

Squeezing the last trick *by Derrick Browne*

The squeeze is considered one of the great plays in bridge. It forces an opponent to relinquish a seemingly sure winner. Here is a basic situation:

| | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| | NORTH | |
| | S K | |
| | H AJ | |
| WEST | | EAST |
| S A | | S any |
| H KQ | | H any |
| | SOUTH | |
| | S 2 | |
| | H 2 | |
| | D A | |

With three cards left to play, South who is declarer seems to have only two winners, the red aces. West has the SA which prevents dummy's SK from being a winner, and the K-Q of hearts which surely crush any hopes that the HJ had of taking a trick.

Yet West will be dragged down by this weight of riches. West has no idle (unneeded) cards so comes under inexorable pressure when the DA is led, forcing a discard. If West throws the SA, dummy's SK comes good. So West instead discards the HQ. The now-useless SK is discarded from the North hand and the A-J of hearts win the last two tricks. West had been squeezed.

Note that if East had been guarding one suit and West the other, each would have had at least one idle card available to discard on the DA so neither would have been squeezed. In fact, even if East had been guarding both majors – if the East and West hands had been reversed – the squeeze would not have worked because East would play after North, and could discard accordingly.

Playing pairs (ordinary duplicate), making one more trick than other declarers in the same contract wins you a top board. When you can see the rest of the tricks bar one are yours, be reluctant to concede that trick. Instead, rattle off your winners and hope an opponent is squeezed. Here is an example from a club duplicate, as played by Nick Bible:

Dealer South, nil vul.

| | | |
|---------|---------|---------|
| | NORTH | |
| | S 9 | |
| | H AKT2 | |
| | D A52 | |
| | C JT962 | |
| WEST | | EAST |
| S 7643 | | S KQT85 |
| H 5 | | H QJ974 |
| D T9873 | | D K |
| C 543 | | C 87 |
| | SOUTH | |
| | S AJ2 | |
| | H 863 | |
| | D QJ64 | |
| | C AKQ | |

North used 2C Stayman to search for a heart fit, then settled for 3NT. The D10 was led.

Not knowing the DK was singleton, Nick followed with a low diamond from dummy. After winning the DK, East switched to the SK, taken by the SA.

Declarer has 11 tricks ready to cash and, with only one loser, the opponents will not have a surfeit of idle cards to discard. Nick cashed the A-K-Q of clubs to unblock the suit, then played a heart to the ace. On dummy's last two clubs, he discarded a small card from each major. He then cashed the DA and two more diamonds, and it was curtains for East:

| | | |
|------|-------|------|
| | NORTH | |
| | S — | |
| | H KT2 | |
| | D — | |
| | C — | |
| WEST | | EAST |
| S 7 | | S Q |
| H 5 | | H QJ |
| D 9 | | D — |
| C — | | C — |
| | SOUTH | |
| | S J | |
| | H 8 | |
| | D Q | |
| | C — | |

East was trying to guard both majors while South and North were in the easy position of looking after one major each. On the lead of the DQ, the H2 was cheerfully discarded from dummy but East was looking less happy. When he discarded the SQ, Nick cashed his SJ, and was soon scoring up an equal top for making 12 tricks.