

Duck Soup by Derrick Browne

When you look at dummy and see you will be a trick short of your contract, do you shrug and concede one down?

Here is a related question: how do you fancy your chances of making the last four tricks with the cards below? You are on lead as South.

	NORTH	
	S Q	
	H A2	
	D 2	
	C —	
WEST		EAST
S K		S 3
H KQ		H —
D 4		D QJT
C —		C —
	SOUTH	
	S 2	
	H 4	
	D AK	
	C —	

The A-K of diamonds the HA are three obvious winners, but where will the fourth come from? The SQ is not a winner because West has the SK. The H2 is not a winner because West is guarding that suit too.

And there is the key – West is trying to guard both suits. See what happens as you cash your diamond winners. On the second round, West is unable to discard the SK because that will leave the SQ a winner, so instead discards a heart. The SQ can now be discarded from dummy and the H2 will win the last trick.

This is called a squeeze. Note that if the East and West cards are swapped, the squeeze will not work because East gets to discard after North, so it is North who is first squeezed. However, if South's spade was the jack, North's SQ can be discarded so the squeeze works whichever opponent is trying to guard both hearts and spades.

Here is a hand from the last night of the NSWBA Schaufelberger teams, won by Pauline Gumby - Warren Lazer, Andrew Peake - Kieran Dyke.

S/Both K653
9542
QT9
T7
97 AQJ4
AJT87 KQ6
A8643 K75
3 KQ6
T82
3
J2
AJ98542

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Giura	Jeffery	Hughes	Dyall
	3C		
3H	no	4NT	no
5H	no	6NT	end

Nicoleta Giura's stretch to 3H sent Nick Hughes slightly overboard. He chose 6NT to avoid a club ruff.

What should South lead? A club or a heart looks wrong. A spade works, though the defence is tricky. Henry Dyall chose the DJ, which looks okay. Hughes won in hand, crossed to the HJ and played a club to the queen and ace.

He won the second diamond, took the spade finesse and cashed the CK. On the run of the hearts, North was squeezed in spades and diamonds. He had to keep the DQ so the S4 won the last trick.

It looks better for South to duck the club. However, the same sequence of plays works because North is forced to pitch his second club on the last heart. This allows declarer to duck a diamond to North to set up the suit.

The defence gets a diamond but no club trick.

This gives a clue to the winning defence - South has to lead the D2, then duck the club later. The club duck scuttles the squeeze while the DJ stops declarer from ducking a diamond to North.

This also means that 6H can't be beaten. If South ducks a club, declarer can set up diamonds in safety.