

A Virtual Squeeze at Social Distance

♠ T9843
♥ J6
♦ AJ8
♣ AQ8

♠
♥

♠ AKQ72
♥ AT92
♦
♣ K532

You are North in 6S and East leads the KH. Try and make 13 tricks assuming the defences' clubs are not 3-3.

Thoughts:

You can count 5 x trump tricks in hand, the AD and 2 x diamond ruffs in dummy, the AH and 3 x clubs which makes 12 tricks and if the clubs break 3-3 (only 36% of the time) you will make 13 tricks, so the contract looks safe.

However, in Matchpoint scoring every trick makes a difference so you need to make 13 tricks if at all possible.

Most often squeeze plays are deployed by declarer as a last resort when no other more straightforward tactic presents itself but in some cases as here a squeeze play costs nothing and may bring an extra trick.

Squeeze plays normally offer the chance of one extra trick and declarer must ensure that she has lost all the tricks but that one extra she is seeking before actioning the squeeze. This step is called "rectifying the count" and is necessary so that the defenders have no nondescript/worthless/idle card to discard when the squeeze is applied (at a virtual social distance in our present situation). In this case, there is no need to rectify the count because 13 tricks are sought.

Squeeze plays also require two menace cards, one of which also has a direct link in the same suit to access it. In this case the first menace card is the JH which declarer holds in hand and the second, the last remaining club (5C) together with the KC which is the link to it. Because East led the KH, she is also highly likely to hold the QH but in this case it doesn't matter because whichever defender holds the QH, she will be threatened by the JH in declarer's hand **IF she hold 4 x clubs**. Therefore, by

deploying the squeeze you have an extra chance to make 13 tricks if the holder of the QH also has 4 x clubs.

Here is the end position which should help to clarify things:

♠ T
♥ J
♦
♣ 10

♠
♥ T
♦
♣ K5

Now, when you play your last trump (10S) East cannot hang on to the QH as well as her 2 remaining clubs so, if she discards a club, you discard the heart in dummy and cross to the KC to make the last two tricks. If she discards her QH, you can then cash the JH, discarding the 5C and cross to the KC for your thirteenth trick.

As it happens, entries to your hand are a little tricky during this process. You have to draw two rounds of trumps and ruff 2 x diamonds both in dummy and get back to hand to action the squeeze. You have two club entries to hand BUT you will have to ruff the second diamond with QS in dummy in order to use dummy's small remaining trump to get back to hand. The lack of three entries outside the trump suit means that the defenders' trumps have to break 2-1 for the squeeze to operate..

And after all this...what happened in actual play? In the Board played on June 18, the defenders' clubs were actually 3-3 making the whole exercise academic but a chance to make a gain at no risk, nevertheless.

24	♠ T9843	<i>Dir: W</i>																														
	♥ J6	<i>Vul: None</i>																														
	♦ AJ8																															
	♣ AQ8																															
♠ J6	♠ 5																															
♥ 8543	♥ KQ7																															
♦ KT64	♦ Q97532																															
♣ 974	♣ JT6																															
12	♠ AKQ72	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>♠</th> <th>♦</th> <th>♥</th> <th>♣</th> <th>N</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>6</td> <td>2</td> <td>5</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S</td> <td>6</td> <td>1</td> <td>3</td> <td>7</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> <td>-</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		♠	♦	♥	♣	N	N	6	2	5	7	5	S	6	1	3	7	5	E	-	-	-	-	-	W	-	-	-	-	-
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