

Learning Points Finding a Double Squeeze

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

February 8, 2008

E Deals

NS Vul

Kim

♠ J	N	♠ AQ108764
♥ A974	W 2 E	♥ 5
♦ A1097	S	♦ 652
♣ K853		♣ A9

♠ 532

♥ J832

♦ Q83

♣ J76

Steve

East

South

West

North

4♠

Pass

Pass

Pass

South leads the ♠5

February 7, 2008 Thursday Evening Open Pairs Game
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Mentoring new bridge players is a fun way to give back to your club for the time you've enjoyed playing bridge. The CBA offers a mentoring program for aspiring players new to duplicate bridge. Mentors play a minimum number of games throughout the year and provide encouragement and coaching along the way. The CBA has also begun Bridge Buddies - another way to share learning with newcomers. Bridge buddies is more flexible and requires no fixed commitment. A Buddy can coach several new players, and new players can learn from many different Buddies. Buddies might help a new player set their convention card, or answer questions about bidding or play. Mentors play, Buddies observe and coach, new players win, and so does our club.

The Bidding

Kim is my partner. This is our first time playing together. We are playing Standard American with no conventions. There's a lot to say for natural bidding. Not having all the gadgets affords clearer communication and some conservatism.

The East hand has too much defense for an opening weak 2♠ or a preemptive 3♠. I would prefer to open 1♠ because of the two aces. However this hand has 6 losers. Partner does expect my nonvulnerable preempts to be weak. The vulnerability is favorable and just a little something from partner can help a lot. I can afford to go down three doubled against any vulnerable game they make (-500 beats -600 or -620 at duplicate). However bidding 4 Spades can put a lot of pressure on partner if partner has a good hand. Since this is a bid many players will make, I commit 4♠. All pass.

Planning the Play

South led a spade thinking to cut down ruffs in dummy. The ♠J fetched the ♠K. Trumps fell in 2 more rounds and 11 tricks are there for the taking. Can declarer establish a 12th trick in a side suit? If one opponent holds ♣QJ10, the ♣8 will set up in dummy. This is very unlikely. We need better odds. Hearts is no better. Diamonds are missing the KQJ so a 2nd trick from diamonds won't happen either.

With 11 tricks off the top and no clear way to develop the 12th trick in a side suit, it's time to think about a squeeze. In a squeeze, winners are played in proper sequence forcing one or both opponents to discard a guard card, enabling you to promote a threat card to a winner. There are many different kinds of squeezes. Check out the many bridge books written on the topic or the Official ACBL Encyclopedia for more detail. Often playing for a possible squeeze risks nothing, and might or might not work. Either declarer or defenders can execute a squeeze. True squeezes are relatively rare, and successful defensive squeezes even more so.

For a squeeze to work, declarer must be trying to gain one (or rarely two) more tricks than the current number of winners declarer has. Squeezing one opponent for two tricks or more requires all missing winners be in one hand. This is highly unlikely on this deal. Often an opponent's bid will tip you off when

this approach could be possible. The opening preempt eliminated any bidding clue from the defense. Declarer chose to play for a possible one trick squeeze on this hand. It's the best chance for an overtrick on this hand.

Declarer has 11 tricks off the top. The squeeze will be for the 12th trick. It's time to lose one trick in a safe way. This is called rectifying the count – an important step to create conditions that make a squeeze possible. By bringing the total number of tricks that one side wants to win to 1 more than the total number of tricks already known, there will be a squeeze. All we need to do is force one or both opponents to play a critical card (stopper) before declarer makes the critical play.

To rectify the count, declarer finessed the $\diamond 10$, won by North with the $\diamond J$. North switched to the $\heartsuit K$ won by the $\heartsuit Ace$ in dummy. Declarer trumped a \heartsuit in hand and led a \diamond to the ace (Vienna Coup – this puts the diamond threat in hand to help this squeeze work). A small \clubsuit to the King was followed by the run of the spades. South discarded the $\diamond Q$, forcing North to guard the suit. The run reduced the hands (see table) with 3 cards to play to:

E Deals	$\spadesuit -$	
NS Vul	$\heartsuit -$	
	$\diamond K$	
Kim	$\clubsuit Q10$	Steve
$\spadesuit -$	N	$\spadesuit 4$
$\heartsuit 9$	W 2 E	$\heartsuit -$
$\diamond -$		$\diamond 6$
$\clubsuit K8$	S	$\clubsuit 9$
	$\spadesuit -$	
	$\heartsuit J$	
	$\diamond -$	
	$\clubsuit J7$	

In the 3 card ending, the $\diamond 6$ is a threat against North's $\diamond K$, and the $\heartsuit 9$ is a threat against South's $\heartsuit J$. The $\clubsuit 8$ is a threat against both opponents. The lead of the $\spadesuit 4$ by East squeezes South. South held the $\heartsuit J$ and pitched the $\clubsuit 7$. Declarer then pitched the $\heartsuit 9$ (its work now done). North felt the vise, eventually keeping the $\diamond K$ and pitching the $\clubsuit 10$.

Two rounds of clubs brought in 12 tricks. This squeeze worked first against South and then against North on the same trick - a simultaneous double squeeze. One opponent guards hearts, the other opponent guards diamonds, and both guard the 3rd suit, clubs. Notice that the heart threat has to sit over the opponent guarding hearts. If North chose to guard hearts and South diamonds then the squeeze card would have to be in dummy so the double squeeze would fail.

Post Mortem

The opening lead was unfortunate but not fatal. A preempt shows at least 7 or 8 cards, so dummy and partner have at most 2 or 3 trumps split between them (13 minus 10 or 11 equals 2 or 3). A heart lead is better. Always try to establish your side's length, not declarer's when you choose to lead a side suit.

After a \heartsuit lead, declarer will likely play for a doubleton $\spadesuit K$ with North because there aren't enough entries for a trump coup. Declarer will lead the $\spadesuit J$ to the $\spadesuit Q$, then fell the $\spadesuit K$ with the $\spadesuit A$. The hand then plays similarly. The only change is the timing of the play in the heart suit.

Must North-South succumb to the double squeeze? – **NO!** Once declarer ruffs the heart in hand, South should keep the $\diamond Q$ and drop hearts quickly. South wants to keep the stopper for East's threat card. North will keep hearts over dummy, and not worry where the $\diamond Q$ is. Try the 3 card ending with the $\diamond Q$ replacing the $\heartsuit J$ and the $\heartsuit K$ replacing the $\diamond K$. Now East can only win 11 tricks and the squeeze fails.

Note to self: don't reveal the distribution by ruffing hearts unnecessarily. Make NS work for their tricks!