

Learning Points – GNTQ Bidding, Slams & Squeezes, Oh My!

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February 2, 2009

LEVEL: Advanced/Expert

E Deals

None Vul

Spot Cards
Approximate

♠ AKQ852 Mike
♥ KJ
♦ J63
♣ 75

♠	N	♠
♥	W 30 E	♥
♦	S	♦
♣		♣

♠ J6
♥ A10742
♦ AK6
♣ A96 Steve

Sunday February 1, 2009. Flight B Grand National Team Semi-Final Round, District 11, CBA Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Thanks to our teammates Rob Weidenfeld and Jim Edmiston. Rob contributed substantially to this post mortem. Thanks!

Knockout Imps. Here's an unassuming hand that is a superstar for showcasing why we love this game. NS have 11 tricks off the top and a host of plays for 12. Bidding this slam is tough. Once you are there you might as well enjoy the possibilities.

Opponent's Bidding

Our opponents bid to 4♠ with these cards. A standard or 2/1 game forcing auction can proceed along several possible lines.

Players not opening 1NT with a 5 card major would see something like Auction A. 1NT openers would see something like auction B. Those facing a 1st seat ♣ preempt have several variations and we'll suggest simply 1 here - Auction C. NS face a difficult valuation decisions. Let's take each case in turn.

Standard – 2/1 Game Force Auctions

Auction A. North can be confident that the ♥KJ is working and ♦ are covered. However ♣ seem open and 3 losers are still possible on the combined hands. In IMPS ♠ seem the safest game.

Auction B. North has a bit more information about strength and spade length in partner's hand, but cannot be sure about the heart suit and will be concerned about clubs. South's pass at the 2nd turn indicates 2♠. North retransfers, and South accepts at the 3 level unsure of North's intentions. North now has to decide about level. In most partnerships, a Jacoby sequence with a 6-card major is mildly slam invitational because we have the Texas Transfer (here North would bid 4♥ to transfer to ♠ directly) for game only hands. With all the spaces in the ♥ suit and 2 apparent losers in ♣, South will likely pass 4♠.

Auction C. If East preempts 3♣ they just might goad NS in the right direction. Desperate times call for desperate measures. North can choose 3♠, 4♠, 4♥ and 4♣. Of these, only 4♣ guarantees the auction will continue at a slow informative flexible pace. 3♠ might be passed and is an underbid. 4♥ will be wrong anytime opener has exactly the heart suit shown. 4♠ while apparently right on strength will not goad opener to investigate slam when one might exist. Now South must decide whether 12 tricks are possible with existing information. Can you?

East	South	West	North
Auction A			
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
3♣	3♦	Pass	4♠
Auction B			
Pass	1N	Pass	2♥
3♣	Pass	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
Auction C			
3♣	3♥	Pass	4♣
Double	4♦	Pass	4♠

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♣ ¹	Pass	1♠ ²
3♣	3♥ ³	Pass	3♠
Pass	3N	Pass	4♣ ⁴
Pass	5♦ ⁵	Pass	5♥ ⁶
Pass	5♠ ⁷	Pass	6N

- 1 = 16+ HCP Forcing & Artificial
- 2 = 5+ S, 8+ HCP
- 3 = 5 H, not able to bid NT immediately
- 4 = Control Ask (A=2, K=1)
- 5 = 7 Controls (6 Steps)
- 6 = Delayed raise (2 Cards)
- 7 = Delayed Raise (2 Cards)

← Our Auction – Why we like Precision

Mike and I play Precision with a 2/1 structure over limited opening 1-level bids. Let's see how the information exchange differed. We are in a Game Force at the 1-level unless we identify a misfit. While opponent's interfere, we can show our suits naturally and provide shape information along the way. South's failure to bid ♠ or NT at the 2nd turn suggests flaws for both. A double by South would be penalty. As anemic as the hearts are, 3♥ is the systemic choice. 3♠ not only guarantees 6 cards, but shows extras (Fast arrival applies). 3N says South is a

balanced hand with 5♥, exactly 2♠, and at best the ♣Axx or ♣Kxx. (With better ♣ South would bid 3N or double immediately. With a minimum 5332 pattern and no ♣ stopper South would pass initially. An immediate double by South would show 4+♣. With 6♥ South rebids 4♥ and with 5♥&4♦ south rebids 4♦). The 4♣ Control Ask is from the Italian Blue Team style. It asks number of controls (A=2, K=1) and partner responds in steps (0-2, 3, 4, 5...). With 10 controls a small slam is possible. With 11, a grand slam is possible. North knows we have 11 controls between the 2 hands and that the ♣K is the missing card. 5♥ is a 2-card preference and 5♠ returns the favor. Both bids imply a grand slam is not out of the question. Since North could not be sure South held the ♠J, and was fairly certain we held at least 11 tricks, 6N seems a reasonable place.

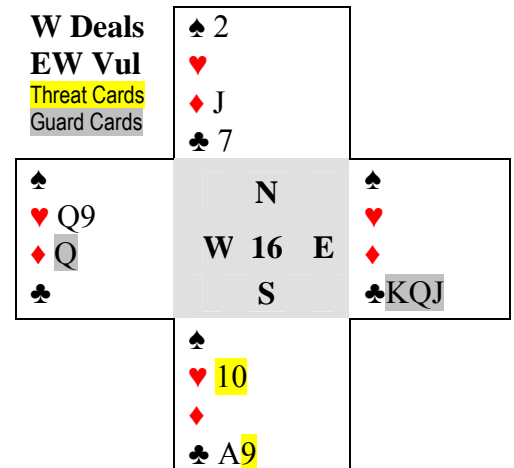
The Play

West leads the ♣8 against this slam (any other lead gives the slam away!) South can count 11 tricks (6♠, 2♥, 2♦, 1♣) off the top. Approaches for the slam going 12th trick are many:

- 1) Finesse West for the ♥Q
- 2) Finesse East for the ♥Q
- 3) ♦Q drops (9% = 31.52% x 6/21)
- 4) Squeeze East in ♥ and ♣
- 5) Squeeze West in ♥ and ♦

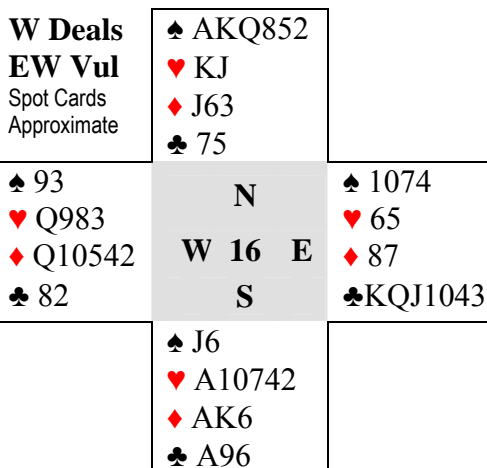
Simple and Double squeezes require opponents to guard 2 or 3 suits respectively, declarer to have threats positioned so opponents have to decide which guard to release before Declarer commits to a play, and declarer looking for just one more trick (There are exceptions). Since declarer has 11 tricks seeking a 12th, losing the 1st trick safely allows the timing for the squeeze to set up. See Clyde Love's [Bridge Squeezes Complete](#) for a thorough review. Note there can be NO double squeeze here. None of the 3 suits are missing 2 guard cards above the threat card. A double squeeze requires that one suit be protected by BOTH defenders. Only the ♥Q is missing, so only one defender can protect the ♥ suit.

Declarer ducked the 1st trick to East's ♣10 who returned a small ♦. This pretty much locates the ♦Q in West's hand. Now's the moment of truth. The ♥Q finesses offer only an apparent 50/50 proposition. Declarer chose to play West for the ♥Q and the remaining club honors (threats ♥10 and ♣9). Appropriately, South Cashed the ♥AK (Vienna Coup) and the ♦K (no ♦Q Fell, sorry). Then on the run of the ♠ found the following 3 card ending. On the lead of the ♠2, West would be squeezed in ♣ and ♥ had West held ♥Q ♣KQ. Instead the ♥Q was with West so the ♣ and ♥ simple squeeze failed. Our result was 6N-1 and -560 or -11 IMPS to the opponents (who made 4S+7 for +510).



Post Mortem

Bidding - 6NT seemed safe if South had even a Queen more than a minimum (South had the absolute minimum hand for opening 1♣).



Play – South overlooked key data when choosing the ♥ and ♣ simple squeeze. Can you spot what he missed? The information available at the end of trick 3 should have pointed South to the right choice. With the ♦Q marked in West, where is the ♥Q? South believed the 3♣ bidder had to have it since a 6-card suit on 6 HCP is terribly risky in this auction. What did South ignore?

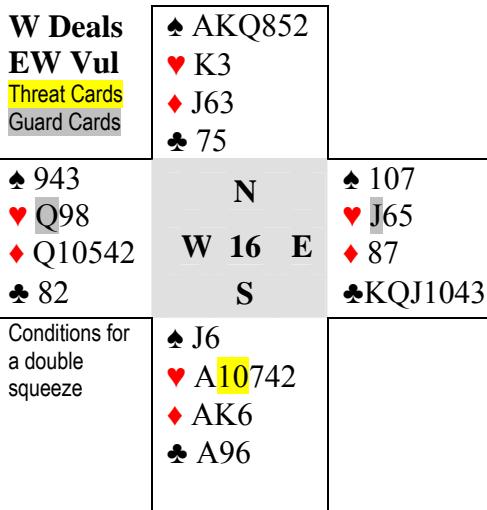
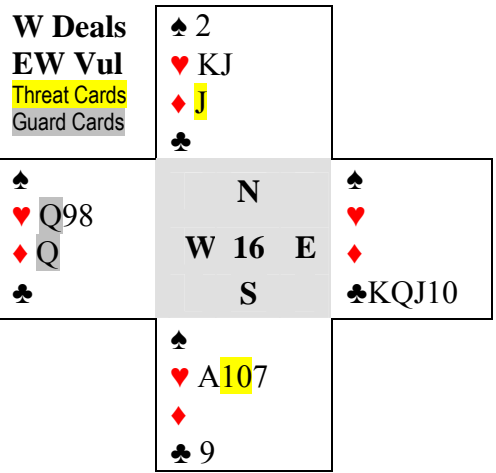
The missing spaces approach can help South estimate the probability where the ♥Q is likely to be. At trick 3, West is known to have exactly 6 ♣ and 1 ♦. East has 2 ♣ and 2 ♦. That means East has 6 unknown cards, and West has 9 unknown cards. The likelihood that the ♥Q resides with West is about $9/(9+6) = 9/15 = 60\%$ (assuming the ♦Q is with West). This is better odds than any

a priori finesse (50%). This doesn't mean the ♥ finesse should be taken. Instead declarer should take steps for a simple squeeze against West. Have you found it?

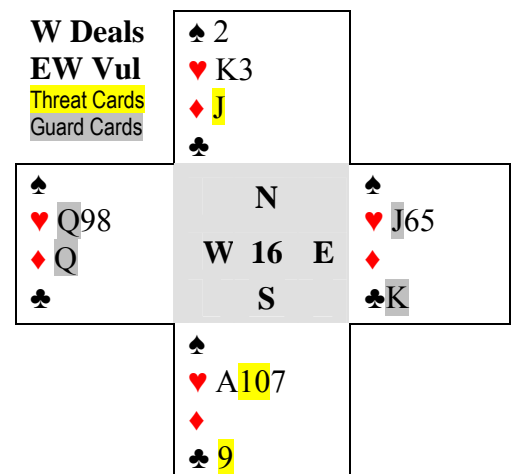
The threat cards are the $\heartsuit J$ and the $\heartsuit 10$, using \heartsuit for transportation to declarer's hand. This means not touching the \heartsuit suit until the end. Declarer should cash the $\heartsuit K$ (Vienna Coup) and $\clubsuit A$ before running off 5 \spadesuit leaving the following position \rightarrow

Now West cannot stand the pressure caused by the forced discard on North's $\spadesuit 2$. South and East both discard clubs on this 9th trick and East must either make the $\heartsuit J$ good in dummy or the $\heartsuit 10$ good in declarer's hand. All declarer pays attention to is whether the $\heartsuit Q$ appears. If not then the $\heartsuit 10$ must be good. Try it!

Finally for Squeeze mavens, we modify North's hand slightly by giving East the $\heartsuit Jxx$. Now there is a split double guard in \heartsuit . The conditions are set for a double squeeze (each opponent controls one suit and they both control the same suit \heartsuit). Here's how the ending evolves. (*Terminology from C. Love*).



The L guard is $\clubsuit K$. The R guard is the $\heartsuit Q$. The B guards are the $\heartsuit J$ and $\heartsuit Q$. Declarer ducks the opening lead then goes about cashing winners to yield this 4 card ending \rightarrow South must cash the $\heartsuit K$ (Vienna Coup) to make the end position clear and avoid communication problems. The $\spadesuit 2$ forces East to discard a \heartsuit to protect \clubsuit . The work of the $\clubsuit 9$ now done, South pitches it and



West is in the same \heartsuit and \heartsuit simple squeeze as before!

Learning Pointers:

- 1) Ducking tricks safely to correct the count is a great way to add chances to making your contract.
- 2) Just because you suspect a finesse might be right, there's no reason to take it.
- 3) Locate missing cards with Available Space guidance – you'll improve your odds.
- 4) When playing a squeeze, be sure to choose the most likely approach – there can be 2 or 3 on any one hand. Locate the guards you wish squeezed away from opponents then plan your play accordingly. If you bid 'em ya' gotta' play 'em right.
- 5) Use Precision. Precision does a better job than many at exchanging maximum information at minimum levels. The asking bid structure in Precision starts at a low level and offers detail for better decisions. The advantages for playing limited natural opening bids include simpler more accurate competitive (something we all do about 50% of the time) and constructive bidding advantages. Precision is simpler than standard or 2/1 once you include all the add-on conventions for equivalent accuracy.

Don't believe us – here's what Larry Cohen says: *“Precision is a wonderful (and in my opinion, easier than "Standard") bidding system. The beauty of this system is two-fold: 1) You get to start your strong hands at the lowest possible starting point (1 \clubsuit). 2) All the other 1-level openings deny good hands, making the rest of the auction simpler. If I were teaching beginners, I would want to start them with Precision--the easiest-to-learn bidding system. As a testament to how good this system is, in my estimate, as of 2007, 4 of the top 5 pairs in America use Precision!”*

<http://www.larryco.com/BG%20articles/A39--Precision.htm>