



International Sport Federation (IF) recognized by the International Olympic Committee

The WBF Systems Policy 2023

(Adopted December 1994; amended October 1996, January 2000, August 2002, October 2007, October 2008 September 2009, October 2010, September 2013, June 2016, June 2018 and August 2022)

1. Preamble

1.1. The objectives of this policy are:

- to ensure that WBF Championships can be properly operated and adequately administered, while at the same time affording proper consideration to progress and innovation;
- to provide the opportunity to play against different systems without material disadvantage relative to pairs with a greater familiarity of the said methods;
- to ensure that players are in no doubt as to what is expected of them with regard to the preparation and filing of systems material for each WBF category of event.

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 (A=4, K=3, Q=2, J=1).

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. Classification Policy

- 2.1.1. *Players should classify their own systems in accordance with this system policy.*
- 2.1.2. *Where players are unsure, they should consult the ['Guide to Completion of the WBF System Card'](#).*
- 2.1.3. *They may also request advice on classification from the WBF Systems Committee Chairman, however this should occur prior to the deadline specified in the Supplementary Conditions of Contest for submission of system cards.*

2.2. System Classifications

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

- the appropriate named colour (hand printed or typed);
- a check mark on a system card next to the appropriate colour - in keeping with the following descriptions:

GREEN: Systems where one-level opening bids are natural and non-forcing.



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BLUE: This category includes Strong Club/Strong Diamond systems that satisfy all of the following criteria:

- a) Either one club or one diamond is artificial, shows a hand with 13 high card points or more, and is always forcing.
- b) One of a major and 1NT are both natural and non-forcing.
- c) The one-level opening in the other minor may be artificial with various possibilities not covered by the other opening bids.

RED: This is a 'warning' that these systems contain artificial elements that may need advance preparation by opponents or explanations by the user of the system. This includes:

- a) All systems that utilise artificial one-level openings that do not fall under the definition of Yellow (HUM) systems, other than Strong Club/Strong Diamond (Blue) systems.
- b) Any system in which the basic 1-level opening structure (other than the length of natural suit bids or the point range of openings) varies according to position and/or vulnerability.

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

2.3. HUM Systems

2.3.1. *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 that 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 that may be weaker than Pass.
- c) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level in either 1st or 2nd seat that may be made with 7 high card points or less.
- d) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level that shows either specified length (three cards or more) or specified shortage (one card or less) in a known suit, whilst excluding other intermediate lengths in that same suit.
- e) By partnership agreement an opening bid at the one level that shows either three cards or more in a specified major or three cards or more in another specified suit.

2.3.2. *In addition, the WBF Systems Committee may at its discretion, designate any specific system as a Highly Unusual Method.*

2.4. Review of Classification

2.4.1. *During WBF Events*

The WBF On-site Systems Manager may review the classifications made by players and, if necessary, reclassify any system. They 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, in a timely manner, adequate defensive methods.

The Systems Manager may also restrict the use of specific partnership agreements in certain short-encounter format events (e.g., BAM Teams or Pairs).

2.4.2. *Between WBF Events*

Any player/pair/team may seek a review of the classification of any system, or of any decision made by the WBF On-site Systems Manager at an event to allow, re-classify, restrict or prohibit use of a system or any specific partnership agreement. The WBF Systems Committee will undertake such a review. The determination of the Systems Committee will not retrospectively affect the results of any decisions made by the On-site Systems Manager at an event.

2.4.3. *Recording of Decisions*

Decisions made following application of 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 above, and the determination of certain aspects of a system to be HUM (See 2.3.2 below) will be recorded so that further questions of a similar nature are handled in a like manner. This will be done through a regularly updated document that will list all such decisions available for both future reference and general player understanding.

2.5. **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, 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. Defensive measures are permitted for opponents as in 6 below.
- 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 in a suit that shows a strong hand.
EXCEPTION: a cue bid in opponent's known suit that asks partner to bid NT 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.

Notes

- I. None of the foregoing restrictions (a-c) pertain to any defences against forcing, artificial opening bids or defences against 'Brown Sticker' or HUM methods.
- II. Restriction (b) also applies to overcalls after an opening bid of one of a minor which is ostensibly natural and non-forcing, even if it might be made on a doubleton or a singleton.
- III. Additional to the classification of systems in 2.2 above, any partnership using one or more 'Brown Sticker' methods must indicate this alongside its system classification.

2.6. Card Play Signals

- a) Partnerships should possess agreements as to the meaning of the cards played when following suit and when discarding (i.e., the use of undefined signalling methods is prohibited).
- b) 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 (e.g., encrypted signals are not allowed).

2.7. 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. Pairs employing HUM methods may however open hands at the one-level that conform to Section 2.3.1(c) criteria.

3. Systems allowed at WBF Championships

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

Category 1: This will apply to all WBF World Team Championship events EXCEPT for the Under 21 and Under 16 categories.

For such events all classifications of systems will be permitted in the Knock Out stages only, subject to adequate disclosure, but teams using HUM systems or Brown Sticker Conventions must submit their System Cards and Brown Sticker Announcement Forms (Appendix 1) 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: Zonal Championships or stages of WBF events defined as Category 2 by the WBF 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 1) 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. No written defence should exceed more than 50 words in total.

Category 3: All other WBF 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 WBF 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.

Unless otherwise specified in the Conditions of Contest a partnership may use a maximum of six Supplementary Sheets, 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 WBF 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:

- i All artificial openings (except strong one club/two club openings)
- ii Responses to natural suit openings which are weak or artificial.
- iii 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 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. The insertion of additional clarificatory statements will also normally be permitted.
- 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. No defence should exceed more than 50 words in total. 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 (but not to openings which are themselves HUM or 'Brown Sticker'). 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 session. 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.

HUM systems that are to be played only as a defence against other HUM systems must be lodged prior to the deadline specified in the Supplementary Conditions of Contest for the submission of system cards.

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, but no defence should exceed more than 50 words in total. 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 seats and/or vulnerabilities.

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

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