

Learning Points – Squeeze or Finesse?

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LEVEL: Advanced

E Deals

None Vul

Spot Cards
Approximate

♠ xx
♥ AQxxx
♦ A108xx
♣ K

Lorna

Monday April 20, 2009. Pasteboards Social Club game, Buca di Beppos. Thanks to Joe Pike and Vern Goetz and Lorna Davis for this interesting puzzle.

Lorna and I decided to practice before playing in the Flying Pig Regional Knockout Events next week. We play a 2/1 card and I could sure use the extra practice.

♠		N	♠
♥			♥
♦	W 9	E	♦
♣		S	♣

♠ AQxx
♥ K10
♦ Qx
♣ AQJ108

Steve

East	South	West	North
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	2N ¹	Pass	3♦ ²
Pass	3♥ ³	Pass	4N ⁴
Pass	5♣	Pass	5N ⁵
Pass	6N ⁶	Passed Out	

Bidding

South's got a good hand worthy of a reverse or a jump shift. When partner responds in ♥, South chooses to profess an 18-19 HCP balanced hand (would you?). North executes a New Minor Force and South now wants to protect a weak ♦ suit. The raise to 3♥ is a stretch that might land us in the only makeable game. Partner tries RKB and finds all key cards. The 5N King Ask exposes a lack of agreement (do we respond in King count or specific Kings? – we chose specific kings after this hand – the value of practice). 6N is a reasonable try knowing all Aces are accounted for. Besides South has no Kings to share.

West Leads ♣

1= Choosing the 2NT value bid instead of 2♠
2= New Minor Forcing; 3= Concerned about ♦, raise with ♥K10 (usually promised 3 cards).
4= RKB; 5= King Ask. 6= Better undo the ♥ fib....

The play Declarer can count 9 tricks off the top with 1 or 2 more available in ♥, perhaps 1 in ♠ and perhaps 1 more in ♦. There are some ♦ layouts that will yield 4 tricks but they are not probable. Declarer set out to check ♥ first. If ♥ can deliver 5 tricks then we are looking for the overtrick. Sure enough ♥ split 3-3. On the run of the ♥ declarer pitched the ♦Q (show-off) and two small ♠ while defenders pitched ♣. They can't escape their fate. A small ♠ to the ♠A (yes, not the ♠Q) allowed declarer to clamp the vice down on either defender for an overtrick.

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The lead of the ♣10 squeezes West in the pointed suits. See the in the 3-card ending. West wisely pitched the ♠K, keeping the ♦ guards. Declarer cashed the now good ♠Q and had a small ♦ to reach the ♦A. 6N+7 was top board.

Post Mortem

When West showed ♥Jxx, the choice of the passive ♣ lead suggested both ♠&♦ Kings. A passive opening lead is somewhat unusual against slam. While the ♠ finesse represents a 50% chance for an overtrick, declarer chose to believe West held both missing Kings. The only real chance for an overtrick was if West held the ♦J as well. (The squeeze will as long as either defender held both pointed suit guards. That defender has to hold both ♦ honors. Split ♦ honors means partner can cover the 2nd ♦ trick and there is no squeeze). Yes, absent the thinnest of inferences from the opening lead, the Spade finesse *a priori* is a better chance than the squeeze. Sometimes you have to trust your instincts.

N Deals

None Vul
3-card ending

♠ -
♥ -
♦ A10x
♣

Lorna

♠ K		N	♠
♥ -			♥ Immaterial
♦ KJ	W 9	E	♦
♣ -		S	♣

♠ Q
♥ -
♦ x
♣ 10

Steve

Learning Pointers:

- 1) When the evidence builds to a squeeze, DO IT! At no cost you might just earn a top.
- 2) When defending, keep the visible threat guarded on the squeeze trick. You never know, partner might hold the ♠Q on this hand! Keeping the ♠K West could fall into a *faux squeeze* trap, and make a winner into a loser.