

Rick's Tricks

MICHAEL JACKSON'S SECRET OBSESSION!



By Rick Roeder

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During the Trump presidency, the media repeatedly came under scathing criticism. However, their foibles were quite apparent well before the 21st century. To wit: The press was so titillated and preoccupied with Michael Jackson's alleged sleepmates that its abject failure to report on his passion for bridge was equally brazen and stunning.

Michael held an excellent hand, playing matchpoints:

♠Kxx

♥AQxxx

♦Ax

♣Axx

Imagine the superstar's pleasant surprise that his partner opened 1 No Trump. Plan your auction before reading on.

Michael knew a slam was going to be bid. "Small" or "grand"? Strain was also going to be an issue. Jackson was always uber eager for those invaluable extra 10 points in No Trump as his greedy outlook reflected an attitude of *Don't Stop Until You Get Enough*. He thought that bidding 2♦ then 5 No Trump was a good plan except he was worried Pard might think he was asking for whether Pard held two of the top 3 Heart honors. (His worries were heedless. His partner, sister Janet, was a solid player who was happy the duo was *Together Again*.)

Jackson settled on Stayman and was again pleasantly surprised to hear 2♥. Michael then took *Control* of the auction with 4♣, asking for key cards. Pard's 4♠ response indicated two key cards without the ♥Q. For No Trump, he was a bit put off by his total lack of intermediates. If Pard had either a doubleton Spade or a losing Diamond, he sagely thought that a ruff could provide a 13th trick. He went big, bidding 7♥.

Janet's hand:

♠Axx

♥KJxxx

♦Kx

♣KQx

ARGH! Mirror distribution. Jackson channeled his angst to later pen *Man In The Mirror*.

Later, at red versus white, he held this hand in 4th seat:

♠ AQx
♥ KJxx
♦ Axx
♣ xx

The auction had proceeded:

LHO	PARD	RHO	MJ
3♣	P	3NT	?

Jackson respected the 3 No Trump call and passed. His RHO was none other than Diana Ross. Among all the superstars discovered by Motown, he and Diana were the two most luminous. *Dirty Diana* stole the pot with her 3NT bid, holding:

♠ Kxx
♥ xxx
♦ Qxxx
♣ xxx

Chagrined that his side could make either 4♥ or 4♠, Jackson later paid Supreme homage to the enterprising Ross with *Smooth Criminal*.

Next, at all white, Jackson held a nondescript mitt of:

♠ 10742
♥ Q3
♦ QJ63
♣ 53

The superstar heard:

PARD	RHO	MJ	LHO
1NT	P	P	Dbl?
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	2♠	Dbl	(All pass)

?4 of a major and a longer minor

Jackson's double was aggressive but not unreasonable in matchpoints. If 1NT was making +90, the importance of getting +100 in beating 2♠ by one trick, doubled, was paramount.

When an opponent shows a 2-suiter, a trump lead is often best. Jackson would later rue his decision to lead the ♥Q. Pard encouraged as he perused this dummy:

♠ A93
♥ J10xx
♦ x

♣QJ853

Looking at the stiff Diamond in dummy and his sturdy diamond holding, Michael had another chance to lead a trump at trick 2 but Jackson was still preoccupied that a trump switch might blow a trump trick. Fatefully, he decided to play another heart. Janet won tricks 2 and 3 with her top Hearts. The ♣K was cashed at trick 4 as Michael discouraged. Janet decided to play a Heart at trick 5 so that dummy's now-good ♥J could be neutralized by a ruff. Michael ruffed with the trump 10 but Declarer overruffed with the Jack. Declarer then rattled off ♦A, Diamond ruff, Club Ruff, Diamond Ruff, Club Ruff, Diamond Ruff with the Ace. Declarer scored up +470 by taking the ♦A and EACH of his 7 trumps separately. OUCH!

Janet castigated Michael's lack of a trump lead or trump shift at trick 2, opining that his lead was as simple as *ABC* and proved monumentally *Bad*. Jackson felt even worse when sis tartly continued, "We should *Beat It*." Little sister cannot resist one last dig, "That was really *Nasty*, big brother." Michael meekly responded, "To occasionally misdefend is just *Human Nature*."

Still deeply agitated by the previous hand's *Escapade* and wanting to *Scream*, Janet tilted out and made an *Off The Wall* 3♥ preempt with ♠xx ♥J9xxxxx ♦Jxx ♣x. The bid received real punishment, richly deserved.

Happily, after all this misery, the session ends on a very high note, ending with one of Michael's patented yelps. At all red, Michael, knowing his sister's favorite suit was *Diamonds*, opened a very marginal 1♦ to humor her, holding:

♠Kx
♥xx
♦AQxxxxx
♣xx

The auction perks up:

MJ	LHO	JANET	RHO
1♦	1♠	2♥	3♥
P	3♠	Dbl	P
3NT	P	P	Dbl

(all pass)

Regretting that he opened so light, Michael wanted no part of 3♠ doubled.

The opening lead was the ♠J, as Jackson perused Janet's dummy:

♠xx
♥AQJxxx
♦Jx
♣Kx

Michael gobbled up the King. He led a Heart toward the Jack and was almost too scared to see if it won. Hallelujah!! What a *Thriller*!! He ran the ♦J. He gobbled up RHO's King. Now, another heart to the Queen. Both followed *Again*. He was making 3NT doubled with only 20 combined HCP! He winked at Janet and happily said, *Enjoy Yourself*. It would get better for the Jacksons. Much better! Diamonds broke 2-2! After scooping up all 13 tricks, Michael could not fathom the score. Sixty seconds later, the table settled on 1550. The opponents were in a *State of Shock* as they realized they could take the first 12 tricks on a Club lead for an unheard of score: 2300.

Jackson's left hand opponent, some singer by the name of Mick, immediately asked Janet if she would play with him in the future as he was so impressed with her game. "I can't get no *Satisfaction* from any of my current partners," he lamented. "Plus, you are a *P.Y.T.*," as he leered at Janet. Michael glared at him and curtly responded, "*Get Off Of My Cloud.*" "*The Girl is Mine.*" Mick responded, "No problem, Michael. I don't *Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'* with you. *She's Out of My Life.*"

In a bizarre manner, Michael Jackson reminded me of my hapless Little League teammate, Rick Vaught. One year in Little League, we had an odd number of teams. Thus, on any given date of play, one team would be idle. However, that did not keep Rick Vaught from showing up at the field in full uniform when our opponent was listed in the schedule as "BYE". The poor soul was also a terrible fielder as he could never field a ball hit at him. Michael and Rick Vaught had one weird element in common: both wore one glove for no apparent reason. ♣