



EUROPEAN BRIDGE LEAGUE

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Law 13

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Here it is:

LAW 13 - INCORRECT NUMBER OF CARDS¹

A. No Call Made

If no player with an incorrect number of cards has made a call, then:

- 1. The Director shall correct the discrepancy and, if no player has seen another's card, he shall require that the board be played normally.*
- 2. When the Director determines that one or more pockets of the board contained an incorrect number of cards and a player has seen one or more cards of another player's hand, the Director allows the board to be played and scored. If he then considers the extraneous information has affected the outcome of the board the Director shall adjust the score [see Law 12C1(b)] and may penalize an offender.*

B. Discovered during the Auction or Play

When the Director determines that a player's hand originally contained more than 13 cards with another player holding fewer, and a player with an incorrect hand has made a call:

- 1. If the Director judges that the deal can be corrected and played, then the deal may be so played with no change of call. At the end of play the Director may award an adjusted score.*
- 2. Otherwise when a call has been made with an incorrect number of cards, the Director shall award an adjusted score [see Law 12C1(b)] and may penalize an offender.*

C. Surplus Card

Any surplus card not part of the deal is removed if found. The auction and play continue without further rectification. No adjusted score may be awarded unless such a card is found to have been played to a quitted trick.

D. Play Completed

When it is determined after play ends that a player's hand originally contained more than 13 cards with another player holding fewer, the result must be cancelled and an adjusted score awarded (Law 86B may apply). An offending contestant is liable to a procedural penalty.

¹ This Law applies when one or more hands are found to contain more than 13 cards. See Law 14 for cases involving a deficient deck

In the 2007 Laws, we notice that the WBFLC was increasingly trying to save results wherever possible, or in other words, allowing for "table results" where they could be obtained, while keeping the option open for the TD to adjust the score at the end of play.

However, here and there, there'd be ambiguities, with places in the Laws where some discretionary power was given to TDs. It's just that, in most of those cases, there was no real reason to do so, which led to TDs abusing their power, by not using any discretion at all, and simply cancelling a board.

Which was not the WBFLC's wish at all, so the new Laws have corrected the relevant parts. One of them is found in Law 13.

To start with, the Law has been totally reorganised - before it didn't flow in the correct way, for example D happens before A. And, it has been greatly simplified (6 paragraphs reduced to 4, with less text), and finally, it has now achieved its original goal: to limit the TD's discretionary powers to specific cases.

Let's see some examples:

Board 16	North	
Vul: EW	♠ K 8 7 5	
Dealer: West	♥ 8 4 3	
	♦ 7	
West	♣ Q J 8 4 3	East
♠ (A) 6 3		♠ (A) Q 4 2
♥ K 10		♥ Q J 5
♦ Q J 10 9 8 6		♦ A K 3 2
♣ 7 6	South	♣ A 5 2
	♠ J 10 9	
	♥ A 9 7 6 2	
	♦ 5 4	
	♣ K 10 9	

All players count, then look at their cards - East holds 14 and West only 12, the extra card is with East and is the ♠A. Before the auction starts West counts the cards better and calls the TD.

It is a very wrongly established habit for TDs to cancel a board on learning that an extra card is an honour. This example, and the next, prove the impact of this bad habit. Actually, if you just give West back the ♠A, you'll see the bidding go: 1NT (East), 3NT (West). Did it matter that East knew partner held the ♠A? And there are thousands of similar examples, or the opposite:

Board 1	North	
Vul: None	♠ K 8 5	
Dealer: North	♥ K J 4 3 2	
	♦ 7	
West	♣ A Q J 10	East
♠ A 9 6 3 (2)		♠ 4 (2)
♥ 10		♥ A 8 5
♦ Q J 10 9 8 6		♦ A 5 4 3
♣ 7 6	South	♣ 9 8 4 2
	♠ Q J 10 7	
	♥ Q 9 7 6	
	♦ K 2	
	♣ K 5 3	

The scenario is the same as above, but the extra card was held by West: the ♠2.

North opens 1♥, South bids 2NT (Jacoby) and North jumps to 4♥. East leads the ♠4.

Now the extra card was an insignificant 2, and all TDs would certainly allow the board to be played. Alas, this is the worst time to do so, because thanks to the miscarding (12 & 14), West now knows full well to duck the lead to retain communication, whilst without the infraction it would have been a blind guess.

So now here's a third scenario: as for the second case, except NS are playing Flannery. Now, North cannot hold four spades, so the UI is irrelevant. Is it? Well, if West is Lorenzo Lauria, certainly so, but if it is a LOL, you might well reconsider your position, mightn't you? Or should you?

Bottom line: it is just plain silly to base judgment on the type of card(s) involved: an honour might be irrelevant, and a small card could be the most important card in the pack. And to know in advance, the poor TD would have to go through a technical analysis of the entire hand, not forgetting to investigate the methods of both pairs. In the above example with the ♠4 lead, if EW had been playing Polish leads (small from doubleton), the UI would have been of no advantage.

So it is neither practical, nor reliable: bridge players don't always behave as expected.

Keep in mind that there are no real problems to letting the auction and play continue: the TD can always, in the fullness of time, consider the situation in light of the UI, and decide later whether or not a result needs adjusting.

That's Law 13A, now for Law 13B, which again includes TD discretionary power. Why?

Because in Law 13B cases, the possibility is more concrete whereby the TD can immediately know whether a board is playable or not, but, in general, please proceed as in Law 13A.

Here is an auction example:

Board 4	North	
Vul: All	♠ K 8 5 4 (2)	
Dealer W	♥ K J 4	
	♦ 7	
West	♣ K J 10 9 8	East
♠ A 9 6 3 (2)		♠ ---
♥ ---		♥ 10 8 6 5 3 2
♦ A 4 3 2		♦ K 8 6 5
♣ A Q 7 6	South	♣ 5 4 2
	♠ Q J 10 7	
	♥ A Q 9 7	
	♦ Q J 10 9	
	♣ 3	

West starts with only 12 cards, and North 14, and the ♠2 is the mischievous card. West opens 1♣ and North overcalls 1♠, raised to four by South. Only now is the anomaly discovered, and the TD is called.

Here is a scenario where the board is clearly unplayable, because without the infraction West would have certainly opened 1♠!