

Wishful tricking

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Do you know what a “wish trick” is? A poll taken not long ago indicated that not everyone does. For those still in the dark, a wish trick is one that includes the ace, 2, 3 and 4. Many players announce a wish trick when those four cards are played to a trick.

One of the ACBL’s most ardent wish trickers in world champion Nick Nickell. “Some people believe a wish trick is only a wish trick if the cards are played in order: ace, 2, 3, 4,” he said. “I’m not that much of a purist.” Nickell also described the variations of a wish trick: multi-suited, multi-colored and the very rare case of a wish trick on the third round of a suit. The first player at the table to call, “Wish trick!” gets a wish.

Some players believe in what is known as the high wish trick: ace, king, queen, jack. Expert wish-trickers also have a signal to take the pressure off partner. If dummy is holding the ace and king of a suit and declarer leads the 2, followed by the 3, declarer will call for the king rather than the ace to let dummy know that no wish trick is possible C declarer has the 4. Nickell announces his wish tricks whenever possible. “It keeps you even, balanced and relaxed,” he said. He admits to some strange looks from foreign players - unfortunate, uninformed souls - at world championships. During a U.S. team trials, he once held the ♠A 4 3 2. His friend and fellow wish-tricker Dave Smith was operating the vugraph computer. “Look,” Nickell whispered to Smith, “I have a wish trick in my own hand.”

Lynn Deas recalls that, playing with the late Norb Kremer, they had a bidding misunderstanding and she landed in 7NT, doubled by the opening leader, who had the ♦A. The ace was led, and the play went 2, 3, 4. “Norb said, ‘Wish trick,’” Deas recalls. “I could have killed him.”

When told that the term ‘wish trick’ was missing from the ACBL’s Official Encyclopedia of Bridge, an affronted Nickell snapped, “That is a blatant omission that must be corrected.”