



a BRIDGE to
simple squeezes
SECOND EDITION

Julian
Laderman



©2007 Julian Laderman. All rights reserved. It is illegal to reproduce any portion of this material, except by special arrangement with the publisher. Reproduction of this material without authorization, by any duplication process whatsoever, is a violation of copyright.

Master Point Press

331 Douglas Ave.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

M5M 1H2

(416) 781-0351

Websites: <http://www.masterpointpress.com>

<http://www.masteringbridge.com>

<http://www.ebooksbridge.com>

<http://www.bridgeblogging.com>

Email: info@masterpointpress.com

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Laderman, Julian

A bridge to simple squeezes / Julian Laderman. -- 2nd ed.

ISBN 978-1-55494-142-1

1. Contract bridge--Squeeze. I. Title.

GV1282.44.L33 2007

795.41'53

C2007-901626-X

Editor

Ray Lee

Interior format

Luise Lee

Copy editing

Suzanne Hocking

Cover photo

Olena S. Sullivan

Cover and interior design

Olena S. Sullivan/New Mediatrix

Printed in Canada by Webcom Ltd.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

11 10 09 08 07

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In memory of my father, Jack Laderman, who taught me about bridge and more importantly about life.

Acknowledgments to the first edition

I want to thank many individuals who were helpful in writing this book.

My bridge partner Ivan Petrovic was very helpful even prior to my writing the book. After a duplicate event we would often savor the squeezes we had found and lament the squeezes we had missed. He read several versions of this book and suggested many important revisions that improved the approach and content of *A Bridge to Simple Squeezes*.

Several of my other bridge partners, Dennis Kaye, Howard Marks, Sandy Prosnitz and Barbara Skluth, read early versions of the book and suggested several improvements. At this point, authors always absolve their proofreaders of any blame for remaining errors. I don't wish to do that for my five bridge partners. After all, any remaining errors (I fear there may be some) could have been picked up by them. Bridge players are always assessing what percent of the blame falls on each partner. I will accept 95% of the blame, but will leave them 5%.

I am extremely grateful to Amalia Ottemberg, who put in a great deal of time reading several versions of this book. She suggested many improvements in style and phrasing that helped clarify the presentation.

I want to thank Antoinette Blum, my partner in life, for her proofreading and general support. She never played a hand of bridge, but can discuss squeeze play terminology at a cocktail party.

Lastly, I am grateful to the publisher, Ilya Levkov of Liberty Publishing House, for being willing to take the risk of publishing an author's first bridge book.

Changes for the second edition

This new edition contains considerably more material than the first edition. It now covers criss-cross squeezes, trump squeezes and triple squeezes. There is expanded coverage of defense against a squeeze. On the last page, the second edition contains a reference page that will help readers quickly find important information. Several explanations have been made clearer.

Acknowledgments to the second edition

After the first edition appeared, I had the good fortune of having an army of proofreaders. Many bridge players read the first edition and provided me with useful input for the second edition. I tried to keep track of their suggestions and comments in order to incorporate them in this new edition. Unfortunately, since many were thrown at me in hallways or bathrooms at bridge tournaments, I'm sure I lost several great ideas.

I would like to thank the three people who were the most effective at finding significant ways to improve this book: Farley Mawyer, Art Seelenfreund and Dan Wolkowitz.

I am also grateful to Ray Lee, publisher of Master Point Press, for suggesting numerous ways to improve the book, and Suzanne Hocking for her excellent editing of the manuscript.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Why another book on squeeze plays?	7
Simple squeezes are not simple	8
What makes this book different from all other books on squeeze plays?	9
History of the term “squeeze play”	10
Presentation	10
1. Strong Threat Cards	
Trick-winning potential	13
Types of threat cards	14
Honors as strong threat cards	15
Four-card suit strong threat cards	17
Other long-suit strong threat cards	19
Strong-plus threat cards	20
Role of strong threat cards in squeeze execution	21
Exercises	22
Answers	24
2. Assumptions and Pitfalls	
A deceptively simple “simple squeeze”	25
The four mistakes	27
Level of assumption in squeeze execution	31
Exercises	34
Answers	36
3. Positional Squeezes	
Choosing between a squeeze and a finesse	37
Example that finally demonstrates mistake 4	40
Rectifying the count	43
Example with two long-suit threat cards	44
Examples with two honor threat cards	47
Example with one threat card in each hand	52
Watching discards	54
Comparison of examples	55
Exercises	57
Answers	60
4. Automatic Squeezes	
How automatic squeezes differ from positional squeezes	67
Example with a long-suit threat card and an honor threat card	68
Example switching the defender guarding the threat cards	70
The very important useless card	71

Vienna Coup	72
Comparison of two similar examples	74
Level of assumption	74
Example with two honor threat cards	75
Example with two long-suit threat cards	78
Triple Vienna Coup	81
Exercises	84
Answers	87
5. Summary of Simple Squeeze Execution	
Summary of simple squeeze execution with the structured approach	91
Pseudo squeezes	94
Discarding and signaling as a defender	94
6. Defense Against a Squeeze Play	97
A Trojan Horse	100
Exercises	103
Answers	107
7. Developing and Manipulating Strong Threat Cards	
Creating strong threat cards (isolating the menace)	109
Choosing between two strong threat cards in a suit	112
Switching strong threat cards (transferring the menace)	115
Exercises	118
Answers	120
8. Not-So-Simple Simple Squeezes	
Show-up squeeze / count squeeze	121
Memory squeeze	124
Criss-cross squeeze	125
Trump squeeze (ruffing squeeze)	128
Exercises	130
Answers	131
9. Double and Triple Squeezes	
Non-simultaneous double squeeze	133
Simultaneous double squeeze	136
Level of assumption	139
Choosing between a simple squeeze and a double squeeze	140
Triple squeeze / progressive squeeze / repeating squeeze	142
Exercises	144
Answers	146
Afterword with Suggested Readings	149
Reference Page	151

INTRODUCTION

Why another book on squeeze plays?

Many excellent books on declarer play include long chapters on executing squeeze plays. Several fine books have been written that are devoted entirely to the topic. However, in spite of the existing literature, a void exists in bridge knowledge. The majority of experienced duplicate players do not recognize situations when they should be searching for a squeeze play on a deal. They do not intuitively spot the elements and ingredients required to produce a squeeze. Occasionally, they will have the good fortune to execute a squeeze play by accident. They will bask in the glow of their accomplishment, but will not taste the pleasure of truly recognizing, planning, and then executing the squeeze play.

There is an aura about squeeze plays that causes bridge players to think of them as very advanced. Although bridge players will witness many squeezes in newspaper columns, they will not find them at the bridge table. They will enjoy squeezes from the position of a spectator, rather than as a participant. Unfortunately, most of them see squeezes as plays that will be mastered only by players better than themselves. One can even argue that squeeze plays are not essential, since players can win on a regular basis at their local club without mastering the ability to execute them. There is a lot of truth to that argument. Since squeeze plays occur in only a small percentage of deals, and most duplicate players will miss them anyway, it is not such a major disadvantage to leave them out of your arsenal.

One important reason to master the ability to execute a squeeze play is pure enjoyment. There is an art to finding a squeeze, as well as a sense of accomplishment. Consider the highlight film on the sports segment of the evening news. The broadcast will show a great catch performed by a leaping center fielder even though his team lost the game by ten runs. A 50-foot putt will be televised even when a golfer finished fifteen strokes behind Tiger Woods. Occasionally, I have left a bridge tournament with a poor result, but with my spirits high from mentally replaying my personal highlight reel.

Some players like to accuse their partners and opponents of playing incorrectly when they overlook a squeeze. Although these players speak

confidently, they are often uncertain that a squeeze was actually missed. Even if their analysis is incorrect and no squeeze was missed, they realize that most players are not comfortable enough with squeeze mechanics to challenge the veracity of their statement. I hope this book will protect you from the squeeze bully!

Since tournament bridge players devote a great deal of time to playing and enjoying the game, it is unfortunate that so many close the door to this exciting technique.

Simple squeezes are not simple

All existing books on squeeze plays follow basically the same approach. Even books that claim to be an easy introduction merely use the traditional approach, but in a slower fashion. Most begin by telling the reader that many squeezes are easy to execute. The author then tries to convince the reader with several model examples that seem quite simple on the surface. Even bridge literature identifies a set of so-called ‘simple squeezes’. A simple squeeze is defined as a squeeze against one defender in two suits. Although the adjective ‘simple’ is appropriate in the sense that if one considers all squeeze plays, a squeeze against one defender in two suits is clearly the simplest to master, there are, however, too many potential pitfalls during squeeze execution to make it reasonable to describe even simple squeezes as ‘easy’.

Below are the three main complications that can arise when executing even the simplest of squeezes:

- 1) You must recognize what features of a bridge hand will provoke declarer to consider searching for a squeeze.
- 2) You must choose a line of play based on the assumption that one defender holds certain specific cards.
- 3) You must avoid four common timing mistakes during execution.

A Bridge to Simple Squeezes clearly illustrates these complications and will, I hope, give readers a fresh view of squeeze-play execution. Experience alone does not improve a player’s ability at squeezes. Bridge is a difficult game that can be mastered only by understanding the techniques involved.

Charles Goren received the following humorous note from a bridge player who appreciated the limitations of experience:

“Dear Charles Goren,

Do you have a simplified, easy-to-understand instruction book for someone who has been playing for 30 years?”¹

What makes this book different from all other books on squeeze plays?

Whereas most books on squeeze plays tend to give examples as quickly as possible, my book develops a structured approach by first introducing the concepts of strong threat cards, level of assumption, and the four common mistakes. This format prepares the reader for understanding the mechanics of a squeeze play. Thus, I chose the title *A Bridge to Simple Squeezes*. I considered the alternative title *Foreplay to Squeeze Plays*, but I decided it was a little too provocative.

A Bridge to Simple Squeezes contains many similar examples and exercises that enable the reader to observe the subtle differences between them.

On several occasions, the same North-South hands will appear in different chapters. For instance, in one chapter we may study a simple squeeze on a hand and in a later chapter we may study a double squeeze on that same hand. We will consider how to choose between the different squeezes.

I have avoided some standard terminology: one-card menace, two-card menace, two-card threat, isolated menace, etc. My approach does not require these terms, as it is possible to explain the mechanics of a squeeze without them.

This book primarily covers simple squeezes. The last chapter, however, includes several examples of double and triple squeezes. Each is merely a combination of two or three simple squeezes respectively. I have included references to books that cover more advanced squeezes.

The main goal of *A Bridge to Simple Squeezes* is to get bridge players to the level where they can enjoy finding simple squeezes. The study of advanced squeezes is not appropriate until simple squeezes seem, well, almost simple.

1. Adler, Bill, ed., *Bridge Players write the Funniest Letters to Charles Goren* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1968), 42.

History of the term ‘squeeze play’

The term ‘squeeze play’ was coined by Sidney Lenz. In his 1926 book he states, “After seeing the ‘Yanks’ squeeze in the winning tally in a close game of baseball I thought the term would be singularly appropriate to the play in Bridge, where a winning card is squeezed out of a hand through being forced to make too many discards.”¹ This term was quickly relished by the bridge community. It is certainly very descriptive. It is easy to imagine an important card being squeezed out of the tight fingers of a defender. Even though the term is only eighty years old, the play itself dates back to the days of whist.

In the early days of bridge, prior to squeeze plays being named squeeze plays, their execution was called ‘forcing discards’. That name is descriptive, since declarer is forcing the defender guarding both suits to make one discard too many. When a defender has a useless card that can be discarded, that card is called an *idle* card. When all of a defender’s remaining cards play an important role, he does not have an idle card. At that point, if he has to discard, he must discard a *busy* card. A squeeze involves forcing a defender to discard a busy card. In each example, I will indicate the number of idle cards a squeezed defender can spare. This can help the reader to understand the mechanics of squeeze play.

Presentation

The examples in *A Bridge to Simple Squeezes* were designed to demonstrate squeeze plays and not to teach the reader anything about bidding. For most examples, however, I include the bidding, since any bidding by the defense often plays a crucial role in squeeze execution. Even a *pass* by a defender may influence the line of play chosen by declarer. Alternatively, when the bidding conveys no information to declarer that would affect his line of play, I just indicate the final contract without showing the full bidding. I do not indicate the vulnerability, since it plays no role in declarer’s decision making in any of my examples.

In general, North and South always bid aggressively — at times, too aggressively. In one example they even reach 7NT while missing an ace, but don’t worry — with a squeeze, declarer still prevails and that bad contract looks brilliant on the score sheet. Such aggressive bidding is necessary in all of my examples, since a squeeze is required for the contract to succeed. Clearly there are no easy contracts. Aggressive bidding creates exciting contracts.

1. Lenz, Sidney S., *Lenz on Bridge* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1926), 52-53.

In several examples, the defense will miss opportunities to interfere with declarer's successful execution of a squeeze. Sometimes I will point that out at the time the example is being studied; other times I will refer back to it later. For instance, Chapter 6 on defense against squeeze plays refers back to several examples from earlier chapters.

Since several new terms and expressions are introduced in this book, a [Reference Page](#) is included in the back of the book.

While writing this book, I frequently stumbled over which pronoun to use when referring to the declarer. *He/She* is cumbersome. *He* alone seems male chauvinistic, and alternating *he* and *she* is a distraction. When I explained my problem to a female bridge partner, Sandy Prosnitz, her advice was, "When declarer plays correctly, use *she*. When declarer makes a mistake, use *he*." Since my declarers are brilliant, that would mean using *she* all the time. I finally decided to use *he*, since it takes less time to type.

I was often asked whether I found writing *A Bridge to Simple Squeezes* a difficult task. Personally, I found it much easier than playing our complex game. First I was able to make up the deals and could then take hours or days to analyze them. At the bridge table, Lady Luck makes up the deals, and as if that isn't difficult enough, the director allows only seven or eight minutes to play them!

CHAPTER 1

strong threat cards

Trick winning potential

Throughout this chapter we will consider only one suit in each example. Assume that the other suits provide entries. Bridge players can easily recognize cards that are certain trick winners. We will study the potential of other cards to win tricks. Consider the situation where declarer holds AK and dummy holds J64. This suit combination will be represented as follows:

Example 1

J 6 4
—
A K

In this suit, declarer clearly holds two winners. There are three ways the jack may win a trick.

- 1) **Extremely good luck:** The defenders' cards in the suit may break 6-2, with the queen being one of the cards in the doubleton, or 7-1 with a singleton queen. The combined chance of these two possibilities is only about 5%.
- 2) **Poor defensive discarding:** Only the defender who holds the queen can prevent the jack from winning a trick. If the defender started with Qxx, he cannot relinquish any cards in this suit. If this player started with Qxxx, he can safely let go of one card in the suit, but not two. Obviously, with Qxxxx, two discards can be made, but not three. If the defender carelessly pitches too many cards in this suit, the jack will win a trick.
- 3) **The defense is 'forced' to discard from the suit:** This is the essence of the squeeze plays we will be studying.

The first two ways do nothing to inflate a bridge player's ego. Anybody can be lucky or be given a gift by the defense. True ecstasy is obtained by winning a trick the third way.

Now let us consider a different suit combination.

Example 2

10 6 4
<hr style="width: 50%; margin: 0 auto;"/>
A K

In this suit, declarer again has two sure winners. The chance of the ten winning a trick is not very good. The possibility of a doubleton QJ being held by one of the defenders is less than 1%. The chance of defensive discards (careless or forced) enabling the ten to win a trick in Example 2 is much less than that of the jack in Example 1. If one defender has the queen and the other defender has the jack, both defenders will probably have to discard in that suit in order for the ten to be converted into a winning card.

Clearly the jack in Example 1 has a greater potential to win a trick than the ten in Example 2. The essential difference is that in Example 1 declarer can be certain that only one defender can prevent him from winning a trick with the jack. No such certainty exists for declarer with the ten. It may indeed be the case that only one defender can prevent the ten from winning a trick — this can occur, for instance, if one defender holds both the queen and jack with at least one other card in this suit, or if one defender holds Qx or Jx. However, since the rules of bridge prevent declarer from peeking at the defenders' cards, even if only one defender is actually preventing the ten from winning the trick, declarer will be unaware of the situation.

Types of threat cards

Squeeze plays involve forcing the defenders to discard important cards. In squeeze play terminology, the term *threat card* is often used to refer to the jack in Example 1 and the ten in Example 2. In other words, a threat card is a card that may become a winner if the defense is forced to discard in that suit. Declarer has a card with which to threaten the defense, in the sense that the defense must try to prevent it from winning a trick. A defender who can prevent a threat card from winning a trick is said to be *guarding* the suit. Many books use the term *menace* instead of threat card. The meaning of the two terms is identical. Usually these terms are used primarily in the context of squeeze plays. In this chapter, however, we will use the term 'threat card' when analyzing a single suit.

It is important to realize that not all threat cards are equal. I will introduce some new terminology to categorize different types of threat cards.

Weak threat card: A threat card that is possibly guarded by both defenders.

Strong threat card: A threat card that is known to be guarded by only one defender.

In Example 1, the jack is a strong threat card. In Example 2, the ten is a weak threat card. Even though there is a chance that only one defender can prevent the ten from winning a trick, it is a weak threat card since declarer is unaware of the lie of the cards in the defenders' hands. If during the play of the deal declarer were to learn that only one defender could prevent the weak threat card, the ten, from winning a trick, then that weak threat card would be promoted to a strong threat card. For example, if declarer led a low card in this suit and a defender played the jack or queen, losing to the ace, then the ten would become a strong threat card.

If during the play of a deal one defender shows out in a suit, any weak threat card in that suit is promoted to a strong threat card.

Example 3

$$\begin{array}{r} 9\ 6\ 4 \\ \hline A\ K \end{array}$$

The nine is obviously a weak threat card. It has even less of a chance of being promoted to a strong threat card than the ten in Example 2.

Honors as strong threat cards

In this section we will look at examples of honor cards that are threat cards.

Example 4

$$\begin{array}{r} Q\ 2 \\ \hline A\ 3 \end{array}$$

The queen is a strong threat card, since only one defender was dealt the king.

Example 5

$$\begin{array}{r} J\ 5 \\ \hline A\ 2 \end{array}$$

The jack is a weak threat card, since one defender may have the queen and the other the king.

Example 6

$$\begin{array}{r} 6\ 4 \\ \hline K\ 3 \end{array}$$

The king is always a strong threat card, since only one defender has the ace.

Example 7

$$\begin{array}{r} 4\ 3 \\ \hline Q\ 5 \end{array}$$

The queen is a weak threat card, since one defender may have the ace and the other the king.

Example 8

$$\begin{array}{r} 3\ 2 \\ \hline A\ Q \end{array}$$

The queen is a strong threat card.

Example 9

$$\begin{array}{r} 5\ 3 \\ \hline A\ J \end{array}$$

The jack is a weak threat card.

Example 10

$$\begin{array}{r} 6\ 2 \\ \hline A\ K\ J \end{array}$$

The jack is a strong threat card.

Example 11

$$\begin{array}{r} A\ 3 \\ \hline K\ J\ 4 \end{array}$$

The jack is a strong threat card.

Example 12

$$\begin{array}{r} A\ 10\ 3 \\ \hline K\ J\ 4 \end{array}$$

The jack in declarer's hand and the ten in dummy are both strong threat cards.

In Examples 8, 10, 11 and 12, declarer has the option of taking a finesse with the threat card. In other chapters, we will consider whether to finesse or try for a squeeze.

INTERMEDIATE

What do you see?

DUMMY

♠ 4 3



DECLARER

♠ A K Q 2

If your answer is ‘Three top spade winners’, your vision can be improved! You should see ‘Three top spade winners and squeeze possibilities using the ♠2 as a threat card’. Just this one rather ordinary suit should start you dreaming about squeezes.

In this book, learning to recognize and appreciate threat cards plays a central role as you begin to understand how squeeze play operates. It won’t be long before you can look at a layout like this one and begin to imagine how the East-West cards will need to lie in order for your squeeze to be successful. Very soon, you will get to the point where simple squeezes are a part of your regular bridge arsenal.

The first edition of this book was named Book of the Year in 2006 by the American Bridge Teachers Association.



JULIAN LADERMAN is an associate professor of Mathematics and Computer Science at Lehman College, City University of New York. His specialty as an educator is making complex subjects understandable. He writes a bridge column in the *Bronx Journal*.



MASTER POINT PRESS