

MOUNTNESSING BRIDGE CLUB

Meets every Thursday at 7.25 for 7.30
at Mountnessing Village Hall, Roman Road, Mountnessing, Essex, England, CM15 0UG

AN ELEGANT DOUBLE SQUEEZE BRINGS HOME A SLAM

Hand played on 05/11/2012 NICKO ROUND 1 (IMP SCORING)
Board number 1
Dealer North
Vulnerability Love All
Submitted by Alaric Cundy

	North ♠AK3 ♥7 ♦KJT8632 ♣65					
West ♠QT94 ♥863 ♦Q74 ♣J74		East ♠7652 ♥KQJ54 ♦95 ♣32				
			The Bidding			
	South ♠J8 ♥AT92 ♦A ♣AKQT98		North 1♦ 2♦ 2NT 5♦ ²	East No No No No	South 2♣ 2♥ 4NT ¹ 6NT	West No No No End

- Partnership agreement: Roman Key Card Blackwood, with the last naturally bid suit, i.e., hearts, as the presumed trump suit
- One out of five 'Aces', counting the ♥K as an 'Ace'

How would you like to encounter this problem as your first board of the match in a national knock-out event? Superficially, in the contract of 6NT, there are six club tricks, so long as the suit behaves, plus 2 spades, 2 diamonds, and a heart - 11 in total. Should the ♦Q fall within two rounds there would be 16 tricks to choose from, but with the benefit of seeing all the cards, we can see that doesn't happen. Well, OK, the play of the hand would be trivial in 6♣, given that the ♣J falls within three rounds - simply ruff one heart in Dummy before drawing trumps, which can be done even after a trump lead at trick one. Indeed, the extra entry to the North hand offered by the heart ruff makes a huge difference, and as the cards lie, Declarer has time both to set up and then enjoy Dummy's diamonds, even after a potentially awkward spade lead at trick 1, and now all 13 tricks can be made. The play in 6♦ is also trivial - just give up the ♦Q if necessary. But if the hand had been played in any of those contracts, there wouldn't be a story to tell...

Unsurprisingly, against 6NT, East started with a top heart, and Declarer (Chris Megahey) played very well to duck and then to take the heart continuation. The ♦A was cashed, and then Declarer crossed to hand via the ♠A and played the ♦K, throwing the ♥9 from Dummy. When the ♦Q didn't fall, five club tricks were run off, leaving this 3-card ending:

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	North ♠K3 ♥- ♦J ♣-	
West ♠QT ♥- ♦Q ♣-		East ♠76 ♥J ♦ ♣
	South ♠J ♥T ♦- ♣8	

When the 6th club was led then firstly West, and subsequently East, were both under pressure.

- If West throws a spade, then Declarer throws the ♦J, and East squeals: he can't afford to part with the ♥J else Dummy's ten is established, so he has to throw a spade. Now Declarer simply leads the spade off table to the King, and miraculously the ♠3 becomes the 12th trick
- West can avoid putting partner under pressure by instead throwing the ♦Q (as happened in practice), but now of course, Declarer throws the ♠3, and claims the ♦J as the 12th trick.

Either way, the contract makes, for a score of 990.

In the other room, the bidding had been short and to the point: North opened what looks to me like an over-valued 3♦, which South raised to 6♦, making, for a score of 920. So Chris' fine squeeze superficially earned a measly 2 IMPS, which hardly seems full reward for such good play. However, had the 6NT contract failed, a score of -50 would have given a net swing out of 14 IMPs, so the fine play was actually worth a notional 16 IMPs.

A couple of comments

1. So why did I describe Declarer's play at trick one - ducking the heart lead - as very good play? In any potential squeeze situation it is vital to 'rectify the count' by losing whatever tricks can be afforded early on. Just to check that out for yourself, replay the hand assuming that the opening lead was taken, and you will find that the squeeze just doesn't work
2. Some astute readers might have spotted that either an initial spade lead, or a spade switch at trick 2, would break up the squeeze. Such a defence would be worth its own plaudits - but fortunately I don't need to record them!