

## SQUEEZES

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Squeezes are a very arcane area of bridge. You could go through your bridge life and become a competent player without knowing much about squeezes. One hears players saying 'I was squeezed' when forced to find discards. This is not being 'squeezed'. A squeeze has a special meaning. When you have to find discards, there is a 'correct' card to discard – one that does not cost. But, when you are squeezed, there is *no* correct suit to discard. The lie of the cards is such that, whatever card you discard, you have to give up a trick to declarer. An example shortly.

Clyde Love has written a whole book (250+ pages) on squeezes. So, in one short article, I can't even start on any detail. There are so many types of squeezes – simple squeezes, double squeezes, compound squeezes, trump squeezes, strip squeezes etc.

Many squeezes are automatic. You have almost certainly in the past executed a squeeze without realising it simply by playing out your long suit. But you need to know a few basic rules to follow for a squeeze to operate. Then, once you have executed your first squeeze, you'll have bragging rights for a few months.

### Example 1

Here is a basic situation. Spades are trumps, and we are at trick 11.

|      |     |
|------|-----|
| ♠-   |     |
| ♥Q9  |     |
| ♦J   |     |
| ♣-   |     |
| ♠-   | ♠-  |
| ♥J10 | ♥43 |
| ♦Q   | ♦5  |
| ♣-   | ♣-  |
|      | ♠10 |
|      | ♥2  |
|      | ♦2  |
|      | ♣-  |

South leads the ♠10. What can West do? If he discards the ♦Q, the ♥9 is discarded from dummy and dummy wins the last two tricks. If West discards a heart, South discards the ♦J and dummy's two hearts win the last two tricks.

The ♠10 we call the 'squeeze' card, and the ♦J is called the 'menace' or the 'threat' card.

The principle is that one player has to keep guards in two suits, and the play of the squeeze card in another suit forces him to surrender his guard. This is a 'simple' squeeze. In other situations, two players may be squeezed e.g. West may have to keep guard on clubs, East may have to guard diamonds, but in doing so neither may be able to keep guard on the heart suit. This we call a double squeeze.

**Basic Rules:** There are some basic rules you should know about squeezes.

1. For a squeeze to operate, you must be exactly one trick short of your contract. Thus, in 4S, you must be able to see 9 tricks and no other way of making your tenth trick. In 6S, you must be able to see 11 tricks.
2. In addition to rule 1, you should have lost all the tricks you can afford to

lose before the squeeze will operate. Thus, in a 4S contract, you must have lost 3 tricks. In a 6S contract, you must have lost one trick. If you haven't yet met this requirement, you must arrange to lose the appropriate number of tricks before you can expect a squeeze to work.

The same principles apply when trying for the overtrick in pairs (often an important trick). You are in say 4S, and you can see 10 tricks, but not 11. You must lose two tricks before trying a squeeze by playing your long trump suit.

There is much more to know about squeezes, but, provided you follow the above rules, a squeeze may operate automatically.

### Example 2

|        |        |         |
|--------|--------|---------|
|        | ♠65    |         |
|        | ♥AK42  |         |
|        | ♦AJ83  |         |
|        | ♣J65   |         |
| ♠987   |        | ♠KQJ42  |
| ♥J7    |        | ♥109653 |
| ♦1065  |        | ♦9      |
| ♣87432 |        | ♣109    |
|        | ♠A103  |         |
|        | ♥Q8    |         |
|        | ♦KQ742 |         |
|        | ♣AKQ   |         |

You get to 7NT on the lead of the ♠9 with East playing the ♠J. How do you proceed? You can count exactly 12 tricks, and there is no way of making another unless the ♥2 comes good. One of the opponents must hold at least four hearts, so your ♥2 in dummy can never become a winner. No opponent seeing dummy will discard a heart.

Your only chance for the thirteenth trick is via a squeeze, and it has to be in hearts and spades. Now you know from the lead that East probably started with the ♠KQJ, so he must save a spade honour as a defensive trick. So, if he also holds four hearts, see what happens as you play out all your winners.

You have won trick 1 with the ♠A. You play ♣A,K,Q. Then ♦A,J,K,Q, and now your fifth diamond from hand at trick 9. After trick 3, East must find five discards. Here is the situation when all hands are down to the last 5 cards:

|     |       |        |
|-----|-------|--------|
|     | ♠6    |        |
|     | ♥AK42 |        |
|     | ♦     |        |
|     | ♣     |        |
| ♠8  |       | ♠K     |
| ♥J7 |       | ♥10965 |
| ♦   |       | ♦      |
| ♣87 |       | ♣      |
|     | ♠103  |        |
|     | ♥Q8   |        |
|     | ♦2    |        |
|     | ♣     |        |

East has had to save the ♠K and 4 hearts. When you lead the ♦2 (discarding the ♠6 from dummy), East now has a choice of how to commit suicide. Discard a heart (now you can cash four hearts) or discard his ♠K (in which case you cash your ♠10 and three hearts). In either case, you have made 13 tricks. You have successfully squeezed East i.e. you have forced him to discard a winner or a potential winner.

You may ask 'How do you know that East must guard both hearts and spades?' The answer is that you often don't. If West can guard the hearts, then you are going off. Just as you don't

know that a finesse is going to work, but you just have to hope that it does as it is

your only chance. On this hand, you know for sure that the only way you can make this contract is via a squeeze.

There is a lot more to know about preparing for a squeeze, but, unless you apply the basic rules quoted above, you will never succeed with a squeeze.

May I finish with just a few relevant tips for both declarers and defenders. As declarer: play out all your idle trumps to force defenders to find discards. They may make errors. For defenders: when finding discards in these situations, discard first the suit you can't stop. Partner then knows to hold this suit.

Secondly, as a defender, keep 'parity' with dummy. When dummy holds a four card suit and you also hold 4 cards in that suit, hold all these cards so that you keep the same number (parity) as dummy. Only when dummy discards from that suit may you also discard.