

Rick's Tricks

THEY DON'T HAVE X-RAY VISION

By Rick Roeder

Rickro51@hotmail.com



Mark Perlmutter and I needed some practice before playing in an online KO tournament. He asked if I wanted to play a Speedball or two. While I like Speedballs, I came up with a better idea: I got a good pair to play against us. There are a number of mediocre pairs in a Speedball, and you do not have a lot of time to think on difficult hands. I am a big believer in playing against the best competition available, even if your brains occasionally get beat in.

Mark and I had a simple Stayman auction to 3 No Trump after my 2 No Trump opener. The $\heartsuit 5$ was led as I regarded our assets:

Dummy	Declarer
$\spadesuit A964$	$\spadesuit KQJ$
$\heartsuit J74$	$\heartsuit K1063$
$\diamondsuit J874$	$\diamondsuit AK$
$\clubsuit 74$	$\clubsuit KJ102$

The good book says you want to be in 3 No Trump with a combined 26 HCP. On this hand, it sure looked like the good book was caught in a great fib. One of the reasons for the weakness in my contract is that dummy had only one entry. If our HCP were more equally divided, I suspect we would have had a much better shot.

After winning the Diamond ten with my Ace, I did not know what to do. Most avenues looked like various shades of hopeless. Out of desperation, I thought of a play with some sex appeal: the $\heartsuit K$. Maybe Hearts would break 3-3 and I could build a second Heart trick. Ducked around. Interesting. If Spades behaved, I was up to 7 tricks with some added prospects. I decided to switch to Spades at trick 3. If the Spades were good for 4 tricks, the opponents would have to find a find a discard(s) that could prove helpful. Spades broke 3-3.

When the 13th Spade was cashed, RHO pitched the $\clubsuit 3$ and LHO shed the $\diamondsuit 3$. Their carding was upside down but I was wary as I have been repeatedly indoctrinated to the notion of Fake News. I pitched the $\clubsuit 2$.

At trick 7, I played a Diamond to my King. At trick 8, I played a Heart toward the Jack. The Ace popped up on my left. To my surprise and great pleasure, the dame came out of RHO's mitt. Making!

While their defense looked a bit silly, this was a quality pair. My LHO made a very reasonable assumption on my play of the ♥K at Trick 2, that I also possessed the Queen. He wanted to deny me an early entry to the dummy. Holding 4 Hearts, perhaps he should have gobbled up my King, but he lacked X-Ray vision. When he rose with the ♥A at Trick 8, he played me for an initial holding of KQxx. If my original Heart holding was KQ10x, popping Ace would not cost and would block the suit since the “popper” started with A952.

Like most expert pairs, they use some form of the Smith convention (when Declarer leads a suit at trick 2, attitude is given toward the opening leader’s suit). Even if they did not play Smith, the 8 is ambiguous since they play upside down carding.

In retrospect, my ♥K play looked like a brilliancy but it was not. Just a matter of trying something that looked less hopeless than any of the alternatives. The mere act of not giving up often can reflect the illusion of brilliance.

Later in the session, I overcalled 1♣ with 1♥.

Holding:

♠K ♥J10985 ♦KQ8x ♣Jxx.

The entire auction:

RHO	Me	LHO	Pard
1♣	1♥	1♠	P
1NT	P	2♥	P
2NT	P	3NT	(all pass)

Decide what you would lead before reading on.

I confess that I am a traditionalist when it comes to belief in leading 4th from longest and strongest against No Trump. I am appalled that the passive leads advocated by David Bird & Company have gained traction. I categorize this school of thought as “Bird brain” for the following reason: Your shorter suits tend to be their longer suits. Why assist in their task?

My lead decision relates to a Sherlock Holmes whodunit, “Silver Blaze.” A murder was solved because a dog did NOT bark. Mark did not double 2♥. He would have done so with a high Heart honor. I decided to lead the ♦K and was amply rewarded when Mark held ♦J10 sixth.

The 2♥ cue bidder had an interesting bidding problem after his partner’s 1 No Trump rebid.

Holding:

♠Q109xxx ♥Kxx ♦void ♣AQ10x

If game was making, it could be in any of 3 strains. How would you have planned the bidding?

For me, bridge is like a drug. If I do something reflective of serious brain damage, it really brings me down as I wonder if I am one of the dumbest SOB’s that has ever walked on planet Earth. After this session, the opposite occurred. I felt really good the balance of the evening. ♣