

SABF Procedure for Complaints Regarding Player Behaviour

Lodging a Complaint

1. Complaints may be lodged by any player or Tournament Director (TD) concerning the behaviour of any other player present at a playing venue or present at an appeal hearing or disciplinary hearing.
2. A formal complaint will only be accepted in written form and signed by the complainant. An email from the complainant's email address (or an electronic document attached to an email) is acceptable.
3. The SABF Secretary or President, or the TD, may receive complaints.
4. Complaints must be lodged within fourteen (14) days of the date on which the alleged breach took place.

Preliminary Investigation and Mediation

1. The SABF President, or the President's nominee, will conduct a preliminary investigation of all complaints. (The person conducting the preliminary investigation will be referred to as the Investigator in the remainder of this document).
2. The Investigator must provide the subject of a complaint with a copy of the complaint, and conduct a preliminary investigation in a prompt manner, establishing the facts as far as possible. This will include seeking input from the members of the Appeal Advisory/Ethics Panel (AAEP) regarding completion and relevancy of the complaint.
3. The Investigator may decide that the complaint should not proceed (for example if there is reason to believe that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious), in which case the complainant must be informed of the decision. If the complainant disagrees with such a decision, he or she may appeal to the SABF Committee (the Committee).
4. Unless the complaint is of a serious nature, the Investigator should, in the first instance, try to have the matter resolved through mediation. The Investigator may decide to act as the Mediator, or select from a list of suitable mediators compiled by the Committee.
5. The Mediator is given plenary power by the SABF to resolve a dispute before it goes any further, and any discussions held by the Mediator with the parties involved in the complaint will not be placed on record.
6. After mediation, the Mediator reports 1 of 2 outcomes to the Committee –
 - i. The complaint is resolved and no further action is required. No record is retained other than the complaint was resolved.
 - ii. A Disciplinary Panel (DP) hearing is required as the complaint cannot be resolved between the parties.
7. Resolution of the dispute by the Mediator may include appropriate education of the alleged transgressor.
8. Where the complaint is of a more serious nature (as advised by the Investigator), or if mediation fails, the Committee will refer the complaint to a DP to formally investigate

and make a judgement on the complaint. The defendant must be advised by the Investigator that the DP process has been invoked.

9. Nothing arising from the mediation process can be used in the DP process.
10. The Committee should generally accept the findings of the Investigator or Mediator. However, they should be satisfied that there is prima facie evidence that the complaint has some validity (that there was misconduct), and, if the complaint is upheld, the nature of the transgression is such that the DP is obliged to issue a disciplinary penalty.
11. The preliminary investigation and mediation (where instigated) process should be completed within 2 weeks of the formal complaint being received by the Investigator.

Disciplinary Panel Hearings

1. If the Committee is satisfied that a disciplinary hearing is warranted, it should form a DP within one week of receiving the investigator report.
2. The make-up of the panel is at the discretion of the Committee, but should generally consist of 3 members (one or more of whom may be on the Committee), and be chaired, where possible, by a lawyer. Neither the Investigator nor the Mediator may sit on the DP so formed.
3. Once the DP sets a hearing date, the panel chair advises the complainant, the subject of the complaint, and any witnesses it intends to call, about the time, date, and form of the hearing.

Outcomes from Disciplinary Hearings

1. If the DP finds the defendant not guilty of the charge(s), the chair of the DP advises the complainant and the defendant of the outcome, and submits a report of the finding to the SABF Committee.
2. The complainant, can appeal to the Committee, but only on the basis that there was a failure of due process (eg that he/she did not get a fair hearing).
3. If the DP finds any charge(s) proven, it needs to impose a penalty commensurate with the transgression.
4. Appropriate recommended penalties are contained in the attached table. The DP is not bound by the recommended penalties, but would need good reason to impose a significantly different penalty.
5. If the penalty imposed does not involve suspension, the DP can impose the penalty and notify the defendant directly (after which it reports its actions to the Committee).
6. If the DP finds that a suspension is warranted, it makes a recommendation to that effect to the Committee which will generally follow the recommendation, but will have the final say in the matter.
7. Where the penalty involves suspension, the defendant may appeal to the Committee, but only on the basis that there was a failure of due process (eg that he/she did not get a fair hearing).

8. Where the penalty involves suspension, the defendant may also make representation to the Committee for leniency because of mitigating circumstances.

Player Suspensions

1. It is Australian Bridge Federation (ABF) policy that:-
 - a. Players suspended at national level will be barred from playing at all national events **and** all state events for the period of suspension.
 - b. Players suspended at state level will also be barred from playing at all national events for the period of suspension.
2. Where a player is suspended from state events, the SABF Secretary will forward details, including the length of suspension, to the ABF Secretary.
3. Similarly, the ABF Secretary will pass on details of national level suspensions to all state and territory secretaries.
4. If a player is suspended from a state event, individual clubs are not obliged to suspend the player from their club events, but may choose to do so.
5. If a player is suspended by a club from their events, the SABF is not obliged to suspend the player from state events, but may choose to do so. Similarly, other affiliated clubs may choose to ban the player from their club events, at their discretion.

Discretionary Powers of the SABF President

The President of the SABF may in his or her absolute discretion vary the time limits imposed by this Procedure.

	Recommended Penalty
--	--------------------------------

	Offence	1st	2nd	3rd +
1	Verbal abuse of an opponent or partner.	W	R	10-15
2	Use of crude or abusive hand signals or gestures.	W	R	10-15
3	Offence 1 or 2 aimed at an officiating director.	R or 2-5*	5-10	10-15
4	Non-premeditated breaches of the Laws of Duplicate Contract Bridge which have the effect of gaining an unfair advantage and/or unauthorised information.	W	R	2-10
5	Any unauthorised absence from the table for a period of one deal or longer not agreed by opponents or approved by the director.	W	R	D
6	Wilful damage or abuse of playing cards or other equipment or property at the table.	R	2-5	5-10
7	Presenting at a session in an intoxicated state, or becoming intoxicated during the course of a session.	R or 2-5*	5-10	10-26
8	Engaging in public acts of misconduct or unruly public behaviour while representing South Australia.	R or 2-5*	**	***
9	Threat of assault or physical interference.	R or 2-5*	5-10	10-26
10	Physical interference without intent to cause grievous bodily harm.	10-15	15-26	52
11	Physical assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm.	52	L	
12	Use of pre-arranged illegal understanding or method with intent to gain unfair advantage and/or unauthorised information (i.e. cheating).	52	L	
13	Any offence not specifically covered by 1-12 above.	D	D	D
Legend for Recommended Penalties				
W	Warning to be issued to offender.			
R	Offender to be reprimanded.			
2-5	Numbers indicate weeks of suspension to be applied.			
L	Indicates suspension for life.			
D	The penalty is at the discretion of the Investigator/DP			
*	Reprimand or suspension depends on the relative severity of the offence			
**	Offender should be banned from representing the state for at least the next ANC			
***	Offender would normally be banned from representing the state for life.			