

Squeeze Plays 2

Free discards and free advice



Free Discards

To squeeze an opponent successfully, you must eliminate their nonessential cards and then compel one additional discard. It is this “one additional” that causes the defenders’ erstwhile strength to crumble like a house of cards. We could say that the defender has run out of “free discards,” which is to say, discards that can be made freely because they are cards that have no bearing on the point of the hand. Sometimes these “free discards” are called “idle discards.” Whatever they are called, they are a luxury when a squeeze play is on the make.

These free discards are luxury not only to the defender, but to the declarer. In fact, we could state that a declarer can squeeze only when she herself has one free discard more than does the opponent.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>♠ K 10 3 2 ♥ Q 6 5 2 ♦ K 8 5 3 ♣ 8</p> <p>♠ 9 6 ♥ 10 7 ♦ J 6 ♣ AJ109652</p> | <p>♠ J 6 ♥ J 9 8 3 ♦ Q 9 4 2 ♣ Q 7 3</p> <p>♠ A Q 7 5 4 ♥ A K 4 ♦ A 10 7 ♣ K 8</p> |
|--|--|

South has opened 2NT and by and by North-South reach a 6 spade contract, West leading the club ace, East encouraging. West continues clubs, and declarer pitches a small diamond from dummy while winning in hand with the king. Declarer’s principal hope is a 3-3 split of hearts, or perhaps a discarding error by a defender. The chance of a one-card threat of the 10 of diamonds is also possible if the cards lay right. Regardless, one thing is very certainly true: declarer has free discards in the trump suit. South can play 5 rounds of trump and follow 4 times with dummy’s trumps, and then on the 5th trump, declarer can throw a

diamond from the dummy. Since you want to force discards from the opponents, dummy’s free discards are a luxury for declarer, and she should cash these trumps and throw the free discards just as proper technique. Can the defenders keep up with all of these free discards? When you have one trump left to play off, this is the likely position:

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------|---|---|
| <p>♠ ---- ♥ Q 6 5 2 ♦ K 8 5 ♣ -----</p> | <table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table> | N | W E | S | <p>♠ ---- ♥ J 9 8 3 ♦ Q 9 2 ♣ ----</p> <p>♠ 7 ♥ A K 4 ♦ A 10 7 ♣ ----</p> |
| N | | | | | |
| W E | | | | | |
| S | | | | | |

So far, no one has discarded a heart, and East has discarded but one diamond. Now cash the spade 7 and discard the diamond 5 (free discard). Notice the effect upon East’s hand. In essence, she is squeezed with this card, and must now unguard either hearts or diamonds. But declarer so far has only been following the technique of tossing all of dummy’s free discards. Declarer may be aware of squeeze possibilities, as we discussed earlier, but so far no specific squeeze analysis has had to take place. What has been required, however, is attention to what has been discarded. Not West’s clubs so much, but any discard in diamonds or hearts is most pointed. On the spade 7, East will probably throw a 2nd diamond, observing that declarer is keeping dummy’s hearts. Declarer’s plan is to keep hearts for last, so next she cashes the king of diamonds and then the ace of diamonds. Since she was counting diamonds, she knows her 10 has become good. Problems over. Declarer has squeezed East without even having been focused upon it.

Having free discards is often connected to having extra trump in both hands, as above, but not always. Take a look at the following hand:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>♠ A K 2 ♥ K Q 10 4 3 ♦ 4 3 ♣ Q 4 3</p> <p>♠ 10 9 4 ♥ 2 ♦ A K J 9 7 5 ♣ J 5 2</p> | <p>♠ Q 8 6 ♥ J 9 8 7 6 ♦ Q 10 8 6 ♣ 8</p> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>♠ J 7 5 3 ♥ A 5 ♦ 2 ♣ A K 10 9 7 6</p> | |
|---|--|

Against 6 clubs, West cashes the diamond ace and South ruffs the diamond king. The hand appears to be easy. Declarer will need to pull three rounds of trump and then rid herself of 2 spade losers. One will certainly go on the heart queen, and if the suit doesn't break 3-3, declarer can ruff a 4th heart to establish the 5th for a second spade pitch. Or so declarer may think. Declarers who try this easy line of play will end up on the scrapheap due to the 5-1 break in hearts.

How sad to go set in a cold slam, especially when nothing more than good old technique is all that is needed to bring it home. Consider what dummy will look like after the initial two diamond plays and the three rounds of trump. All of dummy's hearts are, of course, critical cards, as are the ace and king of spades. But did you notice that spade deuce? It is a totally unimportant card, or, as we are saying today, it is a free discard. So why keep it laying around? Before proceeding with the hearts, play a 4th round of trump to eliminate this free discard and tighten the importance of all of the defenders' cards.

In fact, consider the effect on East when declarer plays off her free discard in dummy. East will have played 2 diamonds on the first 2 tricks, and, perceiving the potential of all her major suit cards, she will discard two more diamonds on the 2nd and third rounds of trump. But when declarer plays a 4th round of trump to discard dummy's free spade deuce, what is East to do? She has been squeezed when declarer may not

even have had an inkling that a squeeze would be necessary on this hand. But in fact, East must now either unguard the queen of spades or else reduce her heart holding to four, which will allow declarer to set up an extra heart discard.

Remember this technique. Before proceeding with a normal line of play, consider whether or not you have some free discards. If you do, play them off. Who knows what brilliancies you'll be working!

Free Discards and the Double Squeeze

The following hand will make on a double squeeze. Here the concept of the free discard is different from what we have looked at above. In a double squeeze, everybody's cards must be brought tight. But the fact is that both opponents are not squeezed in an absolutely simultaneous manner. Although both defenders are brought TO the critical moment simultaneously, the actual critical moment strikes first one of them and then the other. When it strikes the first defender, that defender must make her hopeless decision. Once that decision has been made, it CREATES a free discard for the offensive side. Declarer locates this free discard for herself, but the 2nd defender has no such comfort, and the critical moment of the squeeze passes on with unabated power. Let's look at this process at work in a sample hand:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>♠ A 10 ♥ 9 7 3 ♦ K 8 2 ♣ K 9 7 5 2</p> <p>♠ J 7 5 3 ♥ Q J 10 6 4 ♦ 10 9 3 ♣ Q</p> | <p>♠ Q 6 4 2 ♥ 8 5 2 ♦ 7 6 ♣ J 10 8 6</p> |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>♠ K 9 8 ♥ A K ♦ A Q J 5 4 ♣ A 4 3</p> | |
|--|--|

West leads the heart queen against South's 6NT contract. Declarer counts 11 winners. The 12th looks easy: duck a club and then pick up the rest of the suit. Following this plan, declarer wins the lead and then ducks a club, allowing

West to win the queen of clubs. West sends back a high heart; South takes it and cashes the club ace, getting the bad news.

But the news isn't really all that bad. If declarer next cashes the king of clubs and then runs diamonds, think how many tricks will have been played: 2 hearts, 3 clubs, 5 diamonds for 10 tricks. Each player will have only 3 cards left. If West will be compelled to hold a heart, and if East will be compelled to hold a club, then which of them will be holding 3 spades? Neither. Let's construct the critical moment, the moment just before declarer plays the final squeeze card. Here is what the four players will be holding:

| | | |
|---------|----------|---------|
| | ♠ A 10 | |
| | ♥ 9 | |
| | ♦ ---- | |
| | ♣ 9 | |
| ♠ J 7 5 | N | ♠ Q 6 4 |
| ♥ Q | W E | ♥ ---- |
| ♦ ---- | S | ♦ ---- |
| ♣ ---- | | ♣ J |
| | ♠ K 9 8 | |
| | ♥ ---- | |
| | ♦ 5 | |
| | ♣ ---- | |

South now leads the diamond 5. As defensive technique, West cannot throw the heart queen, because the defender must keep the card that is certainly known to be a winner. So West's correct discard is the spade 5, thereby shifting to East the obligation to stop spades. Once West makes this decision, dummy must discard. Up to this point, all of dummy's cards have been absolutely critical, each 9 being the one-card threat against each different defender. But now the work of the heart 9 has been completed because it has already pressured a spade out of the West hand. So at this moment the heart 9 has become a free discard. Declarer needs to recognize that the discard has become free, or else she won't know what to pitch from dummy. But understanding that the heart 9 is now free gives an easy pitch for declarer, but no respite to East, who must now also let go of a spade.

This is the nature of a double squeeze. The left hand opponent makes a decision that creates

a free discard in the next offensive hand. It is the comfort of that free discard that allows declarer to maintain the pressure against the right hand opponent.

Free Advice

Sometimes advice is worth what you pay for it. When it comes from an opponent or from an irritated partner, listen, but evaluate whether what you have heard is as true as it has been presented to be. But sometimes free advice is worth listening to. Consider the source. This first bit of free advice is passed on from Charles Goren. I'd say it was worth listening to.

Goren advises that you look at a squeeze as a 3-step process:

1. Card placement
2. Preparation
3. Completion

By card placement he means that you identify which cards would be important to a squeeze and then decide if it is reasonable that those cards are laying where they need to be. Or, that you place the cards where you actually think they lay, and then consider if they can be squeezed out of that place.

By preparation he means such things as establishing the one-card threat (perhaps by playing a Vienna Coup, or by ruffing a round out), adjusting the count, playing off side suit winners, playing off free discards, ensuring proper transportation, etc. Preparation is anything that is needed to create the critical moment.

By completion he just means that you go ahead and do it.

Another tip is to remember one of the techniques we just used in examining the previous hand. We counted up how many tricks had already been played, then we added to it the number of plays that would ensue if we ran our long suit. The sum allows us to determine how many tricks will be left in the hand, and then we can consider what the impact of this will be on the defenders' holdings and what few cards the defenders will have to come to. In the hand discussed, we saw that 10 tricks would precede the final position, and with only 3 cards left, neither opponent could guard their own suit and also still retain 3 spades.