

## Fast Camels and Striped-Tailed Apes



**By: Michael Cappelletti**

**Published: Friday, February 13, 2004**

In classic bridge literature, there is a rather humorous anecdote, *The Stripe-Tailed Ape Double*, in which a bridge-playing visitor to the Amazon jungle encountered bridge-playing natives who employed a very advanced technique of doubling opponents who were in the process of bidding a makeable slam. When the visitor inquired, *But what happens if they are smart enough to redouble?* the natives replied, ***Oh, then we run like a striped-tailed ape.***

When I was spending time in Morocco in the '80s, I learned about an interesting military ploy that had been used by the French Foreign Legion when one of its desert outposts was about to be attacked by superior numbers of soldiers. All of the French soldiers set up all of their extra "whites" (uniforms) so that they were visible on the top of the walls of the fort. Then, they ran back and forth firing from several different positions so that it appeared there were many more men defending the fort.

When I inquired what happened if it didn't work and they stormed the walls, the old French officer smiled and replied, *Well, that's why we had fast camels waiting at the back gate.*

One of the most important concepts emphasized in my new books, *Poker at the Millennium* (by Caro and Cappelletti) and *How to Win at Omaha High-Low* is the art of driving. Although many good players drive well by experience and instinct, few really understand all the intricacies. And note that many of these Omaha driving subtleties also apply to hold'em.

What is "driving"? It's simply taking the initiative and lead betting a hand either before or just after the flop. For example, the flop comes and you make the lead bet and get one or more callers. Then after the turn card, you bet again. Thus, you are "driving the hand." One of the main advantages of driving is that if everybody folds, you win the pot and it doesn't matter whether you really had a good hand or not.

One of the more sophisticated questions is, should you continue driving a not-so-good hand after the last card? Sometimes, an even more delicate question is, should you continue driving after the turn card? For example, you raise before the flop, and lead bet after the flop and get

one or more callers. Should you continue driving if you still have very little after the turn card? Note that in hold'em, you often raise before the flop, lead bet after the flop, and then punt.

While playing \$50-\$100 Omaha high-low in Atlantic City, I picked up the A♠ 9♠ K♥ 7♦. An aggressive player on my left raised before the flop and everyone folded around to me. Although my hand was not great, I considered it to be good enough to call. Unless my opponent had pocket aces with a low, I would not be much of an underdog.

The flop came 3-5-9 rainbow with one spade. Since I was now clearly good enough to play further, did I want to lead bet, check and call, or check-raise? There is a lot to be said for simply lead betting to see if he would raise, but since we had had some previous psychological business, I chose to check-raise. He just called my raise.

The turn card was a 4. If he had started with an A-2, he now had a wheel. My top pair somehow looked much smaller now. Would you check or bet with my cards?

I made what I sometimes call the "fast camel" bet. If he raised me, I would certainly ride away on a fast camel (fold). Note that if I checked, he might well bet, and I would have a problem. He might not have an A-2, and I might be able to win either high or low.

Thus, the major situational question is, do I make more money in the long run by checking and calling him twice (or less) and seeing the showdown, or by making one bet (driving) and folding if he raises - thereby not seeing the showdown?

He folded. Phew! Note that one of the main advantages of driving is that after the check-raise, every time he does not have a good hand, he will have some incentive to fold. Looking at my puny hand, it is quite possible that the last card would give him half the pot or more (for example, any high card might beat my nines for high). Even if he folds only one time in four, that would be a good investment. All in all, in this type of situation, in both Omaha and hold'em, I have found that driving (and sometimes escaping on a fast camel) seems to produce the best results. Your comments are welcomed.