
"Run the Diamonds."

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♠--
♥--
♦KQ109
♣J3

Immaterial

Immaterial

♠1064
♥--
♦73
♣5

About eight months ago, I was faced with the following interesting situation. Declarer was on the table (his only loser being the ♣3). He now instructed dummy to "Run the Diamonds". On the first round instead of following, he pitched a spade. Dummy now placed the ♦Q in a played position and while East was contributing a card to this second trick, Declarer said "stop", at the same time indicating his wish to correct the revoke.

Occasionally I am a participant on BLML (the Internet Laws discussion group), so I submitted the above scenario, together with the following questions: "Is the revoke established? If the answer is yes, at what point did it become established? If the answer is no, at what point would it have become established?"

As is typical, a number of rapid responses followed and since I believe many were instructive, I have quoted below (in chronological order) some of the varied viewpoints expressed.

Tony Edwards: I would argue that no, it is not an established revoke. Declarer must designate a card to play to the next trick, and has not done so. Yes, he has stated his intent to run diamonds, but that is not binding.

Adam Beneschan: Dummy's card has not been played, and therefore the revoke has not been established I'd say it would become established when declarer plays; or when he gives some indication of approval that the card dummy detached is the one he actually wanted to play, which I'm going to rule is equivalent to "naming" the card and therefore playing it.

Roger Pewick: The ♦Q was designated in the same manner as the ♦K. In fact it was plain that the intent of the designation was to play a succession of diamonds until they were exhausted. This is clear because declarer did not protest the play of the

king to the first trick, nor of the queen to the next trick. He protested that he had revoked after his RHO played. Sounds like an established revoke to me.

John Probst: Declarer gave approval for the play of the ♦Q by saying "play the diamond king, then the diamond queen then the diamond ten then the diamond nine" - or words to that effect. The revoke was established as soon as dummy put the card in the played position.

Hirsch Davis: Dummy's mechanics have nothing at all to do with whether or not a card is played. If we accept that "run the diamonds" is sufficient for Declarer to have designated a card in advance, then that card would be considered played as soon as it was legal to do so. At that point, it is Dummy's turn to play, Declarer has designated a card, and the rest is irrelevant mechanics. If we don't accept the proposition that "run the diamonds" is a legitimate designation of a card to the next trick, then Dummy has not yet played and the revoke is not established. In my opinion "run the diamonds" is a very clear designation of Declarer's play even though the format is not as specified in the laws, and the revoke is established.

Grattan Endicott: Dummy places the ♦Q in a played position after it has been played. In normal play a lead to a trick is only made when it is indisputable who is on lead after the previous trick has been quitted. So prima facie we are looking for a point within the indicated range. It seems to me that this point is in the instant after the quitting of the previous trick. Declarer has already made his intention known to dummy and at this juncture I think there is a dumb communication with partner which would constitute a means by which declarer "otherwise designates a card to be played to the following trick" [Law 63A2].

David Stevenson: Bridge is played one trick at a time, so that the instruction is not one that has to be followed, and really constitutes a statement of intent. Thus declarer is allowed to change his mind. Presumably therefore he has not actually played from dummy until he indicates it. Thus the revoke is not established.

Grattan Endicott: This is not practical bridge, is it? Consider how often dummy is told to run a suit, he plays the next card of it, and declarer is satisfied. If it is said that card is not played, declarer's RHO has to sit there and wait for something to happen. Is that how the game is played in practice? Or do all four players know the trick is in progress? If so, then there must have been some kind of communication to trigger the lead.

David Stevenson: As far as practical bridge is concerned I do not see a problem. If declarer has said "Run the diamonds " then when a trick is finished and dummy reaches for the next club, declarer will say something if he does not wish it to be played. Fine, that is practical, and if nothing goes wrong, few people argue, but it does not make it a legal way of playing a card. Of course, it would be better if declarers did not say "Run the diamonds", but do you think we can sensibly ban them? Think of all the club players around the world!

Hirsch Davis: In my opinion we can't bind Declarer to run an entire suit on a single command, should events transpire that cause him to change his mind. The questions at hand are:

- 1) Should advance designation of a card to be played be permitted at all?
- 2) If advance designation is to be permitted, at what point is a card so designated considered played?

LK: Notice how the discussion had shifted from addressing the specific revoke problem to the more general situation of what should happen when the declarer fails to follow correct procedure in playing cards from dummy. When I was required to rule on the original scenario, I decided that the revoke had been established and ruled accordingly. However I was far from certain about the issues that I subsequently raised.

Last month in Bermuda the WBF Laws Commission (presumably at Endicott's urging) addressed this very topic and released the following minute:

WBFLC: "Being aware that Declarers sometimes give an instruction to Dummy to run a suit and then leave him to do this without giving, as is procedurally correct, a separate instruction for each card. A question can arise as to when the second, or a later, card is played from dummy, since the Declarer is not able to stop play of the card once it is played. The Committee ruled that the card is deemed to be played when Declarer's RHO follows to the trick. However, the committee deprecates instructions given to Dummy in this irregular manner."

LK: So a solution to the problems associated with instructions such as "Run the diamonds" has been found. In the future, declarer will be able to countermand his original instruction regarding subsequent tricks providing his RHO opponent has not played to that subsequent trick. Hence in the original problem I posed, the revoke (by implication) was not correctable once East followed to the ♦Q.