

**HOW TO  
DETECT  
CROOKED  
GAMBLING**

**Marked Cards and Loaded Dice**

**By Frank Garcia**

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**DEDICATION**

TO LILLIAN, THE WOMAN BEHIND MY MOTIVATION

marked. We can't describe every variety of marking because they run into the hundreds, but we can thumbnail the ones that are being most widely used, or rather misused, today.

As you no doubt know, the Bee back consists of a combination of white diamonds with either red or blue diamonds. One technique is to enlarge the diamonds, preferably all on the left side but also along the top or on the right, if the customer so prefers. A second technique reduces the over-all size of the white diamond, while in "neostyle," only one side of the white diamond is reduced.

In a triumph of artistic miniaturization, a fourth variety manages to concentrate tapered single line work on four lines of the upper left corner, and yet indicates every card from ace down to deuce. Still another packs in all "the work," as the cheats call it, in just three diamonds on the upper right corner by variously reducing parts of the diamond to show A-2 values.

The Rider back, you may recall, is a design brimming over with pastoral innocence: two angels in circles are surrounded by flowers, birds, grass and cherubs in each of the four corners. And never has innocence concealed quite so much devilry! Sometimes, "the work" is in the scroll design above the top left cherub . . . or the birds are blocked out . . . or the flowers . . . or the markings are concealed in the grass.

Similarly, the New Fan back, in which a bicycle is superimposed upon an opened fan, seems a quaint, fussy Victorian anachronism in today's harsh world, but, according to one supplier, it offers seven different possibilities for doctoring.

Similarly, I should add, whether the back be Racer, Bulldog, Tally Ho, Angel Back, Circle, Club, Aviator or any other standard design, marked sets are available. Matter of fact, for the modest fee of only \$1 above catalogue price, the houses will put your private markings on a deck, or if you won't trust them with your secret code, they will supply the tools so you can do your own marking.

For \$10, you can obtain a complete "card marking kit," which includes two bottles of French type card ink, in red and blue; plus two brushes and two glass palettes, 24 cellophane wrappers and the same number of red tear-off strips and a bottle of cellophane cement.

Blockout ink and blender in any color costs \$8 per bottle, regular blockout ink is only half that price, while a camel's-hair brush and French pen (both imported, naturally) cost merely \$1 and 50 cents, respectively.

Though the trick is laughably obvious, I think I should warn you about "one-way" packs or "single-enders," as they also are called, because particularly impudent crooks still try to use them. These are cards in which the design in some manner looks different when the card is turned upside down.

For example, several years ago, as you may remember, there was a fad for collecting "artistic" backs which carried paintings by many famous artists. While most praiseworthy from the aesthetic point of view, the cards offered irresistible temptation to anyone with a larcenous mind.

#### *Honest, marked unmarked cards*

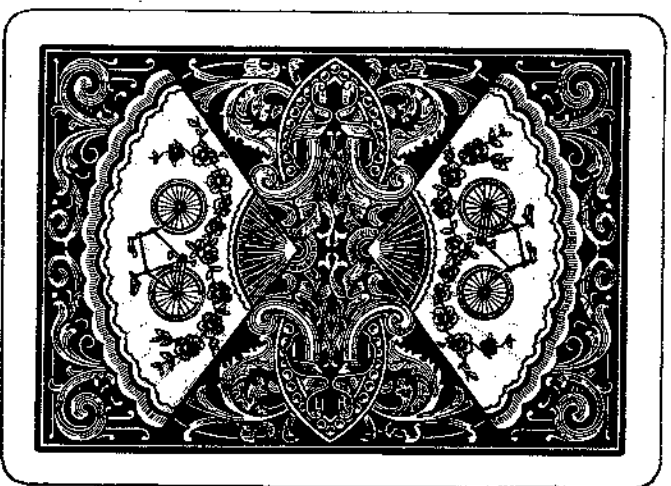
I am sure that many naive players were regularly cheated out of their pants by sharpers who reversed the aces in the pack so they could second-deal them or held key cards upside down in their hands to signal partners. Any deck in which the design is not *exactly* the same, no matter how you hold the cards, is dangerous!

And now for the most frustrating form of marked cards—a deck that has been legitimately printed by an honest manufacturer taking every precaution, a deck that has not been deliberately tampered with or accidentally doctored with telltale dirt spots and yet is flagrantly marked!

#### How can this be?

The manufacturers check and recheck their engravings against the possibility of the slightest nick or flaw and print their cards in big sheets, a full deck or more at a time. They stamp, rather than cut, the separate cards from the sheets; then their staffs of inspectors examine and re-examine the cards so that every pack is absolutely uniform, top, bottom, sides and rounded corners.

But here is what happens. There are separate large printings, and while all the tens upon tens of thousands of cards in any one printing



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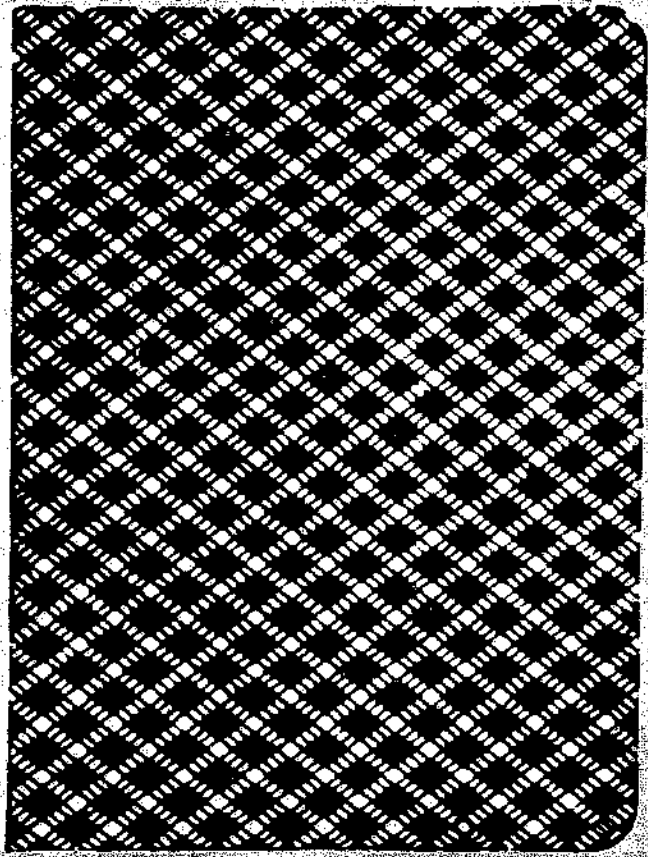
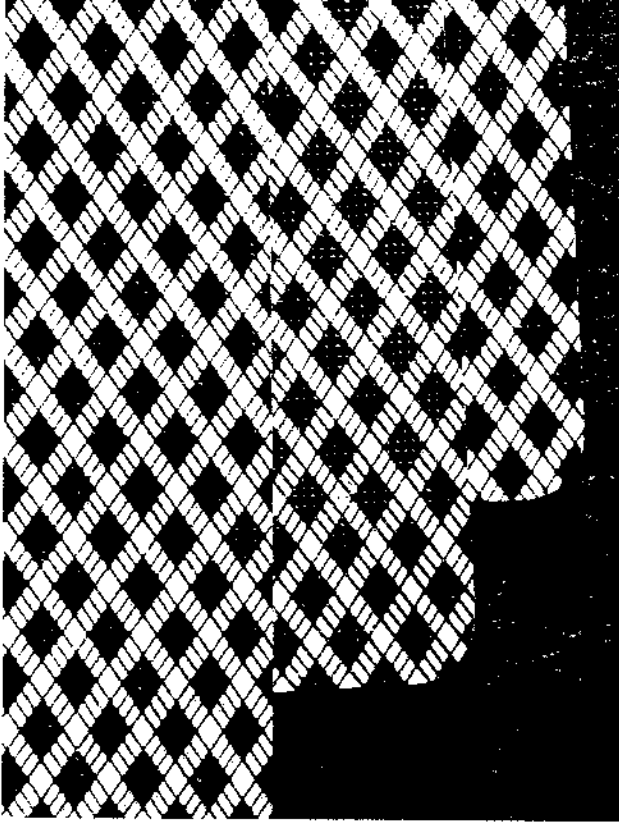


Figure 41. Starting at the lower right hand corner, note five arrows up the side, across the top and down the left hand side of card. These are five places where Bee back cards can be most effectively marked.

Figure 42. These are known as "sorts." If you will look very closely, you will see edges have been cut so that some of the diamonds are smaller than the others. This indicates value.



are uniform, they may differ, ever so slightly, from the cards in other printing runs. That is, in one run, a tiny bit of the design may be "bitten" off closer at the end. It could be anything, scrollwork, floral pattern, diamond or whatnot—but it is enough.

By patiently sorting through thousands of decks, the supply houses reconstruct new decks from the different runs, and the tiny variation in the size of the design is the mark. Quite logically, such packs are known to the profession as "sorts."

### *It was worth the \$200*

Since the supply houses do carry much equipment that is primarily used by entertainers, their declarations that they offer their wares for demonstration of magic or for exposé purposes only has a seeming plausibility. However, they give themselves away in their catalogues by recommending certain marked decks as primarily for poker and others for blackjack and even advertising special pinochle "readers." Poker, blackjack, pinochle, I can assure you, are not magicians' games—not the games of honest magicians, anyhow.

Unlike the movies or television, where the right guy wins out eventually, victory in real-life gambling goes almost always to the cheat. Thus, whenever I hear stories of a cheater cheated, I like to remember them, and here is the best one I know about marked cards.

A "paper worker," who prided himself on the secret value markings he had personally applied with the best imported French ink and the most expensive camel's-hair brush, was sitting in a poker game with several less talented thieves. One of the heavy losers suspected the cards were marked but could detect nothing on them.

So, in the course of gathering up the discards, he managed to get a fast peek at and memorize the top ten cards. This is not difficult for an accomplished peeker, and anyone can train himself to memorize

