

WBF LC Commentary

Laws 53 and 55 (Lead Out of Turn)

A small change has been made in the 2017 code regarding trick thirteen. After years of TDs making the ruling that “trick thirteen plays itself,” now it actually does. A lead out of turn at trick 13 must be retracted; ownership of trick 13 cannot change because of a lead out of turn. This provision assumes someone notices the lead from the wrong hand before the correction period expires.

In the case of declarer’s lead from the wrong hand, either defender may accept that lead and does so by making such a statement. When both defenders express an opinion and they appear to be different, the TD rules as if the player to the left of the lead out of turn has spoken for the side (Law 55A). To apply this Law correctly, the TD should offer the options to the side together (not just to the LHO of the irregular action), only applying the provision for different opinions when it is necessary.

In Laws 55B and 55C the assumption is that Law 55A was applied, but the defenders did not accept declarer’s lead out of turn.

In Law 53B the TD follows the same procedure as in Law 28B. If North leads and it was the turn of East to lead, then if East plays a card the TD has to find out whether he followed or wanted to lead. The case becomes fairly clear if North leads and West is on lead and plays a card. It’s not as if West was following (anti-clockwise!) to a trick started by North. West was herself intending to lead.

Law 53C triggers Law 57 (Premature Play by a defender) in the rare case that the defender to the right of declarer’s lead out of turn follows to it. This player would have been second to play had declarer led from the correct hand. After the irregularity, the defender is now supposed to play last to this trick. His play out of turn accepts the lead from the wrong hand, and the restrictions of Law 57 apply to his partner.

Law 53 does not apply in cases where both defenders play a card, the first out of turn and the second by the proper player. In that case the TD starts by offering the opponent the chance to accept the lead out of turn. If he does accept it, the other card becomes a major penalty card. If he does not accept it, the first played card becomes a major penalty card and the second card becomes the lead to the trick.

An example to clarify how TDs might apply Law 55C:

Example 44:

Declarer plays 4♠ with ♠KJ84 in dummy and ♠AT72 in his hand. After winning trick two in hand, he leads the ♠J from dummy. RHO does not accept this lead. He now plays the ♠2 towards the K and leads the ♠J, successfully finessing the Q. The defenders are not amused and call the TD to complain that the lead from the wrong side might have revealed the location of the ♠Q. Since most players would refuse to accept a lead from the wrong hand if it enabled a successful finesse, the TD adjusts the score.

The TD should also consider adjusting the score in the case where the lead out of turn was accepted but the declarer then rose with the Ace and successfully finessed the other defender.