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ALL YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT REVOKES

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All you should know about revokes

Definition (L61A)

- not following suit if able to follow
- not complying with an instruction to play a card if able to comply

Question: Declarer asks for a heart (♥7) from dummy but dummy plays a diamond. Is this a revoke? Notice the wording in L45D: ‘... places in the played position a card declarer did not name ...’.

And what about RHO if he follows with a diamond? What about RHO if he follows with a heart? At most one of those two cards can create a revoke isn't it?

A nice example of a revoke not following an instruction:

	♠ Q 7 4 3	Board 3	
	♥ A 6	S/EW	
	♦ 8 5 4		
	♣ K 5 3 2		
♠ 10 9 6	N	♠ J	
♥ J	W	♥ 9 8 7 5 4 3	
♦ K Q 7 6	E	♦ A 9 2	
♣ Q 8 7 6 4	S	♣ J 10 9	
	♠ A K 8 5 2		
	♥ K Q 10 2		
	♦ J 10 3		
	♣ A		

W	N	E	S
			1♠
P	2NT*	P	4♠
All pass			

East leads out of turn with ♥9.

South imposes a ♥ lead on West.

West leads ♦K (♥J is hidden behind ♦6) and wins the trick. He then plays ♦6, won by East's ♦A. West wins the third round of ♦ with his ♦Q, and plays a fourth round which East ruffs with ♠J, so one of West's trumps is now a winner.

Result: 4♠-1. West's revoke is worth a 2-trick penalty (we are in the rare situation where a revoke wins the trick without needing a ruff), so the result could be modified to 4♠ plus one but Let us wait for a while.

L61B Inquiring about a revoke:

Declarer may ask the opponents but should he ever do so? Let us start to say that there is no need at all to draw attention to a revoke. Even if a player is absolutely sure that an opponent did revoke he is – ethically spoken – not obliged to inquire about that revoke. Or: a player may try to gain an advantage gaining extra trick(s) by keeping silent about a revoke by an opponent.

Back to the question:

Some fifteen years ago in India the following happened:

South was declarer in 6NT and when dummy opened he saw something like:

♠KJ108 ♥AJ10 ♦KQJ5 ♣104 with ♠AQ9 ♥KQ83 ♦A872 ♣QJ in his own hand. The lead had been ♣A. A fast count showed that he would be at least 4 off. And then he saw RHO playing a small spade and had to rectify the count to 8 off. He couldn't believe it and out of disgust asked RHO: 'no clubs?'. RHO had four clubs and the rest is not subject to this lecture but history indeed.

Since 2007 a defender may ask his partner about a possible revoke unless the NBO (Regulating Authority) has decided not to allow it. As far as we know a big majority of NBO's has not exercised this right. The laws tell that such a question could create UI. Let us give an example:

	♠ J 10 6	Board 11 S/none
	♥ 9 7 4	
	♦ A 6 4	
	♣ A 10 4 2	
♠ 9 7 5 2	N	♠ A 8 4 3
♥ A Q 10 8	W	♥ 6 5 3 2
♦ K Q 10	E	♦ 2
♣ 8 5	S	♣ J 9 6 3
	♠ K Q	
	♥ K J	
	♦ J 9 8 7 5 3	
	♣ K Q 7	

W	N	E	S
			1NT
P	3NT	All pass	

West leads ♦K which wins the trick. He gets a very encouraging signal from partner and continues with ♦Q. When East now discards the ♥6 he can't suppress his surprise and asks: 'no diamonds, partner?' Indeed no diamonds. Declarer plays ♦A and plays the ♠J from dummy. East wins with the ace and switches to hearts. The contract is two off. South calls the TD and tells him what happened. Decision?

This question comes close to telling partner that South has 6 cards in diamonds, which is not exceptional but certainly not common either when opening 1NT. Probably headed by the jack otherwise declarer would play a diamond back. So East now becomes aware of the possibility that South has nine tricks with one trick in spades, which is not possible with $\spadesuit KQ10x$ in West. Playing low in spades is certainly a logical alternative.

Let me give a second example which was presented by Bertrand Gignoux in a previous EBL-TD course.

	\spadesuit Q 9 8	Board 3 S/EW
	\heartsuit A K Q J 6 4	
	\diamondsuit J 6	
	\clubsuit K Q	
\spadesuit K 6	N	\spadesuit 7
\heartsuit 2	W	\heartsuit 10 7 5 3
\diamondsuit A Q 9 7 3	E	\diamondsuit 10 8 4 2
\clubsuit J 8 7 6 4	S	\clubsuit A 10 9 2
	\spadesuit A J 10 5 4 3 2	
	\heartsuit 9 8	
	\diamondsuit K 5	
	\clubsuit 5 3	

South opened the bidding with a weak two in spades and partner bid $4\spadesuit$; end of the bidding. West leads $\heartsuit 2$ for the ace and declarer plays $\spadesuit Q$, overtaking it with the $\spadesuit A$ and another spade for West's king and East discarding a small diamond indicating the club ace. West with some surprise in his voice asks: 'no spades, partner?'. Once again this question informs partner East that something unexpected has happened. And once again it is quite easy to understand what. A weak two normally shows exactly 6 cards, so West told his partner that South this time has seven spades, leaving West with no spades anymore. Without the question East almost for sure would assume West to have a third spade. Winning with the $\clubsuit A$ in trick four he was expected to return a heart. He didn't. The diamond return resulted in one off. East needs a warning, if not a strong penalty, for this unethical behaviour.

Dummy may not ask a defender and the laws clearly state that if he does this might create UI. But how to deal with it? We normally assume that declarer is able to count the cards played in each of the suits. And even if declarer is not aware of the revoke then dummy is allowed to draw attention to it after the play, so the penalty doesn't disappear. Can there be a problem?

Yes. Not so much as long as the revoke is not established but indeed when dummy asks after the offending side has played to the next trick. The fact that declarer now knows to have gained a penalty trick (or two) might influence his play, for example by exercising a safety play by which he wins a trick, which had not been possible otherwise. That is a reason to adjust the score.

L62 Correcting a revoke

If a player becomes aware of his revoke before his side plays a card in the next trick it must be corrected. If it is too late the irregular play cannot be changed anymore.

This creates a nice problem:

	♠ 7 6	
	♥ ---	
	♦ 8	
	♣ ---	
♠ 5 3	N	♠ ---
♥ 9	W	♥ 7
♦ ---	E	♦ 10 5
♣ ---	S	♣ ---
	♠ 10	
	♥ 8 4	
	♦ ---	
	♣ ---	

♥-contract, from dummy (North) to lead: ♠7 ruffed by East, South and West after which West puts down ♠5 and discovers his revoke at the same time as declarer discovers his.

The laws do not solve this irregularity in an acceptable way. Just looking at L62A South corrects his revoke and West may not. Though it is likely that West's revoke is provoked by declarer's. And furthermore it is considered as a right approach to deal with irregularities on their own, in which case the revoke by South is dealt with without taking into account other irregularities. In which case the replacement of the ♥8 by South allows LHO to play another card in that trick too.

This asks for an improvement in the next edition of the laws extending the solution we found for established revokes from both sides on the same board in 2007. This leads to correction of both revokes, none of them becoming established. But presumably with still a major penalty card for the offending defender.

Do the problems ever stop? Let us look at L62C. South declarer, dummy leads and RHO revokes. Declarer wins the trick and leads for the next one. Now RHO discovers his revoke and plays another card. Declarer does not change his card in that trick but wants to change his next lead. Is that allowed? Yes, he may change any card he has played after the revoke. Does LHO now gets the right to change his played card in the previous trick? C2 seems to allow it. Should we add something to prevent this?

This reminds me of the case of the short-sighted RHO. After the first lead with a small club in a ♠-contract dummy comes down with A953 in clubs and before deciding what to play RHO produces a small spade. 'Of course' declarer now asks for a small one in dummy after which LHO inquires about a possible revoke and RHO tells that he thought the lead to be a small spade. 'Of course I have clubs' and he plays the ♣Q. Any remedy? L62C1 does not say 'no' on the question whether declarer may still change his card in dummy.

L62D

We need this law to tell that a revoke in the 12th trick is not penalized, but do we also need to tell that in case partner has cards in two suits he may not choose the card that could be suggested by the revoke of his partner? Why not just using L16D sharing this case among UI created by information from a withdrawn card? And why does this law just deal with the specific case of cards in two different suits?

Look:

	♠ 6	
	♥ 4	
	♦ ---	
	♣ ---	
♠ ---	N	♠ 8
♥ Q 7	W	♥ J
♦ ---	E	♦ ---
♣ ---	S	♣ ---
	♠ ---	
	♥ 8 5	
	♦ ---	
	♣ ---	

Dummy to lead. We can be pretty sure that West understands that if South doesn't play the ♠6 the missing spade is in the East hand but does he know for sure it to be higher than the ♠6, and maybe declarer isn't sure either? And does he know that his ♥7 is lower than the last heart left in South?

♥4 from dummy and RHO shows his ♠8 taken back when he discovers his mistake. It seems that we need L16D to solve this case, L62D does not apply.

L63

During the World Championships 2012 a discussion arose when LHO did revoke and mentioned it after the lead from declarer in the next trick but before playing himself, in which case L62A tells that the revoke must be corrected. But just after this discovery dummy had 'played' an obvious card and RHO had also played. And if you read L63A that means that the revoke becomes established (even if the play by RHO had been illegal, for example made without dummy playing a card). There was no unanimity about the answer. But the majority thought that L62A prevailed (West found out before East played a card) : not an established revoke. I agree.

L63A3

This law is not in accordance with L69 as far as the moment of agreeing in a claim is given. I would have preferred the moment as described in L69 which then means that a revoke becomes established somewhat later. This also takes away the potential inclination for the claiming side to claim as soon as it becomes aware of a revoke by an opponent. Any opinions?

L64A

Made easier to handle in 2007, normally spoken only a two-trick penalty if the revoking player ruffs instead of following suit and wins that trick. Normally because there is an exception: when dummy has lost his rights and asks declarer about a revoke. If true declarer has to substitute a card following suit and L43B2b tells the TD to apply L64 as if the revoke has been established. If declarer plays the highest card in the suit led it might become a second penalty trick.

L64B

The heading is misleading. It is better to read it as ‘no transfer of tricks as described in A’, because rectifications may apply. A second improvement is to move ‘Law 64C may apply’ from B2 to this heading, since this is valid in all but one of the seven cases mentioned. Not in the first case; there cannot be a transfer if no trick is won.

A last remark about the wording: B7 applies only if both revokes are established.

Let us start with the motive to add B7. It happened in Belgium.

With three tricks to go in the following setup:

	♠ 7	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 3	
	♣ ---	
♠ ---	N	♠ 9
♥ 4	W	♥ 8
♦ ---	E	♦ ---
♣ 10 6	S	♣ 5
	♠ 10 6	
	♥ ---	
	♦ ---	
	♣ 8	

Spades are trumps and South is declaring.

West on lead plays ♣10, North ruffs, East overruffs and South ‘follows’ in the spade suit, winning all three tricks. That also happens to be the normal result, but before 2007 South had to pay a penalty of two tricks where East just collected those. OK: law is law but justice should play some role. That is how B7 came to life.

Remember what we said discussing L62. If South plays to the 12th trick and East discovers his revoke at that moment we deal with an established revoke by South and East takes his ♠9 back. A two trick penalty and instead of the normal three tricks for declarer EW get three tricks out of this.

B2

Let us start with the example I give in my Commentary on the 2007 laws.

♠ A K Q 5
♠ 10 7 4
♠ 8 6 3 2

♠ J 9

South plays A and K of spades, East does not follow on the K. If he now follows on the Q no harm is done, South still makes 4 spade tricks and gets an additional trick out of the revoke. If East revokes once more South only makes three spade tricks and is compensated for the fourth by applying L64A, if the second revoke can't harm at all. This means that the laws encourage East to revoke twice. That is not desirable.

A long time ago we followed a different line than we do now. We only used L64C if applying it on the second revoke (without a penalty for the first) would give South more tricks than applying L64A on the first revoke. In the example above this means that South gets four tricks applying L64A on the first revoke and four tricks applying L64C on the second. This means that he is sufficiently compensated using the normal rectification. But as said it encouraged revoking twice.

In an EBL TD course long ago the following problem was presented.

	♠ 3 2	
	♥ A 6 4 3	
	♦ A K Q 7	
	♣ A 4 2	
♠ K 10 9 8	N	♠ A Q J 6 5
♥ K Q J 10	W	♥ 9 8 7
♦ J 10 9 8	S	♦ 5 4 3 2
♣ Q	E	♣ 6
	♠ 7 4	
	♥ 5 2	
	♦ 6	
	♣ K J 10 9 8 7 5 3	

South plays 5♣; first lead ♥K for the ace; small heart from dummy ruffed; to the ♣A and a second heart ruff (second revoke in the same suit). Now declarer plays all his trumps and as an extra finds West squeezed in ♥ and ♦; 13 tricks.

What result should be awarded under the old approach?

If we apply L64A two tricks are transferred and South makes 5♣. If we apply L64C on the second revoke South follows a heart instead of ruffing and EW will collect two spade tricks: 5♣ minus 1. Which was the official answer. The normal rectification does not offer enough compensation.

Nowadays we apply L64A on the first revoke and we ask what would have happened had the second not occurred. (Mind you: the question is not what would have happened had the player been aware of his first revoke in time to avoid the second, the question is what would have happened if the second revoke occurs and the opponents ask about it after which it is corrected.)

In this example it leads to an easy adding up both outcomes in tricks: two for the first revoke and still 3 for the second. (Of course only if starting with the trick in which the first revoke occurred the offenders won at least five tricks). An incredible 5♣ minus 3.

Back to the real world: Poznan 2011

	♠ 10	
	♥ Q J 6 5 3	
	♦ K 6 5 2	
	♣ A K Q	
♠ J 7 6	N	♠ 5 4 2
♥ 9 8 7	W	♥ A K 10 2
♦ A 10 9 8 7	E	♦ Q 4 3
♣ J 10	S	♣ 8 4 2
	♠ A K Q 9 8 3	
	♥ 4	
	♦ J	
	♣ 9 7 6 5 3	

South is playing 4♠ and gets a ♣J-lead. He wins and plays another club discarding his singleton heart and the third club discarding the ♦J. West ruffed and declarer could claim 12 tricks. Yes we are playing in an European Championship. How many tricks do we award to the defenders?

3 indeed: one in real play, one for the first revoke and had declarer found out about his revoke before discarding his second singleton a trick in diamonds.

Time to relax, let us talk about another revoke which occurred in an European Championship, Villamoura '95 this time:

	♠ A 9	
	♥ 6	
	♦ A K J 10 4 2	
	♣ J 10 8 4	
♠ Q J 7 4	N	♠ 10 8
♥ K 10 8 7	W	♥ A Q 4 3 2
♦ Q 7 5	E	♦ 9 8 3
♣ 9 3	S	♣ Q 5 2
	♠ K 6 5 3 2	
	♥ J 9 5	
	♦ 6	
	♣ A K 7 6	

North is declarer in 6♣. East leads ♥A and continues with ♥Q ruffed. North leads ♣J and wins with the ace in dummy. Now ♠2 to the ace and East, not believing all these switches of suits continues to play clubs, the 5. Nobody notices this or realises that such ruff makes you the owner of the trick, so North continues in spades to the K, East following suit, and a spade ruffed, East following suit. After three rounds of a suit being played with 6 outstanding cards and both defenders following suit in the third round the remaining two cards are high. What a relief! Declarer takes his chance and plays his last club to the ace and oh wonder, the Q and 9 drop! Another club for superfluous safety reasons and a claim. Somewhat astonished West shows the ♠Q and ♥K and suggests to call it two off. North persists that the ♠Q can't be in West anymore and the TD needs some time to find out what has happened. Be the TD please.

B3

The well known case where dummy puts 12 cards on the table with a void in the suit in which he originally had a minor card. Playing 6♠ declarer ruffs twice in that suit in dummy. Or – why not? – three times. There are no penalty tricks for this ‘trick’ but for sure there is a rectification. L64C tells the TD to assign an adjusted score. And what he should do is finding out what would have happened had this hidden card be on the table. If the first lead was the ace in that suit it would have won that trick, while leading another suit might lead to the same 13 tricks. L64C does not say that doubtful points should be resolved in favour of the defenders. No need to come to a fixed number of tricks, if there are two or more reasonable ways to play the contract a weighted score is quite possible. And I even am willing to accept such weighted score in case of a claim, not because the claim itself might be doubtful, but because it is based on the false idea not to loose a trick in that suit. And please do not come up with the statement that the defenders should have been aware of the missing card in dummy.

B4

Once again: this means that no penalty tricks are given anymore. But we still need to apply L64C if attention is drawn to the revoke after the non offending side has made a call on the next board. No player should have an advantage by creating a revoke. We take that away. Whether the TD is called at the table somewhat late, whether a spectator is telling the TD

about this revoke, even if the TD is watching and becomes aware of a revoke not noticed otherwise, he should adjust the score if the revoke benefits the offending side. See also L81C3.

L64C itself

Let us go back to the first case. West revoked not playing a heart when declarer demanded such play. So L64A applies, two penalty tricks to the declaring side. But if not revoking gives the opponents more tricks L64C tells the TD to adjust the score. And there are an easy 12 tricks for declarer, he didn't ask for a heart lead for fun.

The application of L64C in case of a repeated revoke makes things somewhat complicated. Don't make the mistake to apply L64C and L64A simultaneously in case of a single revoke. It is either 64A or 64C. The combination only exists with 64A for the first revoke and 64C for the second (third) in the same suit by the same player.

A wrong claim

Revoke may create nice problems and claims are famous for such problems too. So what happens if we combine both. A player claims and rather peculiar adds a statement to his claim. The more so because he announces to ruff the trick in progress after which it appears that he can follow suit.

The solution is disappointing easy, though we might need to put you on the right track. We do not consider such an announcement to plan a revoke to be dealt with using L64. No penalty tricks. But we take the statement seriously. If claimer announces to revoke he may. But only if he does not win more tricks than without the revoke. Otherwise the claim is doubtful – you may say that it is doubtful anyway – and the TD decides what score to assess.

Let us see:

		♠ 5	
		♥ 8 7	
		♦ ---	
		♣ 5 4	
♠ 10 9		N	♠ J 7
♥ ---		W	♥ 4
♦ 10		E	♦ 8 3
♣ 9 6		S	♣ ---
		♠ 8	
		♥ 10 9	
		♦ 7 5	
		♣ ---	

South plays a heart contract, West leads ♠ 10 and South claims telling to ruff the spade and to crossruff losing only the last trick. Hopefully the defenders discover the revoke in which case the TD will decide that South only wins two tricks, deciding that East wins this trick and returns a trump.

If instead South puts down the ♥ 9 as a played card and then tells to start crossruffing we have to go to L63A3, the revoke has become established. In this case it leads to the same result, we transfer two of the four trick to EW. But assume that the result with an established revoke is better for the offender than not revoking, then we have to apply L64C again.