

Roberto Giobbi's *Card College* Playing Cards

Who is Roberto Giobbi?

Almost every student of card magic will be familiar with the name of the magician Roberto Giobbi. His credentials include being named Vice World Champion in Card Magic at the World Championship of Magic on two occasions. With a background that includes skills in mathematics, science, literature, and linguistics, his expertise in a variety of disciplines gives him an insightful perspective that few can match.

But Mr. Giobbi is especially well regarded for his ability in teaching magic and is highly sought after as a lecturer and professional coach for the best magicians in the world. He's created numerous instructional videos, recorded many lectures, written over 50 books, and contributed many articles and essays to influential magazines. Given his outstanding resume, it is no surprise that his teaching materials are popular with magicians around the globe, and his work is much demanded and respected.



What is *Card College*?

But perhaps Roberto Giobbi's crowning achievement is his groundbreaking series of books entitled [Card College](#), which is a serious course in intermediate and advanced card magic. Many magicians agree that this influential five-volume set is arguably the best tool available for mastering the fundamentals of card magic, which is why you'll often see it listed among the best books on the subject. It is considered to be the gold standard textbook in card magic, as evidenced by the fact that it's available in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese and Korean making these five volumes the most widely translated magic books in history.

In addition, Giobbi has authored the spin-off [Card College Light trilogy](#), which is a series of three books entitled *Card College Light*, *Lighter*, and *Lightest*, each containing "self-working" card tricks. Despite the fact that no sleight of hand is required, these are not the

boring mathematical atrocities you may have learned from your grandfather, but are strong tricks that are easy to learn and have a powerful impact.

Giobbi has also created a complete video course that serves as a wonderful companion to the *Card College* series. Entitled [Card College 1 & 2: The Complete Course](#), this is now available as a digital download, and has a run time of almost 8 hours. The 23 lessons included cover all the basics of card magic, as well as a large number of wonderful card tricks. In a similar fashion, his follow-up video series [Card Magic Masterclass](#) covers content corresponding to the three final books of Card College.



Card College Playing Cards

Now in addition to these books and videos there is a new member of the *Card College* family, namely [Card College Playing Cards](#). Having a deck of playing cards named after a famous magician is not a new concept as such, but what is new is the extravagant luxury of these wonderful custom decks, which come in a standard edition and a limited edition, the latter complete with innovative packaging that we've never seen the likes of previously.

Standard Edition

The standard decks both have tuck boxes that immediately bring to mind the graphic designs of the *Card College* books, with a similar style and colors. They're unembossed and don't have a custom seal but are finished off with elegant silver lines for a classy touch.

The back features the cross-hatched design of the card backs, complete with an elegant silver border. The sides of the box feature card magic wisdom that is typical of Giobbi: one side reads "*Card magic is the poetry of magic*" (Hofzinser) and the other reads "*Wonder is the beginning of all wisdom*" (Socrates).



There are two different decks, one that is red-backed and the other that is blue-backed, so they make a nice matching set. The design of the card backs brings to mind the diamond pattern of the classic Bee design. But while the borderless design of Bee decks is good for gambling routines, it is less ideal for regular card magic, so Giobbi has wisely opted to go with cards that have white borders on the backs.

The cross-hatched design of interlaced lines in a lattice shape ensures a plain pattern that won't distract from card magic, and yet looks distinctive. The borders are pleasantly narrow, and there's no evidence of misaligned printing or inaccurate registration in the sample decks that I have personally seen and used first-hand.



The card faces are nearly all standard - exactly what a serious magician would want. While custom cards might be appropriate in some settings, they are also largely a matter of personal preference, and there is always a risk that the novelty can distract from the functionality of the deck.

Roberto Giobbi is all about creating strong magic by your performance, so this choice isn't surprising, because it confirms his classic and traditional approach to magic, where all the emphasis is on good presentation and sound handling techniques.



There are small elements of customization, however, in the places that you expect them even with a relatively standard deck. The Ace of Spades has a large and ornate pip with monogrammed RG initials inside and a Roberto Giobbi signature below. The two Jokers feature a black and white image of Giobbi, with monogrammed circles on opposite corners. This is perhaps my least favorite part of the deck, because I think the artwork doesn't quite do justice to the elegance and sophistication of the man himself. Both decks also come with two extra gaff cards (double-backers), which will be welcomed by magicians.

The deck has been produced by TCC Playing Cards, but the actual manufacturing and printing was by United States Playing Card Company. So, the quality is good, and the handling is just what you'd expect from a standard USPC-produced deck.



Limited Edition

But the star attraction of the Card College decks are the limited editions. These are extremely limited and are available only as a three-deck set. How limited? Well try this: there will only be 500 of the Black Gold Box Set, and only 100 of the Walnut Deluxe Box Set. In the world of modern custom decks, those are very low numbers and very limited quantities, and it means that we can expect a large demand for these by discerning collectors.

But before showing the packaging of the two sets, let's show you the tuck boxes from the limited edition decks, because these are already something truly special and unique. The decks themselves come in three different colors: Wine Red, Dark Green, and Indigo.



These make an immediate statement of class, with elegant touches of beautiful gold foil, to evoke a luxurious and stylish feel that complements the classic nature of the Card College series.

But, fellow playing card enthusiasts and friends, this extravagance is merely the beginning! Distributed by Ark Playing Card Co and TCC Playing Card Co, the creative design here is credited as being produced by D, whose slogan is "*Continuous exploration & infinite innovation to create unparalleled playing cards.*" D's goal was to create a truly innovative tuck box worthy of bearing the name of the classic Card College. Innovation is certainly the order of the day, because the most striking aspect of the tuck box is its innovative folding origami style design that is simultaneously impressive and exclusive.



Opening the tuck box first involves removing a sleeve-like cover. Then you can unfold the front section vertically, and in the process a separate panel unfolds horizontally. It's a piece of beautiful engineering unlike anything I've ever seen before in a tuck box design. It turns the opening of the box into a small ceremony, as you can see in the animated gif [here](#). To achieve this unique effect, dozens of paper stocks were tested, and hundreds of experiments were run, to ensure optimal and consistent performance. This is a project that has been in the works for over a year, and you can tell that it is the result of enormous passion and much hard work.

As for the back of the tuck box, this has a rich design, with lavish foil once again ensuring complete elegance and style. This design is reprised on the card backs, and the use of metallic inks produces a regal and classic look.



The card faces evoke a standard and classic feel, which is appropriate given that they are intended to complement a classic book of card magic, so a traditional look suits this well.

Yet there are small touches where these playing card deviate from the traditional mold, such as an adjusted color scheme for the court cards that makes them look less garish and more pleasing on the eye. Additionally, the pips have undergone a small upgrade to give them additional elegance.



The over-sized Aces have a thoroughly custom look, and the two Jokers feature the same Card College logo that also appears on the front of the tuck box.

Like the standard decks, the limited edition is also printed by USPCC, the ever reliable and respected giant manufacturer of playing cards.



Black Gold Box Set

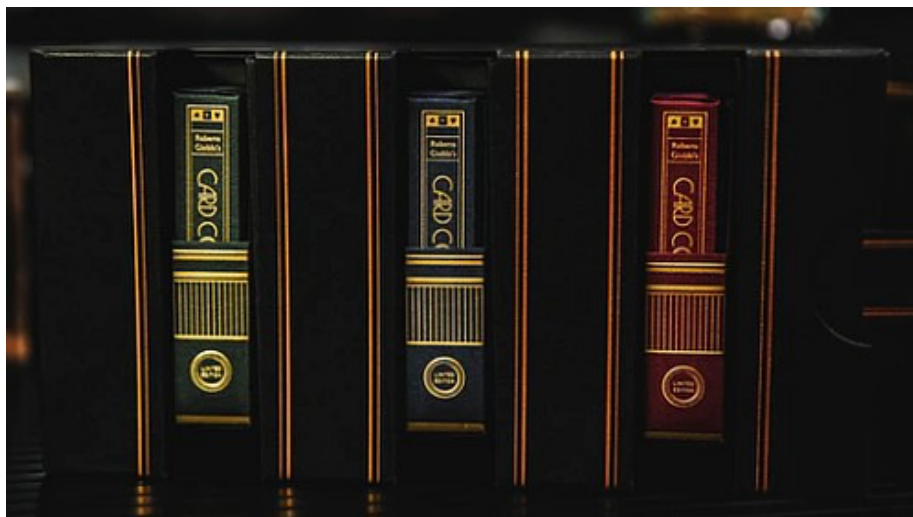
These stunning limited edition decks deserve the very best in packaging, so now it's time to take a look at the packaging of the two box sets, each of which contains three limited edition decks.

The Black Gold Box Set is made of high end matte black cardboard, with gold foil trimmings that match the visual style of the tuck boxes themselves. And like the tuck boxes, innovation is the order of the day, because the design of the box for the set has been inspired by a sports car sunroof.



Once again this needs to be seen to be believed, and you simply must check out the animated gif that shows how opening the box looks [here](#). After removing the large sleeve that encases the whole set, you pull a tab which then reveals the three decks, each with their own separate home inside the box.

Only 500 of these sets are going to be made available, and each deck within the set will have an individually numbered seal from 1 to 500. I'm sure these are going to be snapped up given that while they have a retail value of \$120, Kickstarter supporters fortunate enough to act quickly can get these quality sets of three at a remarkable \$60.



Walnut Deluxe Box Set

If the Black Gold Box Set impressed you, just wait until you see the Walnut Deluxe Box, which represents the very top of the range, and the height of luxury. This is handmade from black walnut wood, and immediately impresses.



The three included limited-edition decks can be found inside a wooden drawer which is lined with fine flannelette, and finished with a polished copper handle. See an animated gif [here](#) that shows how it looks to open the box. The first thing you see is a sealed envelope, and inside you'll find a foil certificate of ownership. For even more luxury, the decks from this deluxe set will have gilded edges; see a preview of the gilding in an animated gif [here](#).

The deluxe box set will be extremely rare, with only 150 produced, all with individually numbered decks. The Kickstarter price is a surprisingly low \$150 given the amount of innovation and luxury included, and given that these three deck sets have a retail value of \$300. Despite the higher price tag, I expect that these Walnut Deluxe Box Sets will be snapped up even more quickly than the Black Gold Box Sets.



Recommendation

Roberto Giobbi's contribution in furthering the art of card magic is significant, given the wonderful resources he has produced to help students of card magic master both the fundamentals of card magic and the advanced moves of card handling. I highly recommend his *Card College* series of books for serious students of card magic, while newbies can hardly do better than beginning with his *Card College Light trilogy*.

One of Giobbi's real strengths is the scholarly approach that he brings to his magic. His instruction is well-organized, clear, and logical, and he is an articulate and thoughtful teacher with a real love for the art of magic. He gives careful attention to the smallest details of presentation, and to the finer points of constructing an effect, while always having a deep respect for both his sources and for his students. Like few others, he has a real gift for identifying and explaining the nuances that are essential for performing magic that is strong, and a passion for preserving magic as an elegant and artistic art-form.

I'm pleased that there are now some quality decks of playing cards that are a fine tribute to this contemporary giant in the world of card magic, and which bear the name of his classic and monumental *Card College* books. If Mr. Giobbi is holding your hand with *Card College*, you are almost certainly going to improve your skills. And with these playing cards on your table, you'll certainly look the part!



Where to learn more?

- **Official:** [Roberto Giobbi Website](#) and [Webshop](#)
- **Books:** [Introduction to Card Magic](#) , [Card College Light Trilogy](#), [Card College 1-5](#)
- **Videos:** [Card College 1 & 2: The Complete Course](#), [Card Magic Masterclass](#)