

## 01/17/12 The Rueful Rabbit at MIT

**Board 19**

South Deals

E-W Vul

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

W 6♦; EW 4♥; EW 3N; E 5♦; EW 3♠; W 3♣; E 2♣

West	North	East	South
<i>Emily</i>	<i>R.R.</i>	<i>Reid</i>	<i>Eric</i>
2 NT	Pass	3 NT	2 ♠
			All pass

Seasoned bridge players are familiar with the colorful characters in the late Victor Mollo's fictional bridge club. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor\\_Mollo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victor_Mollo) describes the cast, including "Rueful Rabbit (RR), a small, timid man who can barely hold his cards together and can't always tell diamonds from hearts, but has such incredible luck that even the cards he accidentally drops (several at once, occasionally) become the right ones."

Some of Mollo's books are still in print, but not the first of this series, *Bridge in the Menagerie*. It remains one of the most popular bridge books of all time (but not always compatible with modern zero tolerance). On amazon.com, used copies are pricey, and one new copy is available for just under \$3,000!

The Rueful Rabbit made a guest appearance for this deal as Eric's partner. The auction was normal enough, and R.R. led his partner's suit. Emily captured Eric's ♠Q with the ♠A, played a heart to dummy, and passed the ♦Q for a finesse. At this point, R.R. played his pair of kings, and I was called.

*Ruling:* the ♦K must be played to the trick, and the ♣K becomes a major penalty card to be played at the first opportunity. As you can see, the ♣K is the only return that holds declarer to nine tricks and a poor matchpoint score. Otherwise, declarer will get at least one more spade trick.

Law 23 says, "When the play has been completed, the Director awards an adjusted score if he considers the offending side has gained an advantage through the irregularity\*. \* As, for example, by partner's enforced pass." The footnote is the key - this rule is intended to protect against *the possibility of* violating the rules for gain (cheating). For example, in the bad old days, some people would make an insufficient bid with the intent to bar partner from the auction.

In this case, there could be no possibility of intentionally violating the rules for gain. It was just an accident, and I let the result at the table stand. After all, anybody who could drop the ♣K on the table could choose to thumb it out there as well. Suppose R.R. had intentionally exposed both cards at the same time, essentially leading to the next trick while winning the current one - poor style, but no technical difference from what happened. It would be unfair to require the ♣K to be led, but then add a penalty if it happens to be a good lead.

- Pete Matthews

The Hideous Hog was also present in spirit that evening, for our annual meeting game. It must have been the great dinner orchestrated by R.R! See "Bid Their Suits!" at <http://web.mit.edu/mitdlbc/www/contrib.html#SessionNotes>.