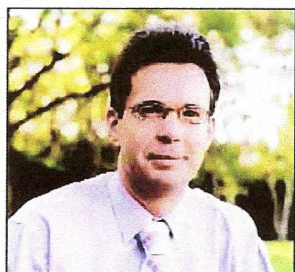


Revokes: The New Rules

by Bernard Magee



Revokes are the cause of much embarrassment at the table, but at last, the rules have been changed to save us!

We are all used to dummy's oft used question: 'Having none, partner?'

If dummy asks the question every time declarer fails to follow suit (as he is allowed to) then the declarer should not establish a revoke, because even if he does have a card in the suit, he will be in time to replace the wrongly played card.

Now the rules have been changed to allow defenders to ask the same question, so we should be able to reach a game of revoke-less bridge!

I advise all players to get into the habit of asking the above question: 'Having none, partner?' every time partner fails to follow suit (for the first time in a suit).

The penalty for a revoke can be quite severe, whilst if you discover the revoke at the time, the player is able to replace his card with a correct one. Then the only penalty is that his exposed card becomes a 'major penalty card'.

A major penalty card: the card played erroneously, remains face-up on the table and must be played at the first legal opportunity. There are also a few other penalties that apply if your partner gets the lead when you have a penalty card on the table – you should call

over a friendly director to have these explained – the declarer can forbid or demand a lead of the penalty-card suit, in which case the leader must obey (if possible). Note that, in this case the penalty card is picked up and the defender does not have to play it – the declarer does not have to exercise this option in which case, the player on lead can lead anything and the penalty card remains on the table.

For example:

♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —
♦ K 7 6	♦ Q 4 2
♣ K Q	♣ A 3
♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —
♦ A 9 5 3	♦ Q 4 2
♣ 4	♣ A 3
♠ —	♠ —
♥ —	♥ —
♦ J 10	♦ Q 4 2
♣ 7 6 2	♣ A 3

In no-trumps, declarer leads a club on which West discards the nine of diamonds: he was too keen to make a signal! East asks: 'Having none, partner?' and West realises what he has done, so he puts the ♣4 on the trick instead of the ♦9, but the ♦9 is left face up on the side of the table. East wins the trick and, before he leads, declarer can exercise one of his options and here he decides he would like a diamond lead. East has to do as he says and therefore leads the ♦2. Meanwhile, West picks up the ♦9 and puts it back in his hand. West decides to take the ♦A and now the play continues as normal – the penalty has been served. In the end,

declarer makes the two tricks he was going to make: one club and one diamond.

Had the revoke stood, then the play would have continued as normal with declarer making the same two tricks, but this time, there would have been a one-trick penalty. The revoke law itself has been simplified*: if the offender does not win the revoke trick (himself) then there is only a one trick penalty, whilst if he does win the revoke trick the penalty would be two tricks (although only tricks won on and after the revoke trick can be lost). It is much more satisfactory to have the revoke discovered before it becomes established and thereby avoid the harsh penalties and the difficulties of the law.

The reason why some penalty is required is because you have shown your partner your card: you have given him 'unauthorised information' to use rulespeak. On the example shown, West had wanted to signal to his partner about his lovely ace of diamonds: his early play of the nine of diamonds has given this information to partner before he should have it, so it is not unreasonable to give declarer the opportunity to ban a diamond lead if he should so wish.

I find that revokes cause many of the difficulties at bridge tables: either through embarrassment or through misinterpretation of the rules. The more we can avoid them the better, so take advantage of the new rules and keep asking your partner 'Having none, partner?' ■

*The new revoke law does not apply to rubber bridge.