

## A Simple Squeeze

(Friday mini-lesson – 22 December 2019)

Today we're going to talk about taking all your chances as declarer, and in the example we'll look at the possibility of a **simple squeeze** developing that might help you make an otherwise impossible contract.

As South, you arrive in 6NT in an uncontested auction, and West leads the J♥. These are the hands you have in front you after dummy comes down:

♠ K 8 5  
♥ A K 7  
♦ A J T 4  
♣ J 6 4

♠ A 7 6 2  
♥ Q 8 2  
♦ K Q 8 2  
♣ A K

It seems to be a very reasonable contract given that you have 18 HCP and dummy has 16. Usually when you have a combined count of 33+ in two balanced hands, a small slam is available. However, on this occasion, when **you count your winners to make your plan**, things are looking a little bit dicey. Counting winners off the top, you can only come to 11 tricks – two ♠s, three ♥s, four ♦s, and two ♣s. You are one short with limited options to find your magical 12<sup>th</sup> trick.

In the red suits, you can't get any more than the seven obvious tricks that are there. In ♠s, you have the possibility that the suit will divide 3-3 in the opponents' hands, and then, after conceding a ♠, your 4<sup>th</sup> ♠ becomes good. However, **a 3-3 division of a suit only occurs about 35% of the time**. Most common is a 4-2 split. In ♣s, to get an extra trick, you need the magic of the Q♣ dropping *singleton* or *doubleton* under your A and K to set up the J. If that seems unlikely to you, you're absolutely right: it will only occur less than 5% of the time!

So what else can help you get your elusive 12<sup>th</sup> trick? There is one particular scenario – and one that is more likely than the others – and that is to find one opponent holding both the Q♣ *and* at least four ♠s.

In this situation, after you lose a trick in ♠s, then run **all your winners in the other three suits**, this defender won't be able to hold onto *both* the 4<sup>th</sup> ♠ *and* the Q♣, and will have to pitch one of them, allowing you to make your contract. In effect, this person has been *squeezed*.

Let's see how it works with the following layout:

	♠ K 8 5	
	♥ A K 7	
	♦ A J T 4	
♠ J 4	♣ J 6 4	♠ Q T 9 3
♥ J T 9 6		♥ 5 4 3
♦ 6 5 3		♦ 9 7
♣ T 9 5 3	♠ A 7 6 2	♣ Q 8 7 2
	♥ Q 8 2	
	♦ K Q 8 2	
	♣ A K	

After winning the opening lead of the J♥, immediately play a low ♠ from both hands, not caring which opponent wins. This achieves two things, it sets you up to discover safely whether ♠s will break 3-3 (you only want to lose a trick while you still have full control in all the suits), and if not that, then if a squeeze is available it “rectifies the count” – that is, a squeeze can only operate if you have already lost the trick you are planning to lose anyway.

Now having won the opening ♥ lead and lost a ♠ trick, you can win whatever suit is returned (probably a ♥). Now play off the A and K of ♣ (this is important), and then play all your remaining red suit winners, **ending in dummy**.

Now, on the play of the 3<sup>rd</sup> high ♦, RHO can comfortably discard one ♣, and the situation will be like this:

	♠ K 8 5	
	♥ <del>A</del> K 7	
	♦ A <del>J</del> T 4	
♠ J 4	♣ J 6 4	♠ Q T 9 3
♥ <del>J</del> T 9 6		♥ 5 4 3
♦ 6 5 3		♦ 9 7
♣ T 9 5 3	♠ A 7 6 2	♣ Q 8 7 2
	♥ <del>Q</del> 8 2	
	♦ <del>K</del> Q 8 2	
	♣ <del>A</del> K	

But when you play the last high ♦ from dummy, poor RHO is forced to either throw the Q♣ (which she won't do, seeing the J♣ in dummy) or quietly pitch a ♠, hoping you won't notice. **But you do**, since you have been *carefully* watching the opponents' discards.

Now when you play the K♠ from dummy and a low ♠ to the A♠ in your hand, you happily see the opponent's high ♠s tumble, and now your 4<sup>th</sup> ♠ in hand is your 12<sup>th</sup> trick.

Smile humbly and accept the warm congratulations from your partner!