

AN HONORS eBook FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

Stephen Kennedy

Play Bridge with Crocs

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Preface

Hello there.

Since we're about to play twenty-four hands together, I think it's best that I introduce myself. My name is Stephen Kennedy (aka Crocs), and I am an ex-junior England player who now acts as Captain for the U21 England Squad. I also like to play bridge. And I really, really love bridge books.

My first published bridge books were *Crocs on Squeeze Play Volumes One & Two*. And while I'm very proud of those books, I will admit that they aren't for everyone. Which is fair enough. Not everyone is interested in squeezes that have yet to make a recorded appearance at the table.

As such, I thought my next book should be more accessible and I turned my attention to a classic of bridge literature – the over-the-shoulder approach.

Each deal will follow my perspective, starting with just my hand and going through the auction – followed by the tabling of dummy and the play of the hand. Once the play is finished, I will reveal the opposing hands and we'll have a post-mortem to discuss the finer points of the hand that may have gone unappreciated during the play.

The hands from this book are taken from real life, but I hope that you will forgive me for the occasional edit. Sometimes, a hand has great potential, but the enemy cards don't lie quite how I need them to.

I don't suspect my analysis will be as good as the legendary bridge authors who have come before me, but I have something that they never had: A wealth of crazy bridge partners and an entire junior squad to collect inspiration from.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I did writing it.

Thanks

The making of this book was made easier and better thanks to the following people.

Thanks to Michael Alishaw who listened to all these stories despite not playing bridge anymore.

Thanks to Ben Norton for help with the book's formatting.

Thanks to Charlie Bucknell for being my bridge partner and taking part in several of the hands featured in this book.

Thanks to Jacob Duschek for lending his analytical mind when proofreading.

Thanks to my mother for teaching me bridge.

And thanks to Miu Wong for her enthusiasm and help in getting this book ready for publishing.

Chapter One

A Good Start

As bridge is a partnership game, I think it best that I introduce who we'll be playing most of our games with. Quack is my regular partner. And what a wonderful partner he is! He drives me to bridge events. He finds us teammates. He also goes off in every contract I put him in and he likes to double making partscores.

Luckily, this is a book on my declarer play, so I won't have to worry about defending doubled contracts or partner going off. Quack will be in his element.

At least that's the idea. It's round one of a Swiss Teams event, and Quack and I are hoping to extract maximum VPs so we can get off to as good a start as possible. It's the last board of the set and I pick up:

♠ J 3
♥ K 6 4 3
♦ K J 10 7 3
♣ 10 3

It's all non-vulnerable, and my LHO opens an Ekren 2♥. This shows a weak hand with 5/4 in the majors, and partner overcalls 2♠. Despite West having shown at least four spades, Quack and I play 2♠ as natural (and better than a normal overcall to compensate). I wonder if I'm supposed to bid 2NT, but I need not worry about that because my RHO opponent bids 3♣ in front of me.

That's odd. As is so often the case playing with Quack, there seems to be a lot of bidding going on. Opposite a solid 2♠ overcall, I probably have enough to double (showing diamonds and some spade tolerance), but opposite Quack, it's best to have something in reserve, so I pass. LHO passes as well, and partner comes back in with a double.

You see? There's no need to bid when partner will do it himself! While I'm thinking about what to bid, RHO bids 4♣. I suppose that takes 3NT out of

the equation. With five diamonds, I certainly can't pass, and opposite a less aggressive partner, I might even bid game. But opposite Quack I settle for 4♦. LHO bids 5♣ and partner raises to 5♦.

I let out a sigh of relief when no one doubles, and West leads the ♣K.

♠ A Q 9 5 4 2
♥ A J
♦ 8 6 5 2
♣ Q



♠ J 3
♥ K 6 4 3
♦ K J 10 7 3
♣ 10 3

West	North	East	South
2♥(a)	2♠	3♣	Pass
Pass	Dble	4♣	4♦
5♣	5♦	All Pass	

(a) Ekren (weak with both majors)

Well, at least I agree with most of partner's bidding. The 2♠ overcall is clear, and the double of 3♣ is okay as well. He may be minimum for his 2♠ overcall, but he doesn't want to defend 3♣ and there's a lot of upside to letting me know about his diamond length. That said, his 5♦ bid is just too much. He is dead minimum for his previous actions, and if 5♦ was going to be a good contract, I would have bid it myself. In any case, I shouldn't worry about the bidding too much. I still have to make 5♦, and after cashing the ♣K, West switches to the ♠7.

That's a bit spooky. If West has five spades, he'll be giving his partner a ruff, so I have to assume spades are 4-1. Ordinarily, I would let this run to the ♠J, but I should consider the possibility of East having a singleton King.

West underleading Kxxx seems unlikely since it could easily give a trick away to my Jack, so it might be right to fly Ace, trying to drop the singleton King offside. This play has the added advantage of looking very cool when I underplay the ♠J (unblocking the suit and allowing for a later finesse against the ♠10). But despite what *Crocs on Squeeze Play* might suggest, I play bridge to make my contracts (not to look cool), and I think it's best to play with the four-to-one odds that the King is on my left.

I call low from dummy and East plays the six. In with the ♠J, I need to decide how to play diamonds. Obviously, I will cross to dummy and take a trump finesse, but which finesse will I take? The diamond honors could be in either hand, and either finesse could work. That said, to make the contract I need East to have the ♦A. If West has it, he will win the first diamond and give his partner a spade ruff.

Since I must assume that East has the Ace, I can either play her for AQx or Ax. In the former case I should play a diamond to my ♦J10 twice. In the latter case I should play a diamond to the King.

How do I think diamonds are breaking? West raised clubs to the 5-level, suggesting three card support, but I don't know if it's reasonable to assume this. That would give East only seven clubs. Would East really compete to 3♣ and then 4♣ with only seven clubs, missing the King and Queen? I don't think so. I think that East has AJxxxxxx and that West raised on King doubleton.

In light of West's 2♥ opening (showing 54 in the majors), the plan is to play West for 4522 shape, which means playing East for Ax in diamonds, rather than AQx. To pick up Ax with East, I should play a trump to the King and then duck a round. To do that, I need to enter dummy, and the first trap to avoid is ruffing a club. If I did that, I would be removing West's last club. When I then lead a diamond off the dummy, East can rise with the ♦A and play a third club, giving West a trump promotion when he has ♦Qx.

The correct play is to enter dummy with a heart. I could finesse by playing the Jack, but I don't need to risk East having Qx in hearts. When diamonds are 2-2, I'll still have two trumps left to ruff a club and a heart. The fourth heart will then go on a spade after taking the marked spade finesse.

So I play a heart to the Ace and call for a diamond. East plays low and I (as per the plan) play the ♦K.

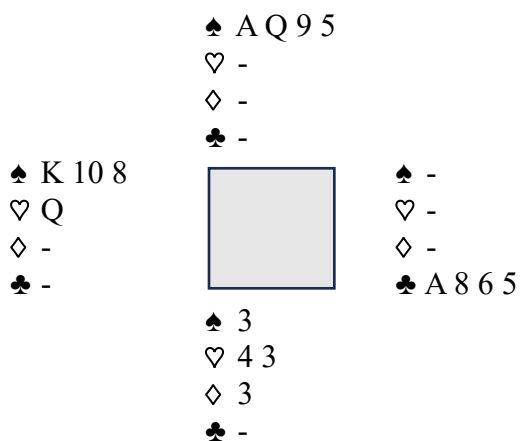
West underplays the $\diamond Q$.

Huh.

I don't suspect that this is a humorous false card from Qx, so it looks like trumps are actually 3-1. And that means my plan of ruffing twice in dummy doesn't look so good anymore. I'd need to ruff a heart, and I can't do that while East can overruff with the $\diamond 9$.

Without anything better to do, I exit with the $\diamond J$ and West discards a heart. East wins the Ace and plays a heart back to my King. Things look bad since I still can't ruff a heart in dummy without suffering an overruff, but that's okay. Luckily, I still have old reliable in the back pocket.

I ruff a club in dummy and come back to hand in diamonds, drawing East's last trump. Then I play off the rest of my trumps, and West comes under some pressure:



On the last diamond, West is forced to part with a spade to keep guard of hearts, and that makes dummy good with the aid of a finesse.

11 tricks and a happy partner.

Too happy if you ask me...

The full hand:

	♠ A Q 9 5 4 2	
	♥ A J	
	♦ 8 6 5 2	
	♣ Q	
♠ K 10 8 7		♠ 6
♥ Q 9 7 5 2		♥ 10 8
♦ Q		♦ A 9 4
♣ K J 9		♣ A 8 7 6 5 4 2
	♠ J 3	
	♥ K 6 4 3	
	♦ K J 10 7 3	
	♣ 10 3	

Post-Mortem

What is there to say? I was very lucky on this board. I misread the hand when I assumed that East had eight clubs and I would have gone off if she held AQx in diamonds. But on this occasion the bridge gods were kind and blessed West with singleton Queen.

I didn't have the squeeze ending in mind when I exited the second diamond, I just knew that I was going off if I didn't try to draw trumps. The fact that the hand ended in a squeeze was just a happy accident. A happy accident that does well to bolster my reputation as a squeeze enthusiast.

OVER THE SHOULDER AND OVER THE TOP

Over the shoulder bridge books have been a staple of bridge literature for nearly a century, but you've never seen one like this before.

Follow Stephen as he takes you through twenty-four hands — each as exciting and humorous as the last. Can he survive his partner's optimistic bidding? Will the England Juniors ever listen to his advice? Can he and his partner qualify for the English open team?

Those who have read Stephen's previous books will know what to expect: a light-hearted tone with plenty of eccentric plays to keep you thinking long after the final page has been turned.



STEPHEN KENNEDY (better known as 'Crocs') lives in Sussex, England. Once a junior international, he now spends his days as a professional bridge player and Captain of the U21 England Team. This is his third book, having published *Crocs on Squeeze Play* Volume One and Two in 2019.

