

# BACK THROUGH THE PACK

Julian Pottage

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## Foreword

As the Ten of Clubs notes in this book, there are too many fine classics for his comrades to answer the Nine of Clubs' question, 'What's your favorite bridge book?' So I shall answer an easier question: 'Which bridge books do you read and reread *for pleasure?*'

Although I turn to other books for reference and to refresh my technique, two classics stand out as my favorites for *enjoyment*: *Why You Lose at Bridge* by S. J. Simon and *Right through the Pack* by Robert Darvas and Norman Hart. *Why You Lose at Bridge* delivers very general practical advice with pungent prose and examples featuring four prototypical characters. *Right through the Pack* presents 52 exquisite deals through the tales of the 52 cards that played starring roles, as told to the main author who apparently has fallen asleep at the table overnight following an exhausting day of bridge. 'Master Robert' (as the cards call him) had collected these deals during World War Two.

Now, decades later, Master Julian has collected 104 scintillating deals – *two* for each card of the pack. He presents these them here through the eyes of the cards, thus paying homage to Darvas and Hart. (He honors Simon *en passant* with cameo appearances from Simon's fearsome foursome.) Unlike Master Robert, he serves only as editor, not as audience for the tales of the four tribes of wee folk. However, mindful of the needs of intermediate bridge players, Master Julian takes extra care to have the cards educate while entertaining the reader.

The result is a book that serious students of the game and connoisseurs of masterly card play will read and reread for pleasure as well as instruction. I hope and trust you will enjoy it as much as I have.

*Danny Kleinman*



## Preface

This book is like no other with which I have been involved. For the last five or so years I have been collecting tales featuring individual cards. The material I collected could have filled four or five books. I had to be ruthless in deciding the best tales for each card. You will see that I have allowed the cards to tell the tales in their own words and have tried to confine my role to that of editor. Although you will find that certain rivalries exist within the pack, ultimately the pack is just that, a united unit.

A few of the cards mention a special connection with their number. I wonder whether I might do the same. It was 21 years ago, in 1985, when my first book came out – and this is my twenty-first book. If you have seen any of my recent books, you may have spotted an increasing tendency to use artistic license. This fictional work thus seems a natural progression.

I am indebted to Maureen Dennison and Peter Burrows for the care they have taken in weeding out my usual mistakes as well as to Bill Bailey and Ed Marzo for their *Deep Finesse* and *Dealmaster* software. I must also mention my young golden retriever Elsa, who managed not to chew any of the computer cables.

*Julian Pottage  
Porthcawl, Wales  
July 2006*



## Editor's Note

On everyone's list of all time favorite bridge books, '*Right through the Pack*' is always #1 or #2. Published just after the end of World War II, it is still in print and delighting new readers.

A sequel was an impossible dream, until the pre-eminent problem creator, Julian Pottage, took up the challenge.

The problems and answers are up to the standards of the original, but the cards have matured. They are not quite as romantic, and are now more sophisticated and well versed in the ways of the (current) world. They show respect for their monarchs, but have formed committees to transact business.

Read! Enjoy! Learn a little!

With on-demand technology, this book will never be out of print, even for a moment.

*Ron Garber*



## Introduction

Once upon a time the bridge correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* and a great Hungarian analyst got together to compile a series of tales told by me and my fellow playing cards. There were tales of brilliancies and blunders, bluffs and double bluffs – and of seemingly impossible events.

That was a long time ago, a long, long time ago. Since then there have been countless millions of deals played – and we cards have many more tales to tell, so many in fact that the largest book in the world could not hold them all. We have enlisted the help of a human collaborator, Julian Pottage, to record just two tales for each card. He allowed us to decide which tales to tell and the order in which we would appear. After much debate by the committee of the Pack of Cards, we decided upon a particular pattern. This is the order you would get if, having sorted us cards face up into four suits with me at the top and the Two of Clubs at the bottom, you then dealt twice into four piles with a sequential pick up.

We chose this order in part to honor a friend of Julian's, Andy Nelson, who showed him that dealing into piles four times would bring you back to the original order. Mathematicians amongst you will appreciate that this happens because 4 to the power 4 modulo 51 (\*) equals one. Andy was not a professor of mathematics or anything like that. He was a fireman in the days of steam trains, a dockworker and latterly a postman. If someone with such a background can chance upon an exquisite piece of group theory, you can perhaps understand how even the lowliest of cards can have an interesting tale to tell. I am writing this introduction because my fellow cards thought it appropriate for me to do so.

*The Ace of Spades*

(\*) 4 to the power 4 modulo 51 means 4 times 4 times 4 times 4, with 51 taken from the answer as many times as possible without going negative.



# 1

## Tales of the Ace of Spades

### Power and Responsibility

‘Life’s tough being an Ace,’ the Ace of Spades continued, ‘people expect so much of you.’

‘Like writing the introduction and telling the first tale,’ someone heckled.

‘I mean when you are a small card it often doesn’t matter exactly which trick you go on. As an Ace, though, you have to put in an appearance at just the right time. Take this example:

	♠ K Q 6 3	
	♥ 10 7 2	
	♦ J 8 4	
	♣ A K 8	
♠ A J 9 8		♠ 10 7 5 2
♥ Q		♥ J 9 8
♦ Q 10 6		♦ K 7 5 3
♣ Q J 10 5 2		♣ 7 4
	♠ 4	
	♥ A K 6 5 4 3	
	♦ A 9 2	
	♣ 9 6 3	

All the players were in the bidding, which was as follows:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
—	—	—	1♥
Double	Redouble	1♠	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

North, with the Spades well stopped, probably considered placing the contract in 3NT – but then there would have been no story.

My human led from the top of his sequence in Clubs. Declarer won in dummy and drew two rounds of trumps with the Ace and King, on which West threw a Club. East played high-low in trumps, suggesting he held a third trump – the Jack if we were to stand a chance of beating the game.

Now declarer tackled my suit, leading the Four. What did West do?

Let me tell you. He knew, from East's bid of One Spade, that the Four of Spades was a singleton and this was the last chance to win a trick with me. He also knew that playing me would set up my subordinates, the King and Queen, as winners. He therefore made the fine sacrifice of ducking.

Winning in dummy, declarer did his best to recover by cashing a second high Club and exiting with a third round, on which East threw a Diamond. My human was on lead again, with these cards remaining:

	♠ Q 6 3	
	♥ 10	
	♦ J 8 4	
	♣ —	
♠ A J 8		♠ 10 5 2
♥ —		♥ J
♦ Q 10 6		♦ K 7 5
♣ J		♣ —
	♠ —	
	♥ 6 5 4 3	
	♦ A 9 2	
	♣ —	

Since South held the cursed Nine of Diamonds, it would be fatal to open up the Diamond suit. (I might add that we cards always refer to the cursed Nine of Diamonds, like humans refer to “the Scottish play” rather than the name Shakespeare gave it. The Shakespearian connection may also explain why one pronounces this curs-ed.) Leading a Club, thus conceding a ruff and discard, would be no better an escape for West. He did in fact lead the one card to beat the contract: me, the Ace of Spades.

Declarer could ruff and set up dummy's Queen as a winner but he had no means to reach her. He tried a low Diamond in the hope that West had the King and Queen of Diamonds. This was not to be. West ducked, which allowed East to win, cash the Jack of Hearts and return a Diamond.

I think I played rather a special role there, being of greater value as an exit card than as a winner.'

Although cards that see themselves as playing an important part in a deal like to join in the discussion, few felt bold enough to interrupt an Ace. This was why he had the floor to himself.

'I did something equally dramatic on another deal. A defender held me once more but I executed a type of play normally reserved for declarers.

My master this time was André Robison. He was East and, though he held a fair hand, he was shut out of the bidding.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
—	—	—	1♣
Pass	1♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	3♠	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West led the Three of Diamonds and dummy came down:

♠ K Q 10 8 7 6	
♥ 10 9 2	
♦ K 2	
♣ 3 2	
	♠ A J 9 3
	♥ J 7 3
	♦ A Q 9 5
	♣ Q 6

Declarer played low from dummy and the Queen took the trick. Most defenders would, without giving the matter a second thought, return the Ace of Diamonds. André knew better than that. He stopped to construct some possible hands for declarer.

♠ 2	♠ —	♠ —
♥ A K 4	♥ A K 4	♥ A Q 4
♦ J 6 4	♦ J 6 4	♦ J 6 4
♣ A K 10 8 7 4	♣ A K 10 8 7 5 4	♣ A K J 9 8 7 4

The Diamond position was clear from West's fourth-highest lead and declarer's play of a low card from dummy. South must have at least six Clubs, perhaps seven, and some useful high cards in Hearts.

Any sensible return would beat the contract if South held the first of these hands, while there was no hope if he held the second. The key case was if he held the third. On a Diamond return, declarer would make nine tricks by way of seven Clubs, one Heart and one Diamond. A Heart return might fare no better – declarer could run the lead round to dummy's Ten.

Of course, you have all guessed the answer by now. André laid down the one card sure to beat the contract if this was the layout, me, the Ace of Spades. Look at the full deal and consider declarer's options:

	♠ K Q 10 8 7 6	
	♥ 10 9 2	
	♦ K 2	
	♣ 3 2	
♠ 5 4 2		♠ A J 9 3
♥ K 8 6 5		♥ J 7 3
♦ 10 8 7 3		♦ A Q 9 5
♣ 10 5		♣ Q 6
	♠ —	
	♥ A Q 4	
	♦ J 6 4	
	♣ A K J 9 8 7 4	

Suppose he discards his low Heart, the guard to the Ace of Hearts and his companion Queen. Then East switches to a Heart and South must finesse. West wins and returns a Heart, which East ducks. This way the defenders score two tricks in each red suit as well as my good self.

Clearly, it is no good for South to discard a Diamond, unguarding the suit. Throwing a Club is no good either. In this case, East cashes the Ace of Diamonds and continues the suit. West is bound to make the King of Hearts and the Ten of Diamonds to bring the defensive total to five.

A squeeze on declarer is rare enough, but a squeeze on declarer at the second trick is still more unusual, isn't it, my friends?'

A deathly hush came over the Pack of Cards as the Ace of Spades sat down. The Pack, being a pack, has a clear hierarchy, one in which each member knew his or her place. Who would dare to follow this speech?

*Who would dare to follow an Ace?  
 He is the one who sets the pace  
 Who would dare to challenge an Ace?  
 He puts a King in rightful place  
 Who would dare to trump an Ace?  
 He is the one who leads the race  
 Who would dare to duck an Ace?  
 He is a player who's red in face*

## ‘LIFE’S TOUGH BEING AN ACE.’

On everyone’s list of all-time favorite bridge books is *Right Through the Pack* by Robert Darvas and Norman Hart. Published just after the end of World War II, the book presents 52 tales using exquisite deals, one for each of the cards in the deck. Now, decades later, Julian Pottage has collected 104 deals — *two* for each card in the pack. He presents each story through the eyes of the cards, paying homage to Darvas and Hart. Keeping the intermediate bridge player in mind, Pottage takes extra care to have the cards educate while entertaining the reader.

“An exceptional, creative collection of hands, entertainingly presented.”

— Tim Bourke

“The deals are excellent and the setting pleasantly reminiscent of *Alice in Wonderland*.”

— David Bird



**JULIAN POTTAGE** (Wales) is acknowledged to be one of the top bridge problemists in the world. He is a regular contributor to magazines, and has written a number of books. His most recent book for Master Point Press is *Why You Still Lose at Bridge*.



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