

WBF LC Commentary

Law 50D – Disposition of More than One Penalty Card

In cases where both defenders have a penalty card, lead restrictions caused by partner take precedence over the obligation to play one's own penalty card.

Example 43:

LHO on lead has the ♠J as a penalty card, while his partner has the ♠7 as a major penalty card. Declarer now prohibits a spade lead. This means that the ♠7 is put back into the hand, LHO cannot lead his penalty card and in the case where he retains the lead, he still cannot lead the ♠J

to the following trick(s).

If declarer requires a spade lead, the ♠7 goes back into the hand and LHO has to play the ♠J. Although it sounds odd, it might be to declarer's advantage to choose this option, so we still offer it. If declarer doesn't exercise his options relating to the ♠7 being a penalty card, LHO must lead the ♠J, and RHO has to play the ♠7. The ramifications of each defender having a penalty card are not obvious even to experienced players, so it is incumbent upon the Director to explain them clearly.

Law 50E – Authorised and Unauthorised Information from a Penalty Card

The knowledge that a penalty card has to be played at the first legal opportunity is AI for both sides and has a remarkable consequence. Declarer is playing 4♥. If LHO has ♠KQJ5 and RHO has the ♠A as a penalty card (from an opening lead out of turn) and declarer does not prohibit a spade lead, LHO is allowed to play the ♠5.

There is a fundamental change in the 2017 Laws: information derived from the exposure of a penalty card is AI for all players, as long as that card remains a penalty card. In this example, the assumption that the player led from Ax is authorized, even for the partner of the penalty card holder. However, once the penalty card is not on the table (Law 50E2), either from it having been played, or having been retracted upon declarer's exercise of a lead restriction, now information relating to the retracted ♠A is UI for partner.

For example, declarer could require a spade lead. The ♠A is withdrawn, and the leader has the UI that partner has it. That player would not be permitted (Law 16C) to lead a small spade; he would need to lead whichever honour (K or Q) is normal from that combination.

This change might have more of an effect for rulings regarding minor penalty cards, as they often remain faced for several tricks. During all that time, the card is not UI to partner.

TDs are reminded by Law 50E4 that they have to take away any gain the offenders might produce through a penalty card. In our example, if the defenders get four spade tricks through their infraction but without it would only score three, the TD adjusts the score.