



## **EBL SYSTEMS POLICY**

**(Adopted December 1994; amended October 1996, January 2000, August 2002, October 2007, October 2008, September 2009, October 2010, September 2013, June 2015, January 2020, October 2021, May 2022, February 2025)  
(\* in text denotes update in APPENDIX 1 )**

### **1. Preamble**

1.1 The objectives are to ensure that EBL Championships can be properly operated and adequately administered, with a fair and equal chance for all competitors, while at the same time affording proper consideration to progress and innovation; to ensure that players are in no doubt as to what is expected of them with regard to preparation and filing of systems material for EBL Championships.

1.2 Additions or amendments to this policy will normally be put into effect only after four months' notice.

1.3 References to High Card Points in this document are Milton Work Points.

1.4 In this document 'Weak' means 9 points or less and 'Strong' means 16 points or more.

### **2. Policy and Classification of Systems**

#### **2.1 Review of Classification**

##### **2.1.1 During EBL Events**

The EBL on-site Systems Coordinator may review the classifications made by players and, if necessary, reclassify any system. He may take into account any other features and structures of such a system which in his/her opinion are such as to make it unreasonably difficult for opponents to devise and implement adequate defensive methods.

##### **2.1.2 Between EBL Events**

Any player/pair/team may seek a review of the classification of any system, or of any decision, made by the EBL Systems Coordinator at an event to allow, reclassify, restrict or prohibit use of a system or any specific partnership agreement. The EBL Systems Committee will undertake such a review. The determination of the Systems Committee will not retroactively affect the results of any decisions made by the Systems Coordinator at an event.

##### **2.1.3 Recording of Decisions**

Decisions made following application of 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above, and determination of certain aspects of a system to be HUM (Sec 2.2.2 below) will be documented so that further questions of a similar nature are handled in a like manner. This will be done through a regularly updated Appendix 1 that will list all such decisions available for

both future reference and general player understanding.

## 2.2 HUM Systems

2.2.1 For the purpose of this Policy, a Highly Unusual Method (HUM) means any System that exhibits one or more of the following features.

- a) By partnership agreement an opening call of Pass shows at least the values generally accepted for an opening bid of one, even if there are alternative weak possibilities.
- b) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be weaker than Pass.
- c) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level may be made with 7 high card points or less.
- d) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more or two cards or less in a specified suit.
- \*e) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level shows either three cards or more in one specified suit or three cards or more in another. **EXCEPTION:** one of a minor in a strong club or strong diamond system.

2.2.2 In addition, at its discretion, the EBL Systems Committee, may designate a system as a Highly Unusual Method.

## 2.3 Other Systems

In order to facilitate recognition and handling, systems material will be identified by one or more of the following:

the appropriate (hand printed or typed) colour;

a check mark on a System Card next to the appropriate colour - in keeping with the following descriptions:

**RED:** A “warning” signal that the system contains elements that may need advance preparation by opponents or explanations by the user of the system. This includes systems that include transfers, relays, switch bids or artificial elements (including in competition). **EXCEPTION:** Transfers over No Trump bids.

**BLUE:** One Club or one Diamond, in an otherwise basically natural system, where one club/diamond is artificial, shows a hand with 13 high card points or more, and is always forcing.

**YELLOW:** Highly Unusual Methods ('HUM') as defined above.

**GREEN:** Essentially natural systems not falling under Yellow, Red or Blue systems.



## 2.4 Brown Sticker Methods

The following are categorised as 'Brown Sticker':

- a) Any opening bid of two clubs through three spades that:  
could be made on 9 high card points or less weak AND does not promise at least four cards in a known suit.

**EXCEPTION:** The bid always shows at least four cards in a known suit if it is weak. If the bid does not show a known four card suit it must show a hand with 13 high card points or more. (Explanation: Where all the weak meanings show at least four cards in one known suit, and the strong meanings show a hand with 13 high card points or more, it is not a Brown Sticker Method.)

**EXCEPTION:** a two level opening bid in a minor, showing a weak two in either major, whether with or without the option of strong hand types containing 16 high card points or more, or with equivalent values.

- b) An overcall that does not promise at least four cards in a known suit, over a natural opening bid of one of a suit.

**EXCEPTION:** An overcall in no trumps which is natural or has the meaning of a take-out double.

**EXCEPTION:** Any cue bid suit that shows a strong hand.

**EXCEPTION:** A cue bid in opponent's known suit that asks partner to bid 3NT with a stopper in that suit.

- c) Any 'weak' two-suited overcalls or openings at the two or three level that may by agreement be made with three cards or fewer in one of the suits.
- d) Psychic bids protected by system or required by system.
- e) None of the foregoing restrictions pertain to any defences against forcing, artificial opening bids or defences against 'Brown Sticker' or HUM methods.
- f) For the avoidance of doubt an opening bid of one club which may be made on a doubleton or singleton club and which is ostensibly natural and non-forcing should be regarded as natural.
- g) An opening bid of the other minor in a strong club or strong diamond system which is natural, or balanced without a 5+ major, is regarded as natural.

Additional to the classification of systems in 2.3 above, any partnership using one or more 'Brown Sticker' methods must indicate this alongside its system classification.

## 2.5 Signals

- a) Players may not use signalling methods by which the message or messages conveyed by the signals are hidden from the declarer because of some key available only to the defenders (i.e. encrypted signals are not allowed).
- b) Not assigning any meaning to discarding or following suit (random signals) is not allowed.

## 2.6 Random Openings

It is forbidden to open hands which, by agreement, may contain fewer than 8 high card points and for which no further definition is provided.

## 3. Systems allowed at EBL Championships

In relation to the aspect of Systems to be allowed at EBL Championships, the events will be divided into three categories:

**Category 1:** European Teams Championships or stages thereof defined as Category 1 by the EBL Rules and Regulations Committee

For such events all classifications of systems will be permitted subject to adequate disclosure, but teams using HUM systems or Brown Sticker Methods must submit their System Cards and Brown Sticker Announcement Forms (Appendix 2) in advance in accordance with the Conditions of Contest and will be subject to a reduction of seating rights, as follows: Whenever a team with one or more pairs using a HUM system opposes a team that has no such pair, the HUM systems team will be the 'Away' team, and lines up first throughout. No special seating rights or line-up restrictions shall apply when two teams containing HUM systems pairs (regardless of line-up) oppose one another.

**Category 2:** European Team Championships or stages thereof defined as Category 2 by the EBL Rules and Regulations Committee.

The use of HUM systems is prohibited.

Up to three 'Brown Sticker' methods per partnership will be permitted, subject to adequate disclosure, but players using them must submit their Systems Cards & Brown Sticker Announcement Forms (Appendix 2) in advance in accordance with the Conditions of Contest. At the same time a viable suggested defence to any Brown Sticker method must be filed. This will be deemed to be a part of the System Card and may be referred to by the opponents at the table.

**Category 3:** All other EBL Tournaments & Championships and stages of such events not covered by Categories 1 & 2 above.

The use of both HUM systems and 'Brown Sticker' methods is prohibited.

## 4. Systems Material

For all Category 1 Teams events, where Yellow (HUM) systems are permitted, any pair using a HUM system is required (in addition to the normal timely filing of the System Card and Supplementary Sheets) to submit **the full system** in English in advance before the beginning of the Championship in accordance with the Conditions of Contest.

Pairs using Green, Blue or Red systems are encouraged to submit their full system in English at the beginning of any EBL Championship. Conditions of Contest may require submission in advance.

In decisions taken by Tournament Directors and by the Championship Committee, pairs who have submitted their full system will be given the benefit of any support that their system notes provide for an explanation given at the table.



## **5. System Cards/Supplementary Sheets**

The principle of adequate disclosure requires that competitors fully disclose all agreements and treatments requiring defensive preparation. In addition to the System Cards, pairs should use Supplementary Sheets to achieve this objective.

Competitors should make use of the Guide to Completion of the WBF Convention Cards when completing their System Cards.

The use of Supplementary Sheets is not strictly limited for all events, provided that the entries are properly numbered to correspond to appropriately cross-referenced numbers on the System Card itself. The sheets must include the pair names, be readily legible and numbered entries must be clearly separated. While brevity is encouraged, particularly for Category 2 and Category 3 events, full disclosure must not be prejudiced in any way as a result.

All systems and treatments requiring defensive preparation must be listed on the front right part of the EBL Card. They must be explained and fully developed (including competitive agreements) either in the appropriate section on the front or inside of the card, or, where there is inadequate space there, in the first numbered entries on the Supplementary Sheets.

The front right part of the System Card must include:

- a) All artificial openings (except strong one club/two club openings)
- b) Responses to natural suit openings which are weak or artificial.
- (c) All artificial defensive bids used over natural openings of one of a suit (making sure that all two suited intervention is detailed precisely; the best way to do this is to write: 'Two Suiters' and include a reference to the left column or a reference number to a supplementary Sheet entry).

If a pair uses any bid which should have been listed here, but which has been left out, and their opponents do not get to their best contract, there will be a strong presumption that the opponents have been damaged by not being able to prepare a defence. The offending pair may also be liable to incur a procedural penalty.

Any pair playing a HUM system or 'Brown Sticker' method has a special obligation to present a complete description of both their bids and subsequent developments (especially competitive developments). If a pair uses an auction that is not fully described, then the same presumption of lack of advance notice (with adjustments and penalties as described in the preceding paragraph) shall apply.

For each tournament, the Conditions of Contest will state the date by which, and the address at which, systems material and System Cards (together with telephone and fax number or email addresses of the individuals best equipped to deal with queries regarding the system) must be received. The onus is jointly on the pair, the non-playing captain (where relevant), the NBO and the Zonal Organisation to obtain the information required to meet this deadline. Failure to meet this deadline will result in automatic penalties, which will be fully described in the Conditions of Contest. Problems with systems should be referred to the Chairman of the Systems Committee or his nominee in accordance with details given in the Conditions of Contest.

After the closing date for submission of systems, the following will be the policy governing any changes to the System Card and Supplementary Sheets:

- a) Deletion of an item or a statement will be permitted upon application to the Chairman of the Systems Committee or his nominee.
- b) A change replacing an agreement with another or to introduce a fresh agreement, where the new material is not Brown Sticker, will normally be permitted. The permission to use the new agreement will operate at the discretion of the Chairman, but will normally be from the morning of the second day after notification of the change is issued to other contestants.
- c) Neither the replacement of a Brown Sticker method with another Brown Sticker method, nor the introduction of a new Brown Sticker method will be permitted.

It is strongly emphasised, and all contestants must note, that the policy stated above will be rigorously applied.

## **6. Defence against Yellow (HUM) Systems and Brown Sticker Methods**

The following regulations will apply to defensive measures against HUM systems.

A pair opposing a HUM system pair will submit two (clearly legible) copies of their defence to the HUM system at an appropriate time and place prior to the start of that segment, to be specified in the Conditions of Contest. Such defences are deemed to be part of the opponents' System Card.

In preparing the defence against a HUM system, pairs using Green, Blue or Red systems are allowed to change their systems, including opening calls. Pairs using a HUM system are not allowed to change their opening calls.

The pair using a HUM system must inform the opponents in writing (two clearly legible copies) about their counter-defence at the table prior to the start of the segment. In preparing their counter-defence, the pair using a HUM system is not permitted to change any of the highly artificial aspects of its system.

The following regulations will apply in relation to defensive measures against Brown Sticker methods.

A pair may prepare written defences against the 'Brown Sticker' elements of any system. Such defences will have to be given to the opponents (two clearly legible copies) at an appropriate time and place specified in the Conditions of Contest prior to the start of that segment for team events, or prior to that round for pairs events. Written defences against Brown Sticker methods are deemed to be part of the opponents' System Card.

## **7. Number of systems allowed per team**

For Category 1 events, a maximum number of four Red or Yellow Systems, of which only three may be Yellow, will be permitted for each participating team. A System, for the purpose of this section, may include different methods for different vulnerabilities.

Both members of the partnership must agree to use the same methods of bidding and card play.



## **8. Additional Regulation for Category 3 EBL events**

Psyching artificial or strong opening bids are prohibited.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Classification Decisions of the Systems Committee or its Designee**

#### **2.2.1(e)**

The following agreement

*1 Club opening is 12-14 balanced or any 17+Hand.*

*1 D opening is limited and promises length in either clubs or diamonds.*

is considered as an exception to 2.2.1(e) and is classified as **RED**.

Decision of EBL Systems 31/1/2020

## APPENDIX 2

### BROWN STICKER OPENING BID ANNOUNCEMENT FORM

This form is to be completed and sent, by email, to [anna@ecats.co.uk](mailto:anna@ecats.co.uk) by the closing date announced in the Conditions of Contest

**Names:**

**Country**

**Event**

**Opening bid of**

**in**

**seat at**

**Shows:**

**Detailed Description:**

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#### **Responses and Rebids in Uncontested auctions**

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**With what hands will responder pass the opening bid?**

**Meanings of other responses and rebids:**

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#### **Competitive Agreements**

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**Responses after opponent's DBL** (including Pass, RDBL and expected follow-ups)

**Responses after opponent's overcall:**

**Rebids after 4<sup>th</sup> hand DBLs the response:**

**Rebids after 4<sup>th</sup> hand overcalls:**

**BROWN STICKER OVERCALL ANNOUNCEMENT FORM**

This form is to be completed and sent, by email, to [anna@ecats.co.uk](mailto:anna@ecats.co.uk) by the closing date announced in the Conditions of Contest

**Names:**

**Country**

**Event**

**After opponents opening bid of**

**showing**

**Our overcall of**

**at**

vulnerability

**Shows:**

**Applies:** Opposite PH; Opposite UPH; All the time

**Detailed Description:**

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Responses and Rebids When Responder Passes

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**With what hands will advancer pass the overcall?**

**Meanings of other advances and follow ups:**

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Competitive Agreements

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**Responses after opponent's DBL**

(including Pass, RDBL and expected follow-ups)

**Responses after opponent's bid:**

**Rebids after opener DBLs the overcall (1X)-2Y-(P)-P-(DBL)-?**

**Rebids after opener DBLs advancer's bid:**

**Rebids after opener's suit rebid:**