

# Rick's Tricks

## THE PSEUDO SUICIDE

By Rick Roeder

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One of my all-time favorite movies was *M\*A\*S\*H*. If ever there was a funny satire demonstrating that war is often both futile and absurd, *M\*A\*S\*H* was that movie. Its clever theme song expressed that “*Suicide is painless. It can bring on many changes.*”

However, in bridge, which for the deepest fanatics in us is as large as life, if not larger, suicide is quite painful. Regard the following hand:

DECLARER	DUMMY
♠ AJ52	♠ 1064
♥ 10x	♥ AQ8x
♦ 10xx	♦ AQ
♣ AKQ10	♣ Jxxx

In an IMP game, our simple auction.

PARD	ME
1NT	2♣
2♠	3NT
P	

An editorial comment on the auction: In your serious partnerships, a discussion is needed as to the frequency of opening 1 No Trump with a 5 card major. In most expert partnerships, getting the balanced nature and HCP off your chest in one bid is considered more important than showing a 5-card major in your opener. If you concur, I cannot recommend use of Puppet Stayman strongly enough.

In my partnership with Alan Watson, we do not use Puppet Stayman even though we frequently open 1NT with a 5-card major. (Happily, we later switched to a 3 club response over 1 No Trump to ask for a 5 carder.) Looking at my weakish Clubs, I was uncomfortable with our auction. If Pard happened to have 5 Spades, I would have felt better in a 4♠ contract.

The opening lead was the ♦7 and I felt a pit in my stomach. Dummy's ♦Q lost to the ♦K as my pit grew larger. A Diamond went back to the ♦A. I was now thinking that this contract might be as wrong-sided as the West-bound drunk, doing 95 MPH, who meandered on the Eastbound Interstate entrance at 2AM.

Declarer now played a Club to his ♣A and, to my surprise, Alan played a Diamond at trick 4. His RHO quickly grabbed the Jack. Appreciating Declarer's unexpected generosity, he played off 2 more Diamond winners as the opening leader shed 2 Clubs.

Without hesitation, RHO shifted to the ♠9. Alan rose Ace and started rattling off club tricks. At trick 9, Alan won the penultimate Club in his hand as he noted LHO's discard of the ♠Q. When the last Club was cashed at trick 10, let's look at the remaining cards:

LHO		
♠K		
♥KJ9		
DECLARER	♦—	DUMMY
♠J	♣—	♠—
♥10x		♥AQ8
♦—		♦—
♣K		♣x

When the ♣K was cashed at trick 10, LHO was crushed. In essence, his Partner's cashing of the 5<sup>th</sup> Diamond was a key element in the opening leader getting squeezed. When Partner plays a key role in squeezing you by cashing a winner, the bridge terminology is a "suicide squeeze." Making 3!

Did this happen in real life? True confession: NO! However, something even cooler happened in Walt Schafer's invitational game with hands not too dissimilar to my hypothetical layout.

Here were the actual hands with the same auction as above:

DECLARER	DUMMY
♠ AQ62	♠ 953
♥ 10x	♥ A954
♦ 10xx	♦ AQ
♣ AKQ10	♣ Jxxx

The opening leader did make an inspired lead of the ♦7, holding.

♠J108 ♥K863 ♦754 ♣ 865

The first 4 tricks went exactly the same way as in my hypothetical. Alan, a gifted declarer, realized that if Diamonds were 5-3, he had no viable way to get to 9 tricks. His counterintuitive Diamond play at Trick 4 proved to be sheer genius. By cutting their communications, he was setting the stage for a Pseudo Suicide Squeeze. Naturally, 2 more Diamond winners were cashed at Tricks 5 and 6. At tricks 5 and 6, the opening leader discarded the ♣5 and the ♥6, using standard signals. How would you have discarded? Discarding the ♥8 instead of the ♥6 would likely have been a stronger play.

But, wait! Did you note the key point I glossed over? At Trick 5, Alan's RHO is left with two Diamond winners: the ♦9 and the ♦2. The order in which they are cashed is important as potentially critical suit preference information is transmitted to partner. The 9 was cashed before the deuce. Let's peek at his hand.

Alan's RHO started with:

♠K74 ♥QJ5 ♦KJ962 ♣9x

Perhaps the 9 was cashed before the 2 to indicate the lack of a Club card. This defender is a multiple National champion, so he is not your average Joe. However, Declarer's earlier play to his ♣A at Trick 3 indicated strength in the Club suit. Thus, I think any suit preference inferences should relate ONLY to Hearts and Spades. Since he "knows" he has a defensive Heart trick but does not know that his ♠K will prove to be a defensive trick, I believe he should show a preference for Hearts. Thus, I think his correct defense is to play the ♦2 at Trick 5 and the ♦9 at Trick 6.

At Trick 7, the ♠4 was returned. Alan won the Queen, with his LHO playing the ♠8 (*do you think the ♠J would be stronger defense? I do, in part, because the ♠8 is ambiguous*) Tricks 8-10 resulted in Clubs being cashed with the 4-card ending shown. At Trick 10, Declarer was in his hand, which put more pressure on the opening leader to find the right discard when the ♣10 was played.

DECLARER	
♠A6	
♥10	
♦—	
♣10	
RHO	LHO
♠K	♠J10
♥QJ5	♥K8
♦—	♦—
♣—	♣—
DUMMY	
♠9	
♥A9	
♦—	
♣J	

LHO pitched the ♠J. Making an impossible 3 No Trump. Yes, both defenders could have done better, but this was not a trivial hand to defend. As for Alan, who made a terrific play of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Diamond to induce a memorable Pseudo Suicide Squeeze: That's my partner!! ♣