



Inside Ed's Head

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Twenty is Plenty

(Twenty-One is More Fun)

Exactly three years ago, I wrote "Impromptu Blankwave Revisited." It's based on the trick "Impromptu Blankwave," from Richard Kaufman's book *Cardworks* (1981). This month, I harken back to a trick, "Stapled Blackjack," by Darwin Ortiz and Pat Cook, from the same book.

I liked the idea of this trick but wasn't crazy about the handling. This wasn't about unusual difficulty; many people might think the method I'm about to present is more difficult than the original. My method uses a Gambler's Cop. A magician who performs seated should not be afraid of this move. It's a great way of adding, stealing, and switching cards. Back in the October 2012 issue of *Inside Ed's Head*, Daryl had been kind enough to let me publish his trick, "Out of Body Experience."

(<http://www.edhassmagic.com/edshead/EH-2012-10.pdf>) He said I could use the original text and illustrations.

He explains the Gambler's Cop on pages six and seven of that issue. Illustration 32 shows what the grip looks like.

I'm also doing something I've never done before; I'm adding patter that I believe fleshes out the effect. This patter will be in quoted italics.

Stapled Blackjack Revisited

Effect

Recounting a hand of blackjack he played long ago, the magician deals out two hands. His is a twenty. He sees that the dealer's up-card is a six.

Showing his twenty to the dealer, he staples his cards together to be able to remember the occasion happily. The dealer shows his down card. It is a

four; his total is now ten. He now shows the next card. It is an ace. His twenty-one appears to be the winning hand.

The magician is unfazed. He asks the dealer to look at his card again. It's now a jack! It appears to be a tie. Smiling, the magician flips his stapled pair over. The card stapled to the jack is an ace. He's won, after all.

Setup

I'm assuming you're performing sitting. Since this trick involves a game of blackjack, you will definitely need to have a table in front of you. Since two cards are destroyed every time you perform this trick, I recommend you use old decks for this trick. (Using an old deck can also facilitate a deck switch.)

The only cards necessary for this trick are a four, a six (preferably black), a pair of black jacks, and a pair of duplicate aces (preferably the Ace of Spades). One of the aces should be on the bottom of the deck. The other five cards are randomly inserted into the deck. Case the cards so the ace won't flash when you remove it.

You'll also need a stapler. One of the small ones you can have in your pocket would make the most sense but perhaps you are more clever than I am and can get some laughs by using a large office stapler. If you can produce it in a puff of smoke, even better.

If you wish to do a deck switch, place the old deck as far to your right as still reachable. Place the stapler in your pocket or next to the deck.

Method

"I'm often asked if being a magician is of any value while gambling. I'll show what happened to me the first time I played blackjack. I'm going to use an old deck to tell this story; it doesn't even have all its cards. You'll understand why shortly."

As you're saying this, case the deck you've been using. Keep it in your left hand. Reach for the deck on your right; if you're using this trick to do a deck switch, shift your body weight to the right as you turn to pick up the other deck. This will let your left hand naturally dip into your lap and switch the deck for the cold deck in your lap. Don't pay any attention to the deck in your left hand—not a glance. Place that deck on the table so you may remove the old deck from its case.

Spread through it, downjogging ace at the bottom about an inch in the process. Continue spreading through the deck, upjogging the two black jacks, the four, the six, and the duplicate ace. Strip these out of the deck and arrange them in jack, four, jack, six, ace order and place them on top of the deck. Flip the deck face down, book-wise, and maneuver the bottom card into cop position by way of the downjog.

“I knew that if you go to a casino, the longer you play the more certain you’re going to lose, so I decided I’d bet all of my money on one hand of blackjack. I sat down at an empty table and bet all I had, five hundred dollars. The dealer dealt out cards to each of us—his second card face up.”

Alternately deal four cards, *first to yourself* then to the imaginary dealer, dealing the first three cards face down, the last face up. (Position check: you should have a face-down pair of jacks in front of you. The “dealer” has a face-down four and a face-up six.

Gambler’s Cop the bottom card and gently toss the deck off to your left. You want the deck to be somewhat unsquared, so you have a reason to square it later. Placing the deck to the left as you cop the card will help cover any inadvertent flash. I take a rest position as shown in Photo 1. This position will keep the card hidden from all but someone lying on the floor to your right. If you’re standing, just drop your hand naturally to your side. It won’t need to be there for more than a few seconds.



“When I saw the six, I was incredibly relieved. The six is the worst card for the dealer to have. Then I hesitantly took a look at the cards I was dealt. My first card was a black jack. I was almost too nervous to look at my second card. It was another black jack. A twenty against a dealer showing a six has an eighty-three percent chance of winning!”



As you begin the above, slide the two face-down jacks on the table into your left hand, directly on top of the copped card. Shift the three cards into a mechanic’s grip as your right thumb bends the top card of your hand, so you can “hesitantly” look at it. (Photo 2.)

Turn the jack face up to display it clearly, thumb on the face, fingers on the back. (Photo 3.) After everyone has seen it, in one continuous motion, place it under the other card(s) and push the card flush with your right thumb, simultaneously getting a pinky break between it and the two cards above it. (Photo 4, stop motion.) As soon as the break is established, your right thumb lifts up the inner end of the top card as before. (Photo 2, previous page.) Look at it and turn it face up on the other card(s).

“When I saw I was playing a twenty against a six, I’m ashamed to admit I got a little obnoxious. I waved my cards in the dealer’s face saying, ‘I got a jack on the top and a jack on the bottom.’ I’m afraid I did this several times. I told him I’m going to make a keepsake so I’ll never forget this occasion. I used my lucky stapler to staple the cards together as a permanent keepsake.”

You accompany this patter by pointing to the jack on the top of the packet, then lifting the packet in your right hand (maintaining the thumb break) to show the jack at the bottom. (Photo 5.) Repeat this as you feel appropriate. The last time you do this, put the bottom jack directly into Gambler’s Cop position, moving the top two cards into mechanic’s grip. As your left hand settles in rest position, lever the two cards so they’re parallel with the table. Spread them a bit (Photo 6) and staple them together. Toss them on the table, between your cards and the dealer’s.

“The dealer glared at me. He said ‘Listen wiseguy, I still have to play my hand. You haven’t won yet.’ He turned over his hole card; it was a four. Suddenly, my win wasn’t as certain as it was before. He then turned over his next card. It was an ace. He leaned forward, laughed in my face, and said snidely, ‘Ok you jerk. How does it feel to be a loser?’”



As you begin these lines, you are going to pick up the deck as follows: Reach to your left with your right hand. As you do this your left hand will drift a little to the left and below the tabletop. As soon as you pick up the cards, you'll turn back to the right as you drop the deck onto the copped card in your left hand, getting a pinky break over the jack.

Turn over the four on the table, say your lines, and turn over the top card of the deck, showing the ace. (Photo 7.) Now, as you say the line, "He leaned forward . . .," lean forward dramatically and look a spectator right in the eye. Raise your voice as you speak; you *really* want to get their attention. Flip the ace face down and in the same motion table all the cards above the break. Relax your left hand. You don't want to betray any tension while holding the jack. (This switch is Ted Annemann's "Jinx Change." It looks discrepant, but in forty or so years of using it, it always goes right by 'em.) Your work is now done. All you have to do is wrap up.



"This is when, I'm ashamed to say, I used magic to gain an advantage . . . for the first and only time. I looked at him and said, 'I don't understand. How can you say you beat me when all you're holding is a twenty?' He looked at the card in his hand and literally dropped his jaw as he saw the jack. Some time went by until he was able to squeak out, 'Well, at least you didn't win either.' I didn't have anything to say as I shook my head and flipped over my cards. "

Afterword

Why Staple the cards? I suspect it's because it makes a mysterious transposition an *impossible* transposition. I also imagine that, in a professional setting, the stapled cards would also make a very powerful giveaway—if you could figure out a classy way of assuring they'd remember *who* gave it to them. I did test this routine *without* using the stapler; I just dropped the back-to-back pair where the stapled pair would go. In a professional setting this would allow for unlimited performances, saving you the problem of replacing an ace and a jack each time. Performing *without* the stapler, I got a great reaction. That's my one and only attempt.

Some of you may be thinking a Gambler's Cop is too angle prone. It *can* be but seated, either at the head of the table or across the table from those you

are performing for, you have almost nothing to worry about. The only problem you might have is if you are at a small table with someone who is close enough to look down into your left palm as you cop the card.

Would a bottom palm be safer? Perhaps. I'll just point out that the bottom palm is somewhat harder. The bottom palm replacement is infinitely harder, as the cop replacement is nothing more than putting the cards back in your hand.

There's also a problem with the bottom palm that doesn't occur with the cop. The bottom card can put a noticeable bend in the card. I had one occasion when I used a diagonal palm shift. A spectator mentioned afterward, "I don't know how you did it but I do know you bent that card." That taught me to be more cognizant of unbending the card if I do a bottom palm.

Bottom line—I like the Gambler's Cop. Your mileage may vary.

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