

Rick's Tricks

THE DANGER OF PARANOIA

By Rick Roeder

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If you watched hit 1970s TV shows such as “Happy Days” with The Fonz or “Laverne and Shirley”, you might be misled into thinking the 1950s was an entirely lighthearted era in America. However, these sitcoms ignored that Joe McCarthy was frantically looking for Communists, real and false, under every rock. When Nikita Khrushchev told Americans that “We will bury you”, his threat from Moscow became the impetus for homes to be built with bomb shelters and for students to do practice drills to get under their desks in case of foreign attack.

Thankfully, those days have passed. However, for bridge players, paranoia remains when it comes to doubling part scores into game, especially at IMPs. To a degree, such paranoia is healthy. However, like McCarthyism, paranoia can lead to less-than-optimum outcomes.

You are playing IMPs, at all red, and hold an unremarkable hand of:

♠J10x ♥A10754 ♦75 ♣532

The auction proceeds:

LHO	PARD	RHO	YOU
1♦	P	1♥	P
1♠	P	2♥	P
P	Dbl	P	?

One of the many beauties of bridge is that you can have an interesting decision, even on hands that start off as extremely uninteresting. Decide your action before bidding.

OK, OK, you read my earlier text and got “the wire” that I was encouraging you to pass. But would you really pass after Pard has passed at his first two opportunities? After all, you should know that a devious mind like mine is capable of double crossing you. So, reconsider if need be, and make your final choice.

Is Pard making a balancing double after the opponents have rested at the 2 level? If so, it is a bit bizarre as the opponents have bid 3 suits. If Pard had good Clubs, he twice had chances to overcall 2♣. If Pard had 5 Spades, he had a chance to overcall 1♠ and did not do that either.

You should come to one initial conclusion: Pard must have a hand with good Diamonds. Next, you wonder about how good Pard’s hand is: If Pard had a hand with long Diamonds and not much else, Pard could have bid 2 natural Diamonds at his second turn. Again, his “Sounds of Silence”

as this reference sends Simon and Garfunkel fans into ecstasy. Would he encourage you to bid on a hand that might be a total misfit? No.

You should conclude that Pard has a quality hand. And, yes, you should pass. One key consideration is that the hand will play poorly for declarer as the strength in your partnership's red suits are behind their length.

Pard's hand:

♠KQ42 ♥8 ♦KQ853 ♣AK10

My expert partner bailed and bid 3♣ as he did want to have -670 on his conscience. His "safety bid" resulted in -200 in our inelegant 3-3 fit. A pass nets +500. Lose 12 IMPs. I realize that some would take immediate action over the 1 Diamond opener but I am an advocate of Phil Read's 36 rules, one of which is, "When your RHO opens your best suit, you pass."

In IMPs, red versus white, RHO, the dealer, opens proceedings with 3♣. You hold,

♠Qxxx ♥xx ♦xx ♣J108xx

After 2 passes, Pard doubles. What do you do? You could bid 3♠. On the surface, this bid is beyond reproach. Pard gives you a boost to 4♠ holding:

♠Axxx ♥AKQxx ♦QJ10x ♣void

Your LHO pounds 4♠. LHO's trump holding of KJ10x dooms your contract. -200. While this was slightly unlucky, remember that the odds of a 3-2 trump break decrease significantly when Righty announces their preempt. If you had passed 3♣ doubled, you would collected 300. When your Pard doubled, you knew Pard had a good hand as your LHO made no effort to try for game. Thus, you had an inkling that Pard might not subside after your 3♠ bid – yet another good reason to pass Pard's double.

If the opponents occasionally make a doubled part score against you, you can wear your -670/-470 as a badge of honor as long as there are relatively few recurrences. Some advertising good will come if you develop a reputation as a trigger happy doubler. Your opponents may take the low road in close situations. No less a sage than Eddie Kantar says that if the opponents never make a doubled contract against you, you are not doubling enough. Listen to Eddie: he's one smart dude! ♣