

Appeals

The director of a bridge session is required to make rulings after infractions by any player. This ruling needs to be followed at the time, but any player dissatisfied with a director's ruling can request an appeal. This applies at all levels, from international congresses right down to club sessions.

In Pairs events, both members of the partnership must agree to the matter going to appeal, and in Teams events, it requires the concurrence of the player and the team captain.



The rules of the congress or club specify the deadline for lodging an appeal. If there is no such decision, the laws of bridge state that an appeal must be lodged "within 30 minutes after the official score has been made available for inspection".

To hear an appeal, an Appeals Committee (AC) is formed, comprising of an odd number of people (usually 3), who will usually have a reasonable bridge knowledge and who may or may not be versed in the laws of bridge. One of their number will be the Appeals Committee Chairman.

An AC cannot overrule the director on a point of law, but can do so on a point of fact. For example, if the appellants felt that the director awarded an incorrect number of tricks after a revoke, that's a point of law, and the AC cannot overrule this decision. However, if they felt the director had erred in his ruling, they would recommend to the director that the decision be changed.

Two common examples of a ruling on a "point of fact", where the AC can make a ruling, are mis-information or use of unauthorised information. Most appeals are based on one of these two issues.

An appeal is heard at the first practical opportunity. This might be in between matches at a congress, or it might be at the end of a club session.

Most times, an Appeals form is made out before the hearing, outlining the facts, and with provision for both parties to state their case in writing. In the hearing, the AC will first listen to what the director has to say, then will call on the parties, either separately or together, so they can state their case. The AC members will question of the parties as necessary as part of this process. After this, the AC members will discuss the case among themselves before reaching a decision. The decision is then conveyed to the director who in turn advises the parties.

AC's have the power to penalise the appellant if they feel the appeal was without merit, referred to as "frivolous". This penalty usually takes the form of a reduction in the appellant's score (maybe half a top, or 3 imps), but appellants may also be required to lodge a monetary deposit before the appeal which can be forfeited if it is decided that the appeal was frivolous.

Major events often have a team of Appeals Advisors available, who can advise the players on the issue under contention, before formally going to appeal. The Appeals Advisor will tell the player if they believe the matter is worth appealing. The player may choose to disregard this advice, but the AC is more likely to impose a frivolous appeal penalty in such cases. At local congresses and even club events, the director may suggest a prospective appellant speak to another experienced but disinterested player in the capacity of Appeals Advisor before proceeding to a formal appeal.

Congratulations to Peter, who has been promoted to National Director Level 3.