Behaviour Guidelines

Introduction

Many clubs will have had the unpleasant experience of disruptive players ruining other members' enjoyment. A two part approach to dealing with bad behaviour is recommended:

- Promote fair play and being a good sport. Prevention is better than cure!
- Set up complaint handling and disciplinary procedures for dealing with bad behaviour. People may need training so that roles and procedures are understood.

1. Promotion of fair play

Promotion activities can include:

- communicating simple fair play messages via banners, posters, stickers, messages on web-sites
- distributing education brochures about fair play
- instituting a good sports award to present from time to time.

Clubs may decide to adopt a code of conduct. A simple version of a code of conduct is below.

Clubs can:

- attach the relevant code of conduct to membership/registration forms and make it a condition of membership
- write an article in a newsletter about appropriate behaviour, focusing attention on the code of conduct
- attach the code of conduct to your club's notice board
- include the code of conduct or education brochures on the club's website

Example Code of Conduct for Players

XXX Club Code of Conduct

- I will be polite and courteous at all times
- I will respect other people's rights to have different opinions or ways of thinking
- I will conduct my game in a proper, mature and inoffensive manner
- I will assist new members and guests and try to show patience and understanding.
- I will at all times abide by the Ethics Code and rules of my Bridge Club, the NSWBA and ABF

2. Complaint handling and disciplinary procedures

There are several steps in resolving complaints. Taken together, they can be considered a step-by-step guide for managing complaints about bad behaviour.

The first step is often complaint self-management where the person with the complaint tries to resolve the problem directly by talking with the other person involved. Self management of complaints can quickly resolve many lower level and 'accidental' issues.

If this does not work, informal or formal procedures are necessary.

All unresolved complaints about bad behaviour should be reported to a Director, the club Recorder (if the club has one) or a club administrator. It is best if the report is a written report and lists the name of the complainer and full details of the behaviour. Without full details it is difficult to ensure procedural fairness for all parties. Disciplinary action may initially involve a simple gentle warning, but it could also include suspension, expulsion or require the person to participate in a counselling session.

Informal Procedures

The emphasis here is on resolution, not substantiation. Informal procedures are appropriate when:

- allegations are less serious or allegations are admitted
- complainant prefers an informal option
- behaviour has been observed rather than formally reported.
- Informal procedures are based on observation, counselling, mediation and education.

Formal procedures

The club's constitution and/or by-laws should contain a formal procedure for the discipline of members who breach codes of conduct. Once the club has adopted rules about disciplinary procedures it is entitled to apply and enforce these rules.

If your club does not have disciplinary procedures contained in its rules, it's advisable you seek legal advice about serious complaints. In addition you are welcome to ask Bridge NSW for advice.

- From complaint to outcome, a formal process usually follows this path:
- A formal complaint - usually in writing
- An investigation to determine substance i.e. the facts followed by a finding or a report with recommendations to the club's management
- Sometimes conciliation/mediation
- An appropriate outcome The outcome may involve counselling or education or more formal sanctions but must be in line with the club's constitution. A formal procedure must also include an appeals process to ensure procedural fairness.

Training and Further Information

Training in handling complaints may be useful for clubs, directors and administrators. The Australian Sports Commission has a comprehensive free Complaints Handling on-line training course: *Australian Sports Commission - Play by the Rules*