

Esther Discusses "How as Declarer to Execute an Endplay 'Squeeze'"

Bruce Thompson

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Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will talk us through "**How as Declarer to Execute an Endplay 'Squeeze'**". Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, thanks for taking the time to be with us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Esther!

Bruce: Errr, well, sorry again about that, Ms. Klinktoast..., err, I mean Esther.

Esther: Well, Bruce. Please try to exercise at least a modicum of empathy, assuming you have at least the limited capacity to do so. Can you imagine how relentlessly all the other girls in grades K through 4 of my elementary school years relentlessly, endlessly tormented me about my last name, Klinktoast-Houstonhousen?

Bruce: Well, yes, sorry again, Esther! I do understand that young girls can indeed be quite vicious to each other. Well, in any case, Esther, would you first explain the basic concept of an endplay "**Squeeze**", or a "**Squeeze Play**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, an endplay "**Squeeze**" is a play by Declarer that **forces** Opponents to make discard decisions that *inevitably* then lead to "promoting" one of your losing cards into a winner. The idea of the "**Squeeze**" is as *old* as whist, the game from which bridge ultimately developed. And the endplay "**Squeeze**" is also an old idea within

bridge itself! Of course, there are even *entire books* written just about the "**Squeeze**". For example, a classic book about the "**Squeeze**" was written by Clyde E. Love (1951) Squeeze Play in Bridge, which even today is available through Amazon!¹

According to the Wiki entry, "Squeeze Play (Bridge)":
"A [S]queeze [P]lay (or squeeze) is a technique used in contract bridge... in which the play of a card (the squeeze card) **forces** an opponent to discard a winner or the guard of a potential winner. The situation typically occurs in the end game, with only a few cards remaining...

Most [S]queezes operate on the principle that [D]eclarer's and [D]ummy's hands can, between them, hold more cards with the potential to take extra tricks than a single [D]efender's [H]and can protect or guard." [emphasis added]

Or, as Ralph Welton explains in his "Bridge Bears" website article, "Simple Squeezes"²:

"A simple squeeze is a play where [D]eclarer creates an extra winner by **forcing** a defender to make a discard he doesn't want to make... What do I mean by a 'discard a defender doesn't want to make'? That would be a discard that **promotes** one of [D]eclarer's cards to a winner." [emphasis added]

Bruce: OK. Esther, what is the basic principle that underlies the "**Squeeze**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, the basic principle underlying the "**Simple Squeeze**" is that the Declarer can both see, and control, 26 cards, while each Defender can see, and control, only 13 cards. Even Defenders who are proficient at "signaling" cannot fully overcome Declarer's knowledge and control of 26 of the 52 cards being played! This structural advantage may allow Declarer, in certain situations, to manipulate the cards remaining toward the *end of play* to **force**

¹ Other books on this topic include the 1957 book by Clyde E. Love, Julian Pottage, and Linda Lee, Bridge Squeezes Complete, and the 2007 book by Julian Laderman. A Bridge to Simple Squeezes, which won the American Bridge Teachers Book of the Year Award.

² See: <https://www.bridgebears.com/bridge-card-game/intermediate/simple-squeezes.html>

Opponents to make choices to which the Declarer can then adjust to his advantage!

Bruce: OK, is there any essential requirement or condition necessary for Declarer to execute a "**Squeeze**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, yes indeed. To execute a "Squeeze" Declarer toward the end of play **must know exact card counts and the location of certain high cards in one or more Suits.**

Bruce: Well, Esther when are you *least likely* to know this necessary information and when are you *most likely* to know this needed information?

Esther: Well, Bruce, you are much *less likely* to be able to perform a "**Squeeze Endplay**" if both your Opponents were silent throughout the auction because they will not have supplied any information during the auction about their holds.

At the other extreme, if (1) both Opponents bid during the auction or (2) an Opponent makes a bid "showing" an *unusual* distribution (e.g., a 6-card Suit, or a 2-Suited Hand) then you have a lot more information to suss out the Opponents' card distributions. So, you are *more likely* to execute a "**Squeeze Endplay**" if an Opponent bid:

1. a pre-empt bid (e.g., 2S) "showing" a "long" Suit,
2. an "**Unusual 2NT**" bid "showing" a Hand 2 Suited in the Minors:

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/unus_2NT.pdf,

3. a Cuebid by an Opponent of your bid or Partner's bid "showing" an Opponent holding a 2-Suited Hand, such as "**Michael Michaels Cuebid**":

https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/5_cuebids.pdf.

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. Before you explain the steps to executing a "**Squeeze**", would you first talk us through a quick example of a "**Squeeze**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course! First, we need to learn a bit of "Squeeze" **terminology**:

1. "**Threat Cards**": Cards held by Declarer or Dummy which start out as losers, and thus are "threats" to Declarer, but which may be "promoted" into "winners" when the "**Squeeze**" forces the Defenders to discard their "Stoppers"/"Winners".

2. "Busy Cards": Cards held by Defenders which are "winners" or protecting "winners".
3. "Squeeze": The Opponent whom Declarer knows or believes is holding the "Busy Cards".
4. "Idle Cards": Cards that can *safely* be discarded by Defenders (i.e., are not busy). "Rectifying the Count" removes idle cards from the defenders' hands.
5. "Rectifying the Count": The process of Declarer *intentionally* losing all but one "loser" in the Suit necessary for Declarer to then be able to execute the "Squeeze".
6. "Count": The number of Tricks that must be lost by Declarer before the "Squeeze" can be executed.
7. "Entry Card": A high card or a Trump card that enables Declarer to *retake* the lead in the Declarer or Dummy Hand that holds, or will hold, yet another card that can be played as a "winner" once the "Squeeze" has been executed.
8. "Squeeze Card": The card which when led by the Declarer from either his Hand or Dummy's that **forces** the defense to discard one or more "Busy Cards".

Bruce: OK. Now the example, *por favor*.

Esther: Well, here are the Hands of Declarer NORTH, Dummy, and the "Squeeze" WEST after the Declarer NORTH has already "Rectified the Count" when playing a **NT** contract and all of the Opponents' "Idle Cards" have been eliminated from further play:

	Declarer
	NORTH
	S: K
	H: A Q
	D: --
	C: --
"Squeeze"	
S: A	
H: K T	
D: --	
C: --	
	Dummy
	SOUTH
	S: 7
	H: 5
	D: A
	C: --

At this point in play:

1. All **3** of WEST's remaining cards are "Busy Cards".
2. WEST is the "Squeeze".
3. NORTH holds **1** "Threat Card": the Spade King.
4. Declarer NORTH leads the Dummy SOUTH's Diamond Ace, which is the "Squeeze Card".
5. WEST holding no remaining Diamonds **must** discard one of his 3 "Busy Cards".
6. If WEST discards his Spade Ace, then NORTH in his Hand will discard his Heart Queen, leaving Declarer NORTH holding the "winner" Heart Ace (which WEST must lead to next), and the "winner" Spade King that has been "promoted" by forcing WEST to make an impossible discard decision.
7. If instead WEST discards either his Heart Ten, NORTH will discard Declarer's Spade King, leaving Declarer NORTH holding the "winner" Heart Ace, and the "winner" Heart Queen, which has been "promoted" by forcing WEST to make an impossible discard decision.

Bruce: So, Esther, what conditions are required in order to execute a "Squeeze"?

Esther: Well, Bruce:

1. All the Opponent's "Busy Cards" **must** be held by only 1 Defender, who is the "Squeeze".
2. Prior to executing the "Squeeze", the Declarer **must** have "Rectified the Count" such that both (a) the Declarer has enough "winners" to take all the remaining Tricks but one, which is the card to be "promoted" into a "winner" by executing the "Squeeze", and (2) the "Squeeze" has no remaining "Idle Cards".
3. The Declarer and/or the Dummy **must** have "Threat Cards" in two Suits that the "Squeeze" may "promote" into "winners".
4. After the "Squeeze Card" is played, the "Squeeze" must still hold a remaining entry to the Declarer or Dummy's Hand holding the "Threat Card", which the "Squeeze" must be forced by the "Squeeze" to play.

Bruce: So, Esther, what is that mnemonic, "BLUE", that some people seem to use when talking about the "Squeeze"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Clyde Love in his books created the "BLUE" mnemonic:

- B:** One single Defender **must** hold **Both** Control Cards stopping your "Threat Cards" from becoming "winners", and that Defender must be "**Busy**" in 2 Suits.
- L:** You **must** have "winners" for all the remaining Tricks except for holding a single **Loser**.
- U:** At least one of your "Threat Cards" **must** lie in the Declarer/Dummy Hand that plays "**Under**" (i.e., *immediately after*) the Defender being "squeezed", the "Squeezee".
- E:** You as Declarer **must** hold **Entries** to get to any "Threat Card" "promoted" into a "winner" by forcing the "Squeezee" to throw or discard one of his Control Card "winners".

By the way, Paul Tobias (2016) in his Bridge Squeezes: Easier and More Common Than You Think³, notes that when you are executing a "**Squeeze**" *quite often* a Defender will throw a "Busy Card" by mistake, without being forced to by the "Squeeze," and this is termed a "*Pseudo Squeeze*".

Bruce: So, Esther, how about that example?

Esther: OK, Bruce, here is an example of a "**Squeeze**" modified from an example provided by Paul Tobias:

³ <http://austinbridge.org/sbruce/lecture/BridgeSqueezes.pdf>

Dealer: **SOUTH**

NORTH (13)

S: 9 7 4
H: K Q 6 3
D: K 9 7
C: K Q 8

WEST (8)

S: A 8 6 2
H: 8 4
D: 5 2
C: A 7 5 4 2

EAST (4)

S: J 5
H: J T 9 5 2
D: J 6 4 3
C: J 9

SOUTH (15)

S: K Q T 3
H: A 7
D: A Q T 8
C: T 6 3

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	PASS	2 C	PASS
2 S	PASS	3 NT	PASS
PASS	PASS		

Bruce: Well, OK, Ms. Klink..., errr, I mean, Esther. On Trick #1 WEST led 4th from the Top of his longest and strongest Suit, by playing the Club 4, which Declarer SOUTH took using the Dummy NORTH's Club Queen. Declarer SOUTH on Trick #2 then led Dummy's Spade 4, Declarer SOUTH played his Spade King, and N/S took the Trick when WEST "ducked". On Trick #3 Declarer led his Diamond 8, and won in the NORTH Dummy with Dummy's Diamond King. On Trick #4 Declarer led NORTH Dummy's Spade 7, EAST played the Spade Jack, Declarer SOUTH "covered" with his Spade Queen, and WEST took the Trick with his Spade Ace. On Trick #5 WEST led his Club 2, which N/S won with Dummy's Club King.

Esther: Well, Bruce, things have now become interesting! N/S have taken 4 Tricks while E/W have taken 1 Trick. There are now 8 Tricks left to play. You will certainly make your 3**NT** contract. The questions in duplicate bridge are, as always, *can you pick up any Overtricks, and can you do so safely?* Your remaining N/S "Threat Cards" that might be "promoted" into "winners" are the NORTH Dummy Spade 9, or SOUTH Declarer's Club T, or NORTH Dummy's Club 8.

Bruce: Well, OK, Esther. What is your planned "Line of Play" to execute the "Squeeze" to try to pick up that very precious duplicate bridge "extra" Trick?

Esther: Well, Bruce, think about the things you know at this point:

1. You know from WEST leading the Club 4 and later playing the Club 2 that WEST initially held 5 Clubs.
2. You know from EAST failing to play "low second Hand" on the second Spade Trick, when EAST dropped his Spade Jack, that EAST probably initially had 2 Spades, while WEST initially held 4 Spades.
3. You have seen 1 Diamond in WEST's Hand, so he has at most 3 Hearts, and EAST controls the 4th Round of Hearts. So, EAST cannot be "squeezed" and EAST holds all that matters in Hearts.
4. But WEST has to retain "control" in 2 Suits, Spades and Clubs, and so WEST can be "squeezed".

So, here is your planned "Line of Play":

1. "Cash" your Diamonds, pitching the 4th useless Heart in Dummy.
2. Then "cash" your Declarer's Heart Ace and Dummy's King leaving you in Dummy, with the last 3 cards in each Hand being:

	NORTH (14)	
	S: 9	
	H: Q	
	D: --	
	C: 8	
WEST (8)		EAST (3)
S: 8 6		S: --
H: --		H: J T 9
D: --		D: --
C: A		C: --
	SOUTH (15)	
	S: T 3	
	H: --	
	D: --	
	C: T	

"Squeeze" Play Options

1.	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
	H Q*	H 9	C T	C A
	C 8*	H T	S 3	S 6
	S 9	H J	S T*	S 8
2.	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
	H Q*	H 9	C T	S 6

S 9	H T	S T*	S 8
SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
S 3*	C A	C 8	H J

3. Now play your "Squeeze Card", the Dummy Heart Queen, pitching the Declarer SOUTH's Club Ten "loser". If WEST "drops" his Club Ace "Busy Card", then Declarer plays Dummy NORTH's now "winner" Club 8, and then Dummy's Spade 9 to Declarer SOUTH's now "winner" Spade Ten. If instead WEST "drops" his Spade 6, Declarer must then lead the Dummy Spade 9 to Dummy's "winning" spade Ten, and on the last Trick Declarer can take his last winner, his Spade 3 which through the "Squeeze" has been "promoted" into a Winner!