

Rick's Tricks

EVEL'S PREFERENCE

By Rick Roeder

Rickro51@hotmail.com



Evel Knievel was not a bridge player. If he had been, the legendary daredevil would have scoffed at IMPs. For every exciting hand, there often are several tame counterparts. Ever the adrenaline junkie, Knievel would have experienced many more thrills in matchpoints.

Two examples:

EXAMPLE #1: I found myself playing in a 4♠ contract that would have been **BORING** at IMPs.

My LHO opened 1♦ and I soon found myself in 4♠. I perused our assets:

DUMMY

♠AJ

♥Kx

♦Kxx

♣AKQ1087

ME

♠KQ10954

♥Qxx

♦xx

♣53

I received the ♣2 lead. This looked like a routine hand in IMPs, matchpoints or Skittles. If Clubs behaved, I have an easy 12 tricks. The complexion changed when I cashed the ♠A at trick 2. LHO pitched a Diamond. Even with the 5-0 division, I can easily extract all the trumps. However, the prospect of a 3-2 club break is diminished. I reflected that my RHO had played the ♣6 at Trick 1. After perusing the opponents' convention card, I received little guidance as they use 4th-best leads. If they employed leads of third and fifth versus a suit, I would have trusted the ♣2 lead and assumed a 3-2 club break .

As I extracted trumps, Lefty pitched 3 Diamonds and 2 Hearts. Dummy had to make 3 pitches. With 12 tricks still on my wish list, being the greedy SOB that I am, I pitched both Dummy's Hearts and a Diamond. Reflecting further, I knew the 1♦ opener could not hold 0553, else a 1♥ opener. This skewed the probability of the opening bidder holding 4 clubs a bit higher.

I stewed. In IMPs, we would already have moved on to the next hand. An additional psychological element burdened me. Nobody wants to look like a total idiot, taking a losing finesse of the ♣10. A lot of excellent plays in bridge are left on the drawing board because of what Jeff Selbst once astutely wrote in a Bridge World article as the “H Factor”, “H” standing for humiliation. If Evel had taken up bridge, he would have had one edge on the expert community, as he would have been absolutely fearless.

Bridge being a timed event, I eventually had to play. I made Evel’s play and inserted the ♣10. When Righty produced the Jack, I wanted to vomit. Righty noticed that Dummy’s third pitch on the fifth Spade squeezed the Dummy out of a red suit stopper. A Heart was returned and I went down one on a hand frigid for five!

Was my finesse of the 10 too reckless? If clubs broke 3-2, finessing the Jack was a 2-1 favorite with 3 remaining Clubs unseen. And always right if Clubs did break 4-1. I am guessing that a simulation would indicate that the original 68%, a priori odds of 3-2 Club break have dropped to 40-45%. With this analysis, Evel would be proud of my go-for-it attitude. I would make the same play again. But why does that not ease the pain?

Evel would have scoffed at how timid our auction seemed to him.

LHO	PARD	RHO	YOU
1♦	DBL	P	2♠
P	3NT	P	4♠

(all pass)

Always yearning for a scary, but enthralling, top, Evel would have passed 3 No Trump with my hand.

EXAMPLE #2: At matchpoints, the opponents are red:

You hold:

♠KQxx ♥J10 ♦AQxxx ♣Kx

The auction proceeds:

YOU	LHO	PARD	RHO
1♦	1♥	2♦	2♥
3♦	3♥	P	P
?			

Do you think you can make 3♦? Give Pard the ♦K and a useful black card. I rate the contract as a favorite. If you lose 2 Hearts, 1 Spade and 1 Club, bingo. Alas, the pesky opponents have bid 3♥. At IMPs, you would let 3♥ go. You are usually happy to cede the 3 level to the opponents (*Barry Crane once said, “The even levels are for us and the odd levels are for the opponents”*). A complication: If you beat 3♥ 1 trick in matchpoints, your +100 will lag behind +110. You have

absolutely no assurance of beating 3♥, but the risk/reward suggests a matchpoint double followed by some degree of prayer.

Pard leads a low diamond and you see this dummy:

♠10xx ♥K9xx ♦xxx ♣QJ109

You win the ♦A. Pard rates to have 4 Diamonds so a second Diamond is quite unlikely to cash. You hopefully play the ♠K at Trick 2 as Pard gives you a thumbs up. You play a low Spade at trick 3 as you see Pard's ♠A. Pard follows with a third round of Spades, you playing the Queen, as you take a deep breath to see if Lefty follows. YES!! You know who holds the ♣A. Pard rates to have the ♦K in addition to their ♠A. You see only one path to nirvana. Your 13th Spade hits the table. Pard produces the ♥Q. You have beaten a doubled contract via a trump promotion. Truly Evel worthy! A rush higher than produced by any amount of illicit drugs. And legal, to boot! Sure, you were quite fortunate but fortune often smiles on the brave. You are frigid for 3♦. If an undoubled 3♥ made, you were slated for average minus.

If Evel was a bridge player, he would have much preferred the Fall Nationals to the others. Why? Prestigious Board-A-Match events. If you think matchpoints is exciting.....♣