

Board of the Week 66

By Dick Chapman

Most of my articles discuss boards I played or defended, but occasionally someone puts a board in front of me that I want to share with others. Today we see such a board. There isn't a lot of academic value here, but it's interesting.

♠AK102	♠Q96
♥AK5	♥J9742
♦A1054	♦K86
♣QJ	♣A7

Can you get to 6 hearts on this layout? North deals, fourth-seat West opens 2NT, East 3 diamonds, West 3 hearts, East doesn't quite have enough to blast slam without a fit so East is 3NT, West is 4 hearts. What now, East? With short clubs, you might or might not get to 6. It's close. At the club, the board was played 10 times and 2 pairs got to slam. Six pairs were at some level of hearts, four were in no trump.

Ok, you are in 6 hearts with the lead being the club. Can you make it? Here is where the fun starts. Three pairs of the six playing a heart contract made 12 tricks, the other three did not. Because it was face-to-face play, we can't trace the exact play, but I can see many ways it won't make. Some things that could go wrong are the club king offside (a certainty given the opening lead), an unfavorable trump break, the heart Qxx in North, and spades not working. There are possibly other dangers that I don't see.

So anyone who didn't make 12 tricks here shouldn't feel too badly. You score it up and move on.

But David Cockcroft observed the board makes 7 hearts or 7 no trump at double dummy. Let's have some fun and put all the cards on the table (next column):

	♠53 ♥108 ♦97 ♣10985432	
♠AK102 ♥AK5 ♦A1054 ♣QJ		♠Q96 ♥J9742 ♦K86 ♣A7
	♠J874 ♥Q63 ♦QJ32 ♣K6	

Let's say it's 7NT and North leads the 10 of clubs. You study while I listen to the first movement ("Commencement") of "Adventures in Time," which features the Stan Kenton Orchestra. I still have the LP, which was recorded in 1962.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9L0PUbp_hbvs&list=OLAK5uy_mx78KON8eeSUNyzEw_FLdbdUzn4HTFyrel&index=1

Ok, I'm back. Did you figure it out? It's really pretty easy when you see all the cards.

Win the ace of clubs (Eddie Kantar would say "good play"). Now the jack of hearts. South will either cover or not. Either way, the suit comes in for 5 tricks because the 10 is doubleton in North and the queen is onside. As you play your five hearts, South must find two discards.

If a spade is discarded, the spade suit will come in for four more tricks. Now South must find one more discard. One diamond is already gone, so either the other diamond goes (and the diamond suit comes in for four tricks) or the club king goes. If the club king, Declarer wins the club queen and once again South must find a discard. Nothing is left but diamonds, and the diamond suit rolls in.

So go back and have South discard two spades and no diamonds on the run of the hearts. Now Declarer rolls off four spades and South must find two discards. Etc., etc.

I suggested to David that there must be a name for this type of squeeze but I don't know what it would be. I proposed "cascading squeeze" for lack of a better term.

He replied that it's a triple successive squeeze, which is merely three simple squeezes against the same player (South). Notice that you squeeze with hearts first, forcing discards from South. Then spades (assuming South protects diamonds), finally diamonds and/or clubs depending on South's plays. If South protects spades on the run of the hearts, the play will follow a different order, but the concept is the same.

Now, will anyone find this play in "real" bridge? I don't know how the play or defense went with the three pairs that found 12 tricks. A post-game review is the only positive feature to online play that I wish could be duplicated in club play. First, you would have to visualize 10x of hearts in North and Qxx in South. If you can get that far, you might find the play for 13 tricks. In a suit contract (let's say 4 hearts), you will be loath to run off all your trump, but that is the secret to a top board here. Once the hearts are coming in, you might see South squirming for discards and take it from there.

It would probably be easier to make 13 tricks in NT than in hearts, because of the natural reluctance to play off all your trumps in a heart contract.

I checked the results from The Common Game. The board was played 863 times, and a score of -1010 for North (6 hearts by EW making 7) was achieved exactly one time. There were no scores of -1020 (6NT making 7). A score of -520 (3NT making 7) was achieved 3 times. Scores of -480 or -490 were achieved 14 times. North-South got a positive score 407 times!

Thanks to David for bringing this one to my attention. See you all at the table.

By the way, are you the sort of player that looks for joy amongst the briars of a terrible game? I am. Recently my partner and I finished with a terrible score but did have one enjoyable auction. I know, I know, we should be focusing on making the best score rather than a cool auction, but here it was: (see next column)

♠AQJ1087 ♥KQJ8 ♦42 ♣A			♠K62 ♥1095 ♦A ♣KQ9752
South	West	North	East
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♦
Double	3♥	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♠	Pass	6♠
"I'm out of pass cards"	Pass	"Me, too"	

I was West. East showed a diamond control, but I didn't want to start a slam exploration because of my worthless diamond doubleton and South's lead-directing double. So I did the next best thing: slowed the auction down to show slam interest. For newer players: in a game forcing auction, jumps to game tend to show weaker hands while slow progression tends to show extras. This is especially the case when there is suit agreement.

Ignoring the lead directing double, North led the ace of hearts and a second heart. I just "knew" South was going to ruff, but the second heart survived. I claimed at trick 4, after two rounds of trump (it makes even if trumps are 4-0, as the diamond loser can be ruffed before trump are in or go on a second club winner). The full deal:

	♠93 ♥A643 ♦J853 ♣J104	
♠AQJ1087 ♥KQJ8 ♦42 ♣A		♠K62 ♥1095 ♦A ♣KQ9752
	♠54 ♥72 ♦KQ10976 ♣863	

One good board is all it takes to get me back. Ok, ok, I'm coming back even with no good boards! See you at the club.