

# *Rick's Tricks*

## **THE FAB FOUR UNDER HOUSE ARREST**

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During Beatlemania, one would have presumed that the Beatles had it made: Fame, riches, undying admiration and a vast array of women who would give absolutely anything to be at their beck and call. For a fleeting period, their life was indeed nirvana. But the magnitude of their fame proved so daunting that they could not go out in public without being mobbed. Can you imagine having your first TV exposure to the American public being witnessed by 73 million viewers during a time when USA population was much smaller than today? Billboard's April 4, 1964 Hot 100 Singles chart provided added testimony: For the first week ever (and, to date, the only time), the same artist achieved the unthinkable feat of holding each of the top 5 positions! The Beatles could not even find solace during their concerts. Given the ear-bending decibel level from the screaming hordes, hearing the accompanying music from their mates became impossible.

During their touring, the Beatles sadly became prisoners in their hotel rooms and were utterly bored. With a seemingly endless supply of time on their hands and, at the behest of John Lennon's psychic, the Fab Four took up bridge.

Initially daunted by the game's complexity, the Beatles knew that the path to competence would be a *Long and Winding Road*. Playing with each other, their mistakes were frequent and laughable. We need "*Help*" sighed John. "Let's get a teacher. Otherwise, we're *Nowhere, Man*".

Fate took a stunning turn in 1965. Terence Reese was considered nothing short of a bridge God in England. The bridge world was rocked to its very core when Reese and his partner, Boris Schapiro, were deemed guilty of cheating during the Bermuda Bowl in Buenos Aires. Britain had to forfeit matches won against North America and Argentina. For baseball fans, to understand the magnitude of Reese's sudden fall from the mountain top, the only analogous fall from grace would have been the determination of guilt against the legendary Shoeless Joe Jackson as a result of the Black Sox scandal in the 1919 World Series.

When Reese returned from Buenos Aires, he was so shamed, total seclusion was his pitiful recourse. Meanwhile, Ringo came up with his first original idea since joining the Fab Four. "Reese does not want to be seen in public and neither do we. Let's hire him and have the bloke travel with us under an assumed name." Upon being contacted by Ringo, Reese initially balked at their offer, but Ringo assured him: "*We Can Work It Out.*"

With Reese wearing sunglasses and a fake goatee, he was unrecognizable to every member of the paparazzi except one. A Sudanese journalist swore that Reese was a stunt double for Maynard G. Krebs in Gilligan's Island. Meanwhile, 006 and 008 led a massive manhunt in London for the fallen idol.

Reese's initial efforts were less than a rousing success, as the Beatles lacked the requisite concentration. Reese got sick of hearing himself say, "*You Can't Do That.*" "You guys are making *The Fool On The Hill* look like Einstein. It's going to be many a *Hard Day's Night* if you want to master this game. Otherwise, *I'll Cry Instead.*" Paul opined, "Terence, if you just *Slow Down* a bit, we will eventually absorb your knowledge and improve. Trust us, *It Won't Be Long.*"

Improve they did. Reese happily said, "I've got to admit *It's Getting Better.*" The Beatles were so stoked when their guru explained the concept of rescue redoubles that the Fab Four penned a song in Reese's honor: *Run For Your Life*. Reese was particularly proud of John's declarer play on the following hand. Before John's triumph is shown, decide what you would lead against 6 No Trump:

Holding: ♠K8xx ♥J984 ♦109 ♣J93

The auction:

JOHN	GEORGE	PAUL	RINGO
1♦	P	1♥	P
1♠	P	2♣	P
2NT	P	4NT	P
6NT (all pass)			

Faulting George's ♦10 lead would be difficult. Let's admire John's play (ignoring that you would have bid differently):

DECLARER	DUMMY
♠A9xx	♠QJ10
♥A7x	♥KQ54
♦A764	♦KQ3
♣Kx	♣A8x

Lennon won the ♦K and took a losing Spade finesse. George played back a Spade. John cashed the rest of his red suit winners, noting that his RHO, Ringo, pitched a club on the 3rd Heart and that his LHO, George, threw a Spade on the 3rd Diamond. Lennon could not conceal his disappointment. First, a failed Spade finesse and, now, not being able to get any bloody suit to break 3-3.

For lack of anything better to do, John cashed his penultimate Spade at trick 9 as Ringo's pitch of another club seemed effortless. At trick 10, when Lennon cashed his last Spade winner, he did so with a degree of resignation. George, compelled to keep his good Heart, pitched a Club. John pitched dummy's last Heart. Ringo scowled and flipped yet another Club on the table with disgust.

Why were his mates pitching so many Clubs, Lennon wondered? He shrugged, cashed the ♠K and traveled to dummy to win the Ace. John let out a delighted yelp when he saw the delicious crash of the Jack on his left and the Queen on his right.

Reese exulted in his student's success! "John, you just executed a double squeeze. So proud of you, lad. *Maybe I'm Amazed.*" John cast him a crestfallen look. "A double squeeze is no big deal, Terence. After two of my mates, Mick and Keith, have finished a concert and are in their dressing room, they usually have quadruple or quintuple squeezes. Once *Satisfaction* came out, those boys said goodbye to their "double squeeze" days FOREVER!" Two minutes later, after some of the most persuasive rhetoric that Reese ever conjured, Lennon finally realized he had been paid a compliment.

Ringo overheard this flowery rhetoric and retorted, "Johnny, boy, you are so lucky that George was on lead and not me. It sounded like the anchor suit (the suit in which both opponents are squeezed out of a potential winner) was Clubs. Gotta lead a Club in those situations! One thing I have learned about 6NT contracts is that double squeezes pop up as regularly as spring flowers. If you can successfully attack the anchor suit at trick 1, bye bye double squeeze, after you get in with your winner and play another round of the anchor suit."

Reese's mouth fell agape at Ringo's expertise. Sure enough, leading a Club from J9x was the killer as long as another Club was led upon winning the ♠K. Developing Richard Starkey into one of the preeminent defenders *Across The Universe* against 6NT contracts was easily the greatest feat of Reese's bridge career—far surpassing his years of having to *Carry That Weight* with Schapiro and Jeremy Flint as his partners.

Ringo was preening after Terence expressed his admiration for the drummer's brilliance. Emboldened, Ringo said to John, "In return for that lesson, it is only fair that I be allowed to sing lead vocals on one more song. Only fair!!" John was instantly petrified. As brilliant as the group's three songwriters were, Lennon painfully knew that Ringo's wretched vocals were capable of mangling the most melodic masterpiece. Involuntarily, Lennon's tears started pouring down like *Rain*. However, John's mood eventually brightened as he hit on a solution. Ringo's lecture on anchors reminded him of a nautical, novelty song he had been working on involving a submarine. The damage could be minimized. Now the world knows how Ringo got to sing lead on *Yellow Submarine*.

Reese undoubtedly continued to do a brilliant job of coaching the Fab Four, so much so that the Beatles were getting bored (again) as their mastery of the game felt complete. *Something* was clearly amiss. Phase two of the Beatles' bridge odyssey came to the rescue, as new revelations coincided with their drug experimentation. *Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds* was a thinly veiled reference to their LSD fetish. What is less known is that their mind-bending trips led them on exotic journeys involving bidding theory that made Reese virtually mad and ultimately drove him to a sanitorium.

The Beatles started a bidding *Revolution* and were never given full credit for how their drug-induced pioneering permanently changed bridge. Their invention of the “forcing pass” system was ingenious. So lethal, such system is banned in 191 countries. An unsolved mystery is how Ronnie Rubin and Mike Becker fashioned the Ultimate Club to such massive success – a Big Club system with endless relays—when their brainchild was so close to what the Fab Four created in 6 days (naturally, they rested on the 7th day). Industrial espionage? 50+ years later, we may never know.

Alas, the Beatles’ creative bidding came to a screeching halt after the following, apocalyptic disaster. The lads were one of the earliest proponents of a Multi Two Diamond opener, showing a weak two opener in a major. George was in 3<sup>rd</sup> seat and heard Paul open 2♦. Righty bid 3♣ and the Quiet Beatle was looking at:

♠AJ10xxx ♥void ♦Kx ♣A7632

Loving his hand for defense, George decided to *Let It Be* in 3♣, convinced that Paul held Hearts. Soon, George was on lead. Paul had Hearts, all right, if 4 small counts as a Heart suit.

Paul’s mitt:

♠KQxxxx ♥xxxx ♦Qx ♣x

The lads were cold for 1430 and could not even beat 3♣. George’s head slumped as he kept mumbling, “*I’m A Loser.*” After this brutality, Paul ashely muttered, “I believe in *Yesterday.*” Chagrined, the Beatles reverted to basic ACOL until Yoko arrived at *The End* to break up the band.

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