

SINCE MY LAST COLUMN with Daley's trick was so well received, I'll follow-up with yet another performance piece before again moving to some more conceptual (but practical!) matters in the next columns.

If you have seen my book *Confidences*, you might remember my thoughts on what Ascanio called "pieces of minor magic," meaning tricks that are not blockbusters, but necessary and welcome little tricks that add to the enjoyment of the complete experience, similar to smaller transitional courses in a larger gourmet meal, such as the "amuse-bouche," the "sherbet," or the "friandises" (*Confidences*, p.141, "Minor and Major Magic"). I have little to add to that, beside the fact that such smaller miracles can also lead into more important pieces dramatically, serve as a prologue so to speak, *but they can also facilitate operational requirements* by functioning like a Trojan horse that smuggles in, for instance, a necessary set-up under cover of a seemingly amusing and harmless little effect. Such is the nature of the little trick (with a big potential) that I'm about to describe.

RED & BLACK INTUITION

The effect is that a spectator takes a haphazard number of cards *from a deck he shuffled himself*, chooses the red or the black cards, and the performer knows exactly how many red cards and how many black cards are in each packet, quite an impossible feat. The effect is then repeated, proving this was not just luck.

Well, this is how the audience should perceive and remember the proceedings, the truth being something else. And besides, you have imperceptibly separated a previously shuffled deck into reds and the blacks, which can now be used as such, or alternated with a single Faro Shuffle, so as to obtain the necessary starting situation for your favorite Gilbreath-based trick ...

Let's look at the details of handling and presentation.

PRELIMINARY THOUGHT

I think that most of my readers will fool themselves when

they first try this, and that only a few have even seen this principle at work before. I say this in all humbleness, because when I recently came across it in an older German book, I didn't remember having read anything like it—and I have read quite a bit. Although the principle seems obvious once you think about it, there are several layers of deception that keep even the mathematically educated spectator from immediately seeing through the method—and we won't give him the time to think about it for too long, as this intriguing and irritating piece is then used to segue into a more substantial piece of magical chicanery. I will dub the concept "Red-Black Complement Principle" for lack of a better term and to reference it, until one day I hope to find its origin.

PRESENTATION AND METHOD

Hand the deck to an assisting spectator and ask him to thoroughly shuffle the cards, and then have another spectator cut the cards once or several times. The fact that the cards are well mixed has to be really emphasized, as it is part of the amazement produced later.

Without touching the cards—don't fail to mention that, too—have the spectator count down less than half the deck in a face-down packet on the table. As he is doing this, he may take cards from the top, middle, or bottom of the deck. This really doesn't matter at all, but by later reminding him of this fact, we will have protected our little secret by an additional layer. All you need to know is the number of cards in this packet, so you may either secretly count them as they are being dealt, or have the spectator openly deal the cards on your outstretched hand, making it very easy for you to feel each card counted, even if you look away. Experience has shown that it really doesn't weaken the effect if you have the spectator openly deal the cards and count them aloud—try it and see for yourself.

As soon as he has dealt the cards in front of himself, have him place the remaining undealt balance in front of you, emphasizing that these are now *your* cards, while those he counted off are *his* cards. Don't neglect to say this, as it

makes the situation clear, and clarity is what we seek at all times. Let's assume that his packet contains 16 cards. At this point emphasize that he has done everything himself and that you haven't even touched the cards. Also mention that he shuffled the cards himself and that nobody can possibly know how many Heart, Spade, Diamond or Club cards there are in his packet. This is certainly all very true.

THE PREDICTION

Ask him to choose either the red or the black for himself and to leave the other color to you. Let's assume he chooses the reds. Say that you need to touch his cards briefly to know how many red cards he has in his packet. Touch the top card of his packet for a fraction of a second and then immediately retract your hand. We have borrowed this amusing bit of business from Juan Tamariz, who uses it in a completely different context, our intention being to presentationally frame the phenomenon about to be demonstrated. Explain, "*You have the red cards, okay, so I'll have the black cards.*" Touch your own packet, which is sitting face down in front of you on the table, look at your first finger as if it could deliver some kind of secret information, and then thoughtfully say, "*I have 10 black cards more in my packet than you have red cards in yours!*"

The way to arrive at this statement is to simply deduct the number of cards the spectator dealt (16) from half the total cards in use. Since we are playing with a full deck (or so we hope ... in every sense), half of it will always be 26, and if we then deduct 16 from 26 we are left with 10, our key number. This works in exactly the same way if the spectator initially chooses black instead of red. In this case you would say, "*I have 10 red cards more in my packet than you have black cards in yours!*" (Yes, I know, that's interesting ... and practical, because you don't have to remember anything, just make one elementary calculation.)

THE PROOF

Take your own packet, turn it face up, and start placing the black cards on the table in a face-up packet; do this as clearly but also as smoothly and quickly as possible. To cover the time needed you could explain, "*I'm going to take out all the black cards from my packet and put them here on the table, before you check your red cards, so that I cannot change anything once the cards are down.*" The time it takes to make this statement, or a similar one, should suffice to cover the action. Now briefly show that the red cards you are still holding do not contain any black cards, and then put the red-card packet aside face down.

Have the spectator count the red cards from his packet face up on the table one by one, counting with him in a loud voice. We'll again make an assumption, namely that he has 11 red cards (and consequently five black cards, since he has a total of 16 cards, but *do not mention that*). Focus your attention on the face-up red packet and have him place the other cards aside face down. Repeat, "*You have 11 red cards. Before either of us even touched the cards, I said that I had black cards more than you have red cards. That's ...*" Hesitate and seem to make the calcula-

tion, in reality you want the spectators to think with you and if at all possible anticipate your pronouncement of the result, which will be, "... 21."

Without any false moves clearly take your packet of black cards and count them one by one face up on the table, letting the cards drop from a little height into an unsquared packet. This makes the proceedings clear even for spectators situated at some distance, and also prevents anybody from thinking you could do some hanky-panky as you count. You will count 21 black cards, exactly the amount you had previously announced. If you have followed along with cards in hands, you might just have fooled yourself.

THE REPEAT—THE REAL SHUFFLE

Although this is not an earth-shaking miracle, it is more than just curious. By repeating it, a double synergy can be obtained. First, the merely curious occurrence becomes a bit unsettling and will make for an ideal lead-in to something more amazing as we will see. Second, we will use the shuffling procedure described next to protect the red-black set-up we will end up with at the very end. Follow along.

The situation at the end of this first effect is that there is a red and a black packet face up on the table, next to a red and a black face-down packet. "*I know, you might think I was just lucky, so let's quickly repeat this experiment.*" As you are saying this, put your face-up black cards on the spectator's face-up red cards, turn the combined packet face down and give it one or two Overhand Shuffles. Take one of the two face-down packets, introduce it into the cards in hand, do the same with the other face-down packet, and then do another Overhand Shuffle. Set the deck on the table and give it one or two Riffle Shuffles that you finish with a series of Running Cuts. *All shuffles and cuts are honest*, but simulate exactly the same procedure you will be adopting at the end of the repetition to apparently shuffle the red and black cards together, in reality keeping them separated.

At the end of the shuffling sequence just described you might want to show that the cards are well shuffled by briefly spreading them face up between your hands, "*Let's start over again with a well shuffled deck. But please don't take my word, shuffle them yourself.*" This will be remembered and make the false shuffle later more deceptive. Hand the deck to another spectator, have him shuffle and cut the deck, then repeat the trick as described, very probably with a different number of cards and a different result.

AFTER THE REPEAT—THE FALSE SHUFFLE

At the end of the repetition you will have a similar situation as already described: two face-up packets, one red one black, and two face-down packets, one red one black. Now go exactly through the same sequence of shuffling actions as described above, but keep the colors separated. To wit: take the face-up packets and put them together, however, maintain a break between them. Turn them face down, Overhand Shuffle to the break, and then shuffle off the remaining cards—the red-black order has been retained.

Immediately take one of the two face-down packets and introduce it as a block into the appropriate color section. No memory work is necessary to achieve this, as in the action of introducing the packet into the balance of the deck, the cards can be naturally tilted so that the bottom card of either packet will automatically cue you how to insert the cards. Repeat with the other face-down packet by also inserting it into the appropriate section of the balance. You may add an Ireland Red-black False Shuffle at this point (really already described by Charles Jordan in 1919)—check *Card College Volume 5*, p.1119, "On the Red-Black Overhand Shuffle" for my refined handling on this. When you then table the deck, you can use any Riffle Shuffle that keeps the reds and the blacks separated, such as a Zarrow Shuffle, which is probably the best and most straightforward way of doing it. Another excellent technique is Dai Vernon's "A Red-Black False Shuffle" described in *Card College Volume 3* (p.649), and of course my favorite, my own "A Red-Black False Riffle Shuffle" from *Secret Agenda* (p.104), which combines the Zarrow Shuffle, the Simple Push-Through Shuffle, sometimes called the "Triumph Shuffle," and true Running Cuts, so you get all-in-one.

AND NOW...

At the end of all the shuffles and cuts, you have a color-separated deck, obtained with little effort and under cover of an interesting card experiment. To use the synergy of this "opening sequence" I advise you to now get into some strong effects either using red and black as a theme, or as a secret device that maybe later will end in a red-black climax.

An excellent way of taking advantage of the set-up attained is to do a Perfect Faro Shuffle, this being a real shuffle that is a fake shuffle—never has confusion been so clear. The alternation of colors thus obtained will please all fans of the Gilbreath Principle (never mind which one) among my readers.

It would go beyond the scope of this column to now describe the routine I often do when I have a red-black set-up, As Nate Leipzig used to say, "Never perform unless coaxed." As an author I will borrow that line and say, "Never publish unless coaxed." If I get enough comments I will think about publishing my favorite routine with a red-black deck in the next column.

CREDITS

The oldest reference of the principle in use I could find, thanks to Denis Behr's help, is "The Perfect Card Prediction" in Warren Wiersbe's underrated booklet, *Action With Cards*, The Ireland Magic Co., U.S.A., 1944. Other applications are "The Odd Color" by Arthur Hill in *Pallbearer's Review*, June 1971 (p.424 in the L&L Publishing bound editions, 2nd volume of 3). There he says, "The principle is old, but well concealed in this routine" Such comments are of course always disquieting, as one wonders how far back the discovery of the principle must go. Little more information, but two interesting effects can be found in Arthur F. MacTier's *Card Concepts*, in Chapter 15 titled "Full Deck Red/Black Relationship," Davenport Ltd., London 2000.

LAST MINUTE ADDITION

As I'm about to send this column off to the Chief Genii—it is almost 7 in the morning and I have worked through all night on this—I came upon Dr. Ben Braude's "Way Out of This World" in his *Tricks And Treats* (Haley Press, USA 1971), which uses the "Red-Black Complement Principle" described above as a presentational lead-in to "Out of This World" with a very similar trick (if not to say almost the same!) and with the intention of separating the deck into reds and blacks. I now wonder how Dr. Braude could have already known about my column in 1971—he must have been a Genius (of which *Genii* is the plural, so that must be the connection). •