

International Laws Committee

Official Ruling on Law 53(b)(3)

21st July 2015

Ruling

OR 53(b)(3): Law 55(b)(4) should be applied to interpret Law 53(b)(3), which reads:

“If a player suspects that the outcome of a stroke he has just played was affected by a ball being in contact with both uprights of a hoop simultaneously, he is entitled to have the equipment checked and, if necessary, adjusted or replaced. If it is found that the ball does touch both uprights of that hoop on some axis, he may elect to replay the stroke, unless his turn has ended for another reason.”

as though it read:

“If a player suspects that the outcome of a stroke he has just played was materially affected by a ball being in contact with both uprights of hoop simultaneously, he is entitled to have the equipment checked and, if necessary, adjusted or replaced. The time taken to do this is restored.

If it is found that the ball does touch both uprights of that hoop on some axis and he had attempted to get the ball through the hoop, he may elect to replay the stroke, attempting to do so again, unless his turn has ended for another reason. If he does not attempt to do so, or elects not to replay the stroke, the outcome of the original stroke stands, with any ball jammed in a hoop above ground being placed on the ground in the centre of the hoop.”

Background

Law 53(b)(3) was introduced in the 2008 revision as an optional alternative to Law 35(b). It has been widely adopted, to the extent that the ILC are minded to make it mandatory when the laws are next revised, but some concerns have been raised about its application in particular instances. This ruling attempts to address those.

The first concern was that replays were being allowed in cases where the interference by the hoop was incidental to the intended outcome of the stroke. For example, if, after running hoop 2, a player sent a pioneer to hoop 4 which happened to stick in it, with the striker's ball ending up cross-wired from the ball at hoop 3, it seems unjust to allow the striker a replay.

The second was that players were allowed to adopt a different line of play in the replay from that

which they took in the original stroke, e.g. playing away rather than re-attempting the hoop. Opinions differ as to whether the additional complication of requiring them to play a stroke with the same intended outcome is justified, but those who think it is do so very strongly. The objection that requiring the striker to physically replay the same stroke would be impossible to police (as the referee is unlikely to have seen the original) has been overcome by saying just that the striker must attempt to get the ball through the hoop again. Another objection, that the tactical situation may have changed because time had, or was about to, expire by the time the replay was taken, has been addressed by ruling that the time taken to check and reset a hoop should be restored.

It has not been possible to address the third concern, that the striker can benefit by electing not to replay the stroke, e.g. if a peelee lodged in a hoop, rather than just running through to an awkward position. The reason for this is that, to make a requirement for a mandatory replay effective, the adversary would have to be given the right to have the hoop checked before the striker played another stroke, and it is felt that this could unreasonably interrupt the striker's break. Note the contrast with Law 33(a)(1), where a replay is mandatory if the conditions are met, the difference being that in that case the interference will have been obvious to both players and, if the stroke is not replayed, the balls are placed where they would have ended up, rather than left where they did. This is much less easy to judge in the case of interference by a hoop.

A final concern, that in a few games an excessive number of requests for hoops to be checked have been made, has also not been specifically addressed, although the requirement that the outcome of the stroke must have been *materially* affected might reduce the incidence of this slightly. It is felt that the solution to this is one of management rather than law: the players must have confidence that the hoops are set such that the balls can get through them unimpeded. If the problem does become more widespread, a system like that used for reviews of line calls in tennis, or umpiring decisions in cricket, that a player is only allowed a specified number of unsuccessful claims for a replay in a game, after which they have to take the hoops as they find them, could be instigated, but that does not seem necessary at the moment.

It has not been thought necessary to spell out in the ruling that a replay implies that all balls are replaced to the position they were in before the stroke was played and that any points scored in the original stroke are cancelled, as when an error is rectified. In the next revision it is intended to define the term replay in an additional clause in Law 29, with any restrictions on what may be done in it specified in the individual laws in which the term is used. We have, however, specified that if there is no replay (or the replay does not meet the new condition), the outcome of the original stroke stands, which means that any points scored in it are valid and the balls are (re-)placed where they came to rest, with the obvious exception of any ball jammed above the ground!

Guidance on Implementation

If the striker commits a fault in a stroke, it must be a matter of judgement by the referee whether the fault was a result of a ball (possibly a peelee) being held up by a mis-set hoop, in which case a replay should be allowed, or would have happened anyway, in which case not. For example, if the striker's ball was close to or even in the jaws and straight in front, and the stroke was not being watched because the players had no reason to expect a problem, a replay should be allowed if the striker's mallet catches up with and re-touches his ball in the hoop. On the other hand, a referee

called to watch a difficult angled jump in which the ball bounces back from the hoop back onto the mallet would not allow a replay (if only because the hoop at the height at which the ball would have passed through in a successful jump is likely to be a lot wider than at ground level, and hence the failure of the ball to go through was not caused by it touching both wires simultaneously, even if it could in some orientation at ground level). In marginal cases, the benefit of the doubt should be given to the claimant.

As the requirement that the player should re-attempt the hoop in a replay is new, a referee awarding a replay should tell the player about this restriction, rather than penalise them if they adopt a different line of play because they were unaware of it.

As before, the first thing a referee should do when called to test a hoop where a replay may be claimed is to mark where any balls moved in the last stroke were before it was played, relying on the evidence of the striker and anyone else who can usefully provide it. Then mark where the balls ended up, test and if necessary reset the hoop, but now, if a replay is awarded, leave the markers in place until after it has been taken, in case the line of play is challenged.