

Learning Points - Defending Against Squeezes

by Steve Moese; Mike Purcell ed.

March 19, 2009

When declarer prepares a squeeze, there are several things we can do on defense. First, don't let declarer correct the loser count. We duck tricks we will win later so declarer cannot exert threat pressure. Threat pressure only happens when there are one (or sometimes 2) losers left.

Second, we can attack declarer's transportation by removing entries to threat cards prematurely. Attacking an entry is akin to attacking an option prematurely. We force declarer to commit to a line of play before s/he has sufficient information on the hand. In rare cases, leading declarer's squeeze suit before the squeeze can operate exhausts the only entry before the loser count is right or trumps are drawn.

Forcing declarer to cash suits out of order can make the position extremely complicated. A double squeeze looms when you share stoppers with partner in one suit, and each guard 1 of the remaining 2 suits. There are several classes of double squeezes, each with their respective attack points. Attacking to change the squeeze type or reversing the order of play can cause problems. See Clyde Love's *Bridge Squeezes Complete for definition and defense tactics*.

E Deals NS Vul	♠ K9 ♥ KQ106 ♦ KJ4 ♣ Q1042	East opens 4♠. All pass.
♠ J ♥ A974 ♦ A1097 ♣ K853	N W S	♠ AQ108764 ♥ 5 ♦ 652 ♣ A9
South leads the ♠5	♠ 532 ♥ J832 ♦ Q83 ♣ J76	

Let's look at how to avoid setting up squeezes for declarer. There are situations where the perfect conditions for a squeeze do not exist without modest help from the defense. Crafty declarers will play along squeeze lines hoping defenders make a subtle but wrong choice. Here is a hand where defenders had to choose which suits to guard and which to discard on the run of trumps. Knowing the type of squeeze and declarer's objectives can make squeeze opportunities disappear. South led a ♠ thinking to cut down ruffs in dummy. After a high level preempt this is a questionable lead. 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?

E Deals NS Vul	♠ - ♥ - ♦ K ♣ Q10	
♠ - ♥ 9 ♦ - ♣ K8	N W S	♠ 4 ♥ - ♦ 6 ♣ 9
	♠ - ♥ J ♦ - ♣ J7	

To rectify the count, declarer finessed the ♦10, won by North with the ♦J. North switched to the ♥K won by the ♥Ace in dummy. Declarer trumped a ♥ in hand and led a ♦ to the ace (Vienna Coup – this puts the diamond threat in hand to help this squeeze work). A small ♣ to the King was followed by the run of the spades. South discarded the ♦Q, forcing North to guard the suit. In the 3 card ending, the ♦6 is a threat against North's ♦K, and the ♥9 is a threat against South's ♥J. The ♣8 is a threat against both opponents. The lead of the ♣4 by East squeezes South. South held the ♥J and pitched the ♣7. Declarer then pitched the ♥9 (its work now done). North kept the ♦K and pitching the ♣10. Two rounds of ♣ brought in 12

tricks. Notice that the ♥ threat has to sit over the opponent guarding ♥. If North chose to guard ♥ and South ♦ then the squeeze card would have to be in dummy!! **The faux double squeeze fails.** South must realize that a ♥ guard is useless unless held by North (and a ♦ guard held by South). South should throw the ♥J and not the ♦Q. Neither North nor South could sort out which red suit to hold and which to throw. A true squeeze does not exist. This happens more often than we'd like to admit.

E Deals NS Vul	♠ KJx ♥ K10xx ♦ xx ♣ Q10xx	South declares 4♠
♠ xx ♥ Jx ♦ Axxxx ♣ A?xx	N W S	♠ x ♥ Qxxxx ♦ KJx ♣ Kxx
West leads ♦x	♠ AQ10xxx ♥ Ax ♦ xxx ♣ ?x	<i>Liability laws prevent revealing the auction...</i>

← Another type of faux simple squeeze led to a good match point score when a major suit game came home. While the auction is long (best) forgotten, the game was reached with little revealing bidding. The opening lead was a ♦ and declarer saw 9 tricks were the limit of the hand, barring some miracle in Hearts. After 2 rounds of ♦, defense went passive leading a trump. Declarer drew 2 rounds of trump and led a small ♣ toward the ♣Q.

Since ♣ were not led and no defender overcalled, the ♣ honors were likely split. West jumped up with the ♣A and a 3rd ♦. Declarer ruffed in dummy and ran trumps reducing to the 4-card ending.

East was convinced that declarer had the remaining ♣J threat. On the final trump West pitched a small ♣, dummy the ♣Q and East parted with a low ♥, after much thought. South, with no better line, played the squeeze as if s/he held the ♣J. East could not part with the ♣K.

Perhaps better attention to partner's discards solves East's dilemma at trick 10. Nevertheless when given the choice of protecting dummy's length or the hidden threat, choose the known threat all the time. You have better chances the post mortem will come out better....

E Deals		♠ -
NS Vul		♥ K10x
		♦ -
		♣ Q
♠ -		♠ -
♥ Jx	N	♥ Qxx
♦ -	W E	♦ -
♣ ?x	S	♣ K
		♠ 7
		♥ Ax
		♦ -
		♣ ?