



Inside Ed's Head

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Strike Three, Part 1

(From Simon to Michael to Ed)

Simon Aaronson, in his 2014 book *Art Decko*, created a trick called “Not a Chance.” I liked the effect but I didn’t like the method. It used outs where I didn’t want to use them and the method of controlling and switching the selection was very unusual—I felt it would arouse suspicion. It also used a glimpse. As I’m legally blind, I find glimpsing cards somewhat challenging.

A few months ago, I started reading Michael Close’s 2018 book, *The Paradigm Shift, Volume One*. (More on this, later.) Michael liked this trick well enough to get permission from Simon to include it, verbatim, in his book. Additionally, he published two versions of his own.

In his version, “Base on Balls,” Michael eliminated the outs by using a force, which obviates the glimpse. (Michael added one back.) He did, however, retain the odd control/switch. Realizing that the card control and switch might arouse suspicion, he spends time at the beginning of his presentation accustomizing the audience to the procedure. Additionally, he used this time to force the necessary card as well—with an original force that might fool you as you’re learning it.

Nonetheless, I can’t use that method. I’m an *amateur* magician, meaning that my performing circumstances are quite different than a professional’s. A major difference is that my audience is familiar with my performing style. I’ve been performing for some people for more than forty years! A deviation from my normal performing behavior would likely be spotted, and be noted as part of the method; they may not know exactly what I did but they’d know I did *something*. So, here is *my* version of ‘Not a Chance’ and ‘Base on Balls’.

Effect

The spectator makes a “free” selection which is buried in a half of the deck. He guards this half by putting his finger on it. The magician begins shuffling the other half of the deck. He asks the spectator to call “stop” and the cards remaining are placed on the table. This is repeated, leaving a

second pile on the table. The cards shuffled into the magician's left hand are also tabled, making three piles. The magician uses the cards at the bottom of each pile to reveal the color, suit, and value of the spectator's card. Even more amazingly, the card that shows the value of the selection *is* the selection. It's vanished from under the spectator's finger!

Method

You'll need to have three cards on top of the deck. The top card is your force card. The second is any card of the same suit as the force card and the third is a card of the same color. The way Michael does it is he glimpses the top card. He then uses a spread cull to place a card of the same color on top of that and one of the same suit as the second card on top of that. In other words, glimpsing the top card gives you the card that will be the third card from the top, you then cull the next two cards in two, one order.

Unfortunately, that legally blind thing makes both glimpsing and culling difficult. So, here's how I do it. Since I almost always perform seated, I just remove the three cards I'll need before the performance and leave them face-up in my lap. I can use a Gambler's Cop at any time and add them to the bottom of the deck, holding a break above them. Then, I cut small batches of cards to the table, finishing with the three cards below the break, to get the cards I need to the top. This way, I can have the deck shuffled by the spectators and still perform Triple Play anywhere in the set.

There are some simpler ways. Have the three cards on top of the cased deck and use it as an opener—with convincing false shuffles and cuts. Or, just spread through the deck between tricks and look for three sequential cards of the same color that have the first two the same suit, and cut them to the top. You'll find such an arrangement a little bit better than 99.4% of the times you look through a shuffled deck. (No kidding.) This would be my recommendation for anyone who doesn't want to set up in advance. If you have very bad luck and don't find the three cards spreading through the deck, do *not* shuffle and spread through the deck again; just do another trick that lets you shuffle the deck and try again later. (If you miss it a *second* time, I would advise you to avoid going out during a thunderstorm or living in an area prone to tornados.)

OK, our next tasks are forcing a card and then switching it so that we can apparently bury it into a packet of cards the spectator is controlling. We'll also need to keep the three special cards on top of our half of the deck. This part of the trick is the only place where my handling diverges from Michael's. (You should watch Michael's. He's made it available on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/michaelclosemagic/videos/218501926237564/>.

You can see a minute-long video I sent to Michael to demonstrate my ideas at <http://edhassmagic.com/baseonballs.mp4>

Deciding on a force was easy. The trick needs to have two packets and the force cards need to be on top of one of them. What better than the Cross-Cut Force? I read a blog a while ago in which a magician wrote that he would speak to audience members after the performance and asked them which method of selecting a card seemed fairer. He demonstrated a few. The verdict was clear. Most people said that they thought the method that let them cut to anywhere they liked was the fairest. They were quite dubious about the standard “pick-a-card” procedure embodied by the Classic Force. They felt the performer had too much control of which cards they had a chance to take.

I have two personal anecdotes concerning this. Years ago, I did a trick using the Cross-Cut Force. Later, the spectator came to me and told me that to make sure he would get a free choice of a card, he cut near the bottom. Because of his “caution,” he was completely baffled by the trick.

On the other hand, at a Penn & Teller show in a small venue around the time they were becoming known, they did a trick that required a force. As part of the build-up to the climax, Penn asked the spectator if he had a completely free choice of a card. He replied, “No. He handed it to me!” Penn laughed and said, “I guess Teller’s Classic Force isn’t as good as we thought it was.”

OK, where was I? Oh yes. Somehow or other, after over 1000 words, you have the three necessary cards on top of the deck. Table the deck and have the spectator cut off about half of it. Continue with your set up for the Cross-Cut Force, angling the bottom half over the top half. Now, use some time misdirection. Michael has a great patter theme regarding the number of possible orders a deck of cards could take. If you could shuffle a deck every second and started the moment the universe was created, you’d only have gone through a piddling fraction of all possible orders. Amazing!

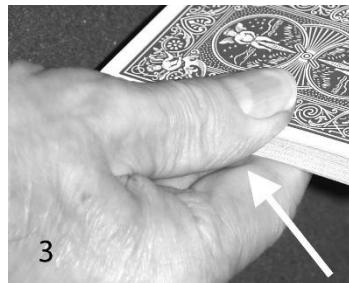
After you’ve finished the misdirection patter, table the top half of the deck near the spectator and lift up the bottom half into dealing position. Thumb the top card of your packet about half-way off the deck and raise your hand ‘til the packet is vertical. Use your right *thumb* to flick the index of the

card. (Photo 1.) You must flick the corner with your thumb, as this



positions your right fingers for the Bo-Top change that is to follow.

As you are doing the thumb flick, look him in the eye and tell him that you would like two favors, the first is that you need him to remember the card. As he ascents, you'll begin a Bo-Top change by using the *tip* of your thumb to push the card square with the rest of the packet. This should bring the index, middle, and ring fingers under the packet for about two-thirds of its width. (Photo 2, left hand removed.) At the same time, you should begin lowering your hands so the deck assumes a horizontal position. The card should end up being flushed before your hands get halfway down. After the card is square, your right thumb should flex towards your fingers, so the first joint of your thumb is touching, or almost touching your fingers. (Photo 3, left hand removed.) You can now push leftward with your right thumb and slightly rightward with the fingers to take all the cards but the bottom one into left-hand dealing position. The single card should pretty much be within an inch or two on the horizontal axis as it was while you were displaying it to the spectator.



Don't stop now! Your left hand should immediately turn palm down, with the index finger extended, to point to the packet that's in front of the spectator. (Photo 4.) As you do this, ask him to lift the top half of the packet in front of him a few inches. Place the card in your right hand on top of the tabled packet. Then ask him to put the cards he's holding on top of them, and to keep his finger on the packet.



Please note that there are some factors to make this sleight difficult to impossible: Dry skin is the first. You need some friction to slide the bottom card to your right. I use hand lotion when I know I'm going to perform.

Another problem is not getting your right thumb in the correct position to squeeze all but the bottom card into your left hand. Be sure to push the card back on top of the deck with the tip of your thumb, to expose most of your first joint, and *don't rush* the move. Everyone is involved in your conversation with the spectator and the large downward and outward motion will cover up the tiny motion of the switch.

You now are in position to start the revelation phase created by Simon. The cards in your left hand have the force card on top, followed by a card with the same suit as the force card, and then by a card of the same color. The spectator thinks his selection is in the middle of his packet.

Unfortunately, I've once again gone longer than I prefer, so learn what I've written so far and I'll see you next month.

Afterword

Michael's website, <https://michaelclose.com>, has some great material on it. The first eBook I bought from him was *Palming, Vol. Three - The Side Steal eBook*. The Side-Steal never made it into my repertoire. I never felt comfortable with it. When I read how Michael created this book, I decided to buy it because of its features that physical books can't match. Michael's eBooks are illustrated in color photos that look great on a tablet's screen. Even better, if you double-tap them (or whatever your eBook-reader's protocol is) the picture enlarges to fill the screen. Better still, Michael has links to YouTube videos he's made, so you can see the sleight in action or even view a video tutorial. In other words, I think this combination of text, photos, videos, and portability makes this the champion format for magic books.

I've not yet finished *The Paradigm Shift, Volume One*. So far, I really like what I've been reading. I'll be back with more about this book when I've finished it.

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