

St. Thomas Duplicate Bridge Club
Behaviour and Discipline Policy

1 POLICY

1.1 GENERAL

The St. Thomas Duplicate Bridge Club (the Club) is committed to maintaining an atmosphere wherein all players, regardless of experience or skill level, may participate in the playing of bridge in a fair and enjoyable atmosphere. The Club promotes and adheres to the concept of “Zero-Tolerance” as outlined by the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL).

In accordance with Laws 74, 80B2(f), 81C4, 90A, 91, and 92A (Laws of Duplicate Bridge) the following policy outlines what is expected of all players during club sponsored events, as well as in the playing area before and after each session.

The ultimate purpose of this policy is to create a much more pleasant atmosphere in our games. Our goal is to eradicate unacceptable behavior in order to make the game of bridge more enjoyable for all.

The Club recognizes that the adoption and enforcement of a consistent disciplinary process is essential to the achievement of the club’s behavioural expectations.

The Club further recognizes that except in a few instances as outlined herein, the Club has the sole responsibility to set its own standards, expectations and corrective disciplinary policy.

1.2 EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR

Below are some examples of commendable behavior, which, while not required, will contribute significantly to the improved atmosphere:

- Being a good ‘host’ or ‘guest’ at the table.
- Greeting others in a friendly manner.
- Praising the bidding and/or play of the opponents
- Having two clearly completed convention cards readily available to the opponents (This one is a regulation, not just a nicety)

1.3 UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

The following are some examples of behavior which will not be tolerated:

- Badgering, rudeness, insinuations, intimidation, profanity, threats, or violence.
- Negative comments concerning opponents’ or partner’s play or bidding.
- Constant and gratuitous lessons and analyses at the table.
- Loud and disruptive arguing with a director’s ruling.

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2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 CLUB EXECUTIVE

The club executive, having accepted the principles of “zero-tolerance” will establish a standing “Conduct and Ethics Committee” which will report to the Club Executive.

2.2 CONDUCT AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Conduct and Ethics Committee will have up to three members appointed by the Club Executive. It is not required that any of the committee members be members of the Club Executive. The Club Manager should be a member of this committee. The Committee should elect its own chair, but the chair should be a player with extensive experience in duplicate bridge play, preferably at both the club and tournament levels. The Club Manager will liaise with the ACBL and will ensure that the committee’s actions are consistent with the ACBL’s policies.

The Conduct and Ethics Committee will be responsible for follow-up on any complaints from members, or game directors, if there is a concern that a behavioural issue has not been adequately addressed at the time of the incident.

The Conduct and Ethics Committee may assess disciplinary penalties, in line with the options outlined below.

2.3 GAME DIRECTORS

Game Directors have the responsibility to set the tone for the games which they direct. They must be proactive in ensuring that everyone is aware that the principles of “zero tolerance” are in effect and must act quickly with fairness, tact and diplomacy to respond to all situations which may arise. When necessary, they have the responsibility to enforce disciplinary penalties during the game, to those who are in violation of the zero-tolerance guidelines.

2.4 PLAYERS

Players have the responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that will ensure their conduct will not adversely affect any other player’s enjoyment of the game.

3 COMPLAINT PROCESS

The club will not deal with anonymous complaints.

The first recourse should always be to call the director as the director has the responsibility of ensuring that each player’s rights and privileges are protected.

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3.1 DURING A GAME

If a player behaves in an unacceptable manner, the director should be called immediately. It is the director's responsibility to hear any concerns regarding any perceived violation of the Laws of Duplicate Bridge, including behavioural issues. Annoying behavior, embarrassing remarks, or any other conduct which might interfere with the enjoyment of the game is specifically prohibited by Law 74A.

Law 91A gives the director the authority to assess disciplinary penalties.

The director, when called, shall make an assessment of the situation. If it is established that there was unacceptable behavior, an immediate $\frac{1}{4}$ board disciplinary penalty (3 IMP in team games) shall be assigned to all offenders. This may involve any one or all four players at the table irrespective of who initiated the unacceptable behavior. If both members of a partnership are guilty, the penalties are additive ($\frac{1}{4}$ board EACH = $\frac{1}{2}$ board!).

If it is determined by the director that the same offender is responsible for a second offense in the same event, then the offender(s) shall be ejected from future competition in that event. An offender removed from an event shall be deemed to have not played in the event, no masterpoints will be awarded and no refunds will be made. All previously-obtained results shall, however, remain valid as to their effect upon other competitors. In the case of a serious offense a disciplinary committee may be convened to determine whether additional sanctions may be appropriate.

Warnings are strongly discouraged and will be given only when there is no clear violation or in cases where the facts cannot be determined. Offenders are to receive immediate penalties. Regardless of who may have initiated unacceptable behavior, ALL offenses are punishable. Retaliatory behavior is a punishable offense. Frivolous accusations will also be considered as offenses under this policy.

In accordance with the Laws of Duplicate Bridge, a director's decision to impose a disciplinary penalty is final; however, all such decisions may be appealed. An appeals committee may not overturn the director's decision, but could recommend that the director reconsider the imposition of a penalty. It should be noted that the committee may feel that the penalty assessed was not severe enough and may refer the matter to a disciplinary committee.

The director shall provide to the Club President a summary report of all behavioral penalties assessed.

3.2 SUBSEQUENT TO A GAME

Once the game file for the game has been finalized any complaints will be deemed to have been submitted as subsequent to the game. These complaints will include instances where a player is not satisfied with the handling of an incident by the director during a game.

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3.2.1 Submit a Written Report to the Club President

The person issuing the complaint should provide as much relevant detail as possible, including but not limited to:

- Date of incident
- Section
- Board #
- Players involved
- Please note table position, e.g. N, S, E, W for each player
- Synopsis of concern
- If pertinent, please provide hand records and bidding summary
- Was director called and what was director's response?
- Sign and date the complaint

3.2.2 Club President will Refer Complaint to the Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee

The Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee will review the complaint and make an initial assessment as to the seriousness of the complaint and will categorize it as either a minor or major issue:

3.2.2.1 Minor Issue

A conduct issue which was restricted to the participants at the table involved and which did not become disruptive to other tables in play.

3.2.2.2 Major Issue

- Any allegation of cheating
- Any complaint of a conduct issue which caused disruption or discomfort to players other than those at the table when the alleged incident occurred.
- Any complaints of a conduct issue which, in the opinion of the Conduct and Ethics Chair, is of a repetitive nature, for which the subject player has been warned or otherwise disciplined within the past two years.

3.2.3 Handling of Complaints

3.2.3.1 Minor Issues

The Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee may investigate and handle minor issues using his/her own discretion.

3.2.3.2 Major Issues

For major issues, the Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee will establish an "Ad Hoc Review Committee" to review the incident and make recommendations.

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3.2.4 Ad Hoc Review Committee

This committee should be comprised of the following:

- The designated Conduct and Ethics Committee members appointed by the Club Executive.
- Additional members of the club who are not on the club's executive.

Ideally, the total committee should have an odd number of persons to avoid the possibility of a "hung" decision. The committee should not exceed five persons in total.

No persons may serve on the "Ad Hoc Review Committee" if they were involved as the complainant, subject or a material witness to the incident being reviewed. Similarly, if one of the members requested to serve on the committee has a conflict of interest they will be expected to recuse themselves from the committee. In this situation, a "conflict of interest" would be deemed to be present if there existed a spousal or familial relationship, or if a committee member was a regular partner of either the complainant or the subject of the complaint.

3.2.5 Right of Rebuttal

The subject of the complaint will have the right to receive a copy of the written complaint and may offer rebuttal, either in person or in writing.

Whenever a written complaint has been received the game director should be given a copy of the complaint and be asked to comment upon it in writing.

4 FINDINGS OF THE AD HOC REVIEW COMMITTEE

After reviewing all of the evidence the Ad Hoc Review Committee must make a determination as to whether the complaint is valid and must then decide what, if any, disciplinary action is warranted.

4.1 AUTHORITY TO ISSUE DISCIPLINE

The Ad Hoc Review Committee has the authority to issue discipline under the guidelines contained herein.

4.2 CLUB EXECUTIVE AT ARM'S LENGTH

In order to preserve the independence of the Club Executive as an appellate body as outlined below, the Club Executive will not be consulted, nor will they advise on any potential discipline which may be considered or assessed.

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5 DISCIPLINARY OPTIONS

The following are the progressive disciplinary options which may be invoked, depending upon the seriousness of the behavioural infraction, or upon a pattern of recurring infractions.

5.1 WARNING

A warning is, in itself, not a disciplinary measure. Rather it is intended as a “wake up call” to a player that there is a need for a behavioural change. Warnings will generally be used only when the details of a possible infraction of the behavioural expectations have not been clearly established – but there is concern that, if left unaddressed, there is a potential for future problems.

5.2 REPRIMAND

The Conduct and Ethics Committee may issue a reprimand, advising the subject(s) that their behaviour was unacceptable and that an improvement is required and expected and that further instances may result in suspension or probation.

5.3 PROBATION

A player may be placed on probation for a set period of time, with the proviso that any further instances of unacceptable behaviour during the currency of their probation will result in their probationary period being replaced by a period of suspension.

5.4 BARRING AS A PARTNER OR AS A PAIR

An obnoxious or incompatible partnership may be barred as a pair, either temporarily or permanently, but each player may be permitted to play with other partners

5.5 SUSPENSION

A player may be suspended from participating in games at the club for a set period of time. Such suspension may be from club sponsored games or from all games.

5.5.1 Suspension from Club Sponsored Games

Includes all games, except those specifically mentioned in the following section.

5.5.2 Suspension from ACBL, CBF, District or Unit Sponsored Games

In addition to club sponsored games, the suspension may also include the following games. If a game is not listed, it comes under the club barring.

- North American Pairs Qualifier
- Grand National Teams Qualifier
- STaC (Sectional Tournament at Clubs)
- Canadian Open Pairs Club Qualifier

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- Canadian National Teams Club Qualifier
- District-wide Championship
- Unit Championship
- Unit-wide Game
- Unit Extended Team Game
- Unit Charity Game
- Unit-wide Charity Game

5.6 SUSPENSION AND PROBATION USED IN TANDEM

It is possible to suspend a player for a certain period of time and then, upon completion of the suspension, to allow that player to return under a period of probation.

5.7 PERMANENT BARRING

The ultimate punishment is to bar a player from the club permanently. This would be the punishment of last resort and would only be imposed following a demonstrated lack of success in using lesser disciplinary options, or upon the subject having demonstrated behaviour which is totally unacceptable under any circumstances.

5.8 PROHIBITED ACTIONS

The club may not bar, or otherwise discipline any player or players as a class, based upon the player's race, creed, religion, political affiliation, sexual orientation, national origin, and physical handicap or on the player's proficiency at bridge.

6 NOTIFICATIONS

6.1 NOTIFICATIONS TO SUBJECTS

When a player has been disciplined, with the exception of a warning, the player shall receive a written notice outlining the following:

- Player's Name and ACBL Number (if an ACBL member)
- Date of Notification
- Date of Incident
- Discipline Assessed
- Effective date(s)
- Brief statement of reason for discipline.
- Information regarding the player's right to appeal.

If the player is an ACBL member and suspension or permanent barring is imposed, a copy of the notification must be sent to the ACBL Club Department.

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6.2 NOTIFICATIONS TO COMPLAINANTS

Upon the final determination of the outcome of any complaint, the Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee will advise the complainant verbally of the decision reached by the Committee. Such notification may include the fact that discipline has been assessed but will not provide any specifics as to the type, quantum or duration of the discipline.

6.3 NOTIFICATIONS TO CLUB EXECUTIVE

The Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee will provide a brief synopsis of all completed cases to the Club Executive. As the Club Executive is a step in the appeal process they will receive this report as information only. The Club Executive may not alter any discipline assessed by the Conduct and Ethics Committee, except in their role as an appellate body hearing an appeal.

7 APPEAL RIGHTS

Appeal rights are as follows:

7.1 LIMITATION ON APPEALS

Where, in the application of the following sections, an appeal may be made to the Unit 249 Disciplinary Committee, such right will only apply to those players who were members in good standing of the ACBL on the date of incident specified in the notification. Any member, regardless of standing with the ACBL, may appeal to the Club Executive.

7.2 SUSPENSION FROM ACBL, CBF, DISTRICT OR UNIT SPONSORED GAMES

No limitations on reasons, but the appellant should include a reason why the appeal is being made. Appeal must be submitted within 30 days of the action being taken. The appellate body having jurisdiction is the Unit 249 Disciplinary Committee.

7.3 SUSPENSION FROM ANY OTHER GAMES

No limitations on reasons, but the appellant should include a reason why the appeal is being made. Appeal must be submitted within 15 days of the action being taken. The appellate body having jurisdiction is the Club Executive.

7.4 SUSPENSION BASED UPON THE PLAYER'S RACE, CREED, RELIGION, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, AND PHYSICAL HANDICAP OR ON THE PLAYER'S PROFICIENCY AT BRIDGE

The appellant should include a reason why the appeal is being made. There is no time limit on the appeal. The appellate body having jurisdiction is the Unit 249 Disciplinary Committee.

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7.5 ALL OTHER DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

No limitations on reasons, but the appellant should include a reason why the appeal is being made. Appeal must be submitted within 15 days of the action being taken. The appellate body having jurisdiction is the Club Executive.

8 RECORD KEEPING

The Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee will maintain a file of all reported incidents, including all documentation pertaining to each incident.

The following information will be recorded pertaining to each incident in a summary file:

- Date of Incident:
- Summary of Incident
- Complainant(s) Name:
- Subject(s) Name(s)
- Findings:
- Discipline Assessed
- Appeal and Outcome – if any

The information within this file is to be treated as “confidential” and will only be used to determine if there are recurring problems of a similar nature within the club, or whether any specific player has a history of disciplinary incidents.

This file will be passed on promptly and intact to each new incoming Chair of the Conduct and Ethics Committee.

9 APPROVAL

This policy has been approved by Motion of the Club Executive on January 15, 2019 and will take effect immediately.

Norman Knott

President

Gail McDonald

Secretary