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CARDOPOLIS

Easy Poker

EFFECT: A spectator selects five cards from the deck and is asked to imagine that they form a perfect poker hand. But, says the performer, one card won't help him win. One card must be discarded. Which card is it?

Without looking at the faces of the cards, the spectator discards one, say, the Nine of Clubs. He selects another card so once again there are five cards on the table.

The first four cards are turned face up. They are the Ten, Jack, King, and Ace of Hearts. One card short of a royal flush. The last card is turned over. It's the missing Queen of Hearts, giving the spectator a perfect poker hand.

Method: This is a solution to a poker problem Karl Fulves wrote about in *Pallbearers Review*. Check Francis Haxton's "Gambler's Last Chance" (Vol.2, No.10).

There are many ways to approach the effect but I like this because one move serves to accomplish a lot. It has the benefit of being almost self-working. The disadvantage is that it uses a double-backed card, but more on that later.

Have a double-backed card that matches your deck on top. Below it, in no particular order, is the royal flush in Hearts. The royal flush is face up.

Begin by giving the deck a false shuffle, bringing the set-up back to the top. Then slowly dribble the cards from the right hand onto the left, telling the spectator that in a moment you will ask him to call stop. At the end of this demonstration dribble, the last few cards are dropped together into the left hand so the face-up cards aren't exposed.

I think it's always important to demonstrate the procedure in any selection process that involves dribbling or riffling through the deck. From the audience point of view it's an odd handling and needs clarifying. If you go straight into this form of selection without explaining properly what you are about to do, you risk it looking a tad suspicious.

When the spectator understands what's required, pick up the deck and again dribble cards from the right hand into the left, slowly enough that he can call stop at some point.

You stop dribbling cards into the left hand. "We'll cut the pack where you said stop," you say. And you then flip the right-hand packet face up onto the face-down left-hand packet. You're about to execute the Henry Christ Force.

Spread the face-up cards into the right hand. "You could have stopped anywhere," you say as you draw attention to the face-up cards. Separate your hands, taking all the face-up cards into the right hand and leaving the face-down

cards in the left hand.

"But you stopped here. Let's take the next five cards." Spread the top five cards of the left-hand packet face down onto the table.

Replace the right-hand cards face down under the left-hand packet and square the deck.

"I want you to imagine that you have just been dealt a poker hand. Not only that, but it is a very good poker hand. A winning poker hand. Except for one card. One card spoils everything. Which card do you think it is?"

"Now don't just point to the nearest card. I want you to take a few moments. Look at the cards. Think about it. Okay, now, push one card forward."

The deck is in your left and, while he is thinking about which card to choose, you are getting a fourth-finger break below the top two cards. When he's pushed a card forward, take it with your right hand and place it face down on top of the deck.

Pause for a moment, saying, "Okay. Five cards. You've chosen one." Then casually flip over the top three cards of the deck as one revealing, apparently, the face of the chosen card.

It's only now that the spectators see the card that has been chosen. Let's assume it's the Nine of Clubs.

"Not a great card. But we need to choose another."

Of course it might be a much higher value and if so you can make some comment about him throwing away a potentially useful card.

Take the discard into the right hand, turn it face down, and push it somewhere into the middle of the deck. Because of the Triple Lift a Heart from the royal flush now lies face up under the double-backed card at the top of the deck and you're in position to repeat the Henry Christ Force.

You can, if you wish, add a false shuffle after the discard has been replaced but it's not necessary. Regardless, you carry on by asking the spectator to select another card.

"Just call stop."

Dribble the cards again, repeating the Christ Force, this time spreading off a single card face down onto the table. For the moment keep it separate from the other four tabled cards. Place the right-hand packet face down below the left-hand packet. This leaves the double-backed card on top for easy removal if required.

Time for the finale. Ask the spectator to turn over the

first four chosen cards and reveal them to be almost a royal flush. Remind him of the card he discarded, "You got rid of the Nine of Clubs. What did you replace it with?" Turn over the remaining face-down card to show that it completes the royal flush.

The method is quite economical. And rather cheeky in that as soon as the spectator has discarded one of the original five cards you force it right back on him.

The real skill lies in making the effect clear to the spectators. They choose five cards, discard one, and find its replacement to make a winning poker hand.

Notes: You don't have to use a double-backed card. Two face-to-face cards can be used in lieu of the fake. In that case the set-up is, from the top of the deck, one face-down card, one face-up card, face-up royal flush.

The handling is pretty much the same as before except you need to be careful when making the Henry Christ Force that you don't accidentally reveal the face-up card that will be in the deck. It's just a matter of spreading the cards singly when you get close to the face-down cards in the left-hand packet. There will be one face-up card in the deck when the trick is over.

Also, when the spectator is choosing a card to discard, you must obtain a break under three cards instead of two. When the chosen card has been added to the top of the deck you make a Quadruple Lift. But since the turnover is unheralded it's easy enough to get away with.

In terms of structure you might prefer to reveal the first four Heart cards before the final card is selected. It's entirely up to you. •

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