the last sentence of Law 45F the TD should not automatically decide that the defenders are damaged if the suggested card would have been played by declarer anyway, or more strictly stated: if declarer did not have a logical alternative for the play he chose