AN HONORS eBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

Stephen Kennedy

Crocs on Squeeze Play Volume Two

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Preface

Bridge is still complicated, intricate, beautiful, and weird.

When I first started writing Crocs on Squeeze Play, I planned for there to be ten chapters. As I wrote, I kept writing and ten chapters turned into thirteen and thirteen turned into seventeen. When I presented my work to Master Point Press, they reasonably suggested that what I had written was too much, and so my seventeen chapters turned into two sets of eight, with the seventeenth chapter hitting the cutting room floor. I guess that's what future volumes are for.

If this is your first entry into my world of squeeze play, I would highly recommend a step back. This book isn't just harder than the one that came before, it builds on what was established prior. The glossary will help with much of my returning terminology, but I wouldn't use it as a guide.

With that incredibly boring spiel out of the way… Let's go again!

Thanks

Thanks again to Ben, Michael, Jono, Mum, and Brian.

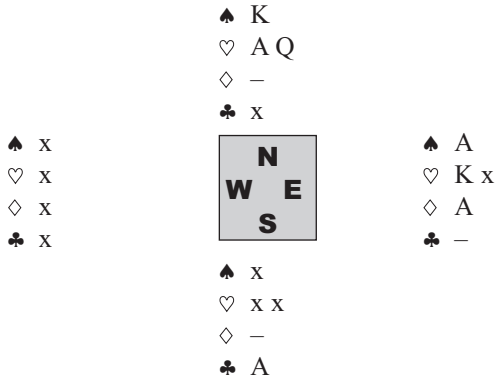
I am very grateful for the help I have received.

Chapter One

Triple Imaginary Squeezes

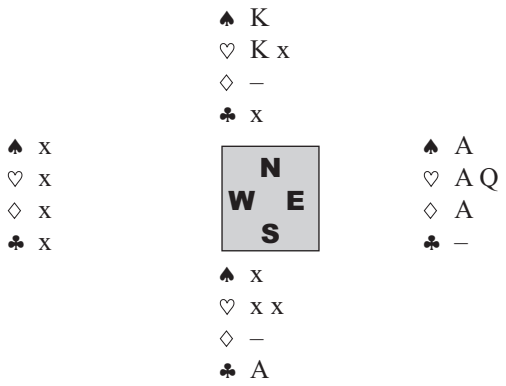
To explain what a 'triple imaginary squeeze' is, we should probably clarify what we mean by a triple squeeze, because the term itself is quite ambiguous.

There are 'proper' triple squeezes which work without the count because they use three menaces against one opponent, but these aren't very common. A far more common type of triple squeeze is a strip squeeze where you force an opponent to abandon an excess winner before throwing him in. A triple strip squeeze, if you will. Something like this:



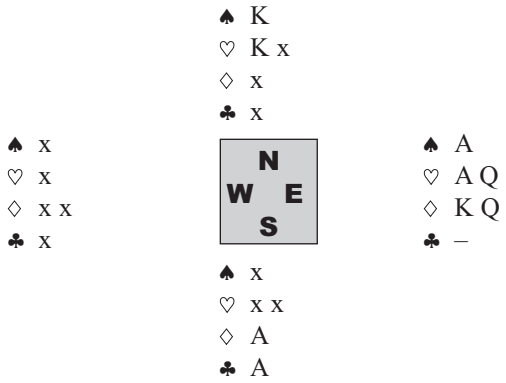
With the heart finesse offside, we are forced to rely on a throw-in, but it is currently unsafe to do so because East has too many winners. Fortunately, the play of the ♣ A soon fixes that problem. On the ♣ A, East can't throw a spade or a heart without setting up a winner but discarding the ♢ A allows us to exit in spades, endplaying him.

Obviously, this play only works because you had a tenace against East. If you had no tenace, there would be no threat of an endplay, but simply having a tenace isn't enough. For this squeeze to work, you need a major tenace, as you need a certain level of control to keep your squeeze target in line:



This time your tenace against East is notably weaker and the squeeze fails. On the ♣A, East can throw a heart, leaving him with three indisputable winners. Before, when you held ♡ AQ, a heart discard from East set up a winner for you immediately, but now it does not.

For any squeeze to work, you need a winner in one of your suits so this sort of thing doesn't happen. This is true, but no one ever said that your winner has to be in one of your menaces!

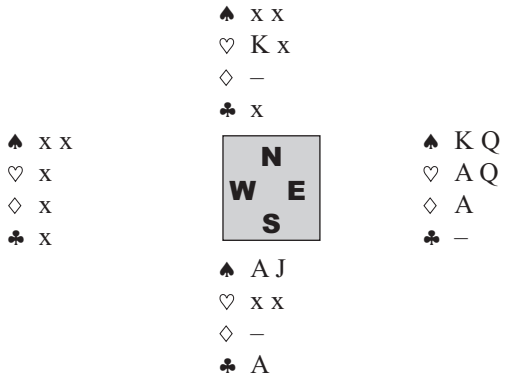


The same position as before, but this time we have a winner in the suit East has excess length in, and what a difference it makes!

Now when we cash the ♣A, it is no longer safe for East to throw the ♡ Q. Throwing the ♡ Q allows us to duck a heart, setting up our King, and because we have a winner in diamonds, East can't cash out against us. If East chooses to throw a diamond, shortening his length, we can cash our ◇ A, stripping him, and throw him in with the ♠ K to enforce the heart lead.

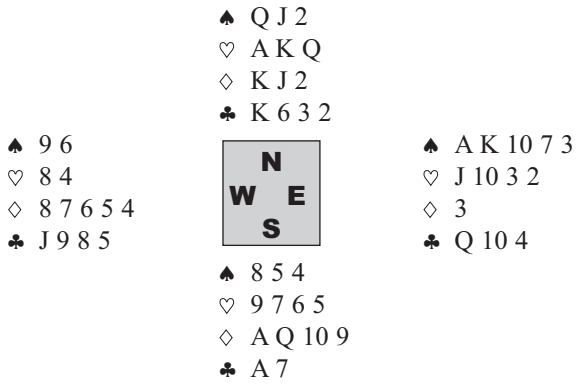
Even though we have three suits to worry about, the play is exactly the same as in ordinary imaginary squeezes. Our opponent can choose to weaken his holding in our throw menace, allowing us to establish a trick directly, or he can discard from his excess length, allowing us to strip and endplay him. And, of course, cashing the ♢ A before the ♣ A is no good.

It is very impressive how a single winner can achieve all this. While we will be covering imaginary squeezes in this chapter, it is still worth appreciating that this winner, needed to keep control, doesn't have to be an imaginary menace:



This time our winner is in our (previous) one-card menace and, once again, the squeeze is a success. If East chooses to weaken his holding in hearts, he will lack the tempo to cash his winners before we cash ours.

But this isn't a triple imaginary squeeze. It's a fake triple imaginary squeeze! You came here to squeeze opponents with imaginary menaces, and that's just what we're going to do! Before we start going over all the 'difficult' stuff, here's a 'simple' hand to get you started:



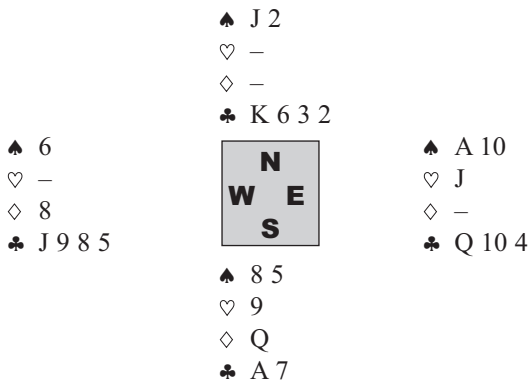
West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

1NT 10-12

Against 3NT, West gives the position away by leading the ♠9, and when you call for the ♠Q from dummy, East wins with the King and switches to the ♡2. There are nine tricks on top, and your best hope for a tenth trick (outside an even heart break) is an endplay against East. How are you going to do that?

Endplaying East in clubs doesn't look practical, as the defenders should be able to arrange the defence so that West wins any club trick you concede, but if East has length in hearts, an endplay will be unavoidable. After winning the heart switch in dummy, you proceed to cash your remaining hearts, and West dutifully shows out on the third round.

Now you know that East can be thrown in with a heart, but you can't throw him in just yet. First, you must remove his club and diamond holding. If East is 5=4=2=2, you can simply cash clubs and diamonds in any manner you choose before throwing him in, but East could have club length. Fortunately, you can cater for this by cashing your diamonds before clubs, catching him in a triple imaginary squeeze! This is the position with one diamond left to cash:



To keep his clubs, East threw two spades, but now, on the final diamond, he has nowhere to go. A heart discard establishes your nine, a spade discard allows you to establish the Jack while you still have a control in clubs, and a club discard allows you to cash your ♣AK,

stripping East, and exit with the ♡ 9. East wins but must now lead into the ♠ J. Ten tricks.

Even though the play was simple, I'm sure making ten tricks on this deal would feel very rewarding. The opening lead basically gave it to you on a plate, as it revealed how the spade suit was lying, but double-dummy, couldn't you have made ten tricks regardless of the opening lead?

This is a difficult question, and at this point, you may be too inexperienced with triple imaginary squeezes to give a satisfactory answer. Simple looking deals like this can reveal themselves to be quite interesting in the hands of a well-practised bridge player. I think that once you have widened your experience, the answer to this question will be clear.

While you may be determined to learn more about this interesting topic, it looks like you'll have to put such aspirations on hold. Sat opposite your regular partner, you find yourself in the qualifying stages of a massive pairs competition. How will you fare, I wonder?

♠ 8
♡ 5 4 3 2
◇ A Q J 5
♣ Q 9 7 4

N
W E
S

♠ A K 4
♡ K 6
◇ 9 6 4 2
♣ A K J 8

West	North	East	South
			1♣
dble	1♡	2♠	2NT
3♠	3NT	all pass	

2NT 18-19 Balanced

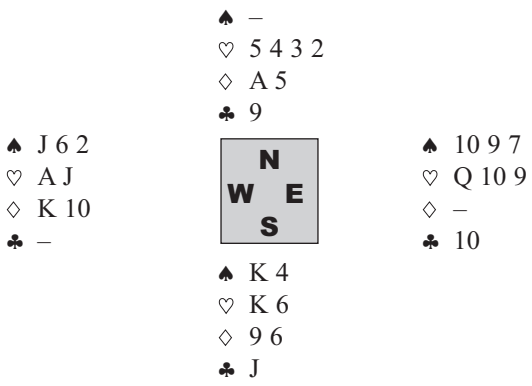
Against 3NT, West leads ♠ Q, and you must plan your campaign. It's early days in the tournament, but that's no reason to slouch. How will you play to maximize your score?

There are seven tricks on top, and obviously, you'll need to establish some diamonds. The opponents have done quite a lot of bidding on a humble 13 points. Presumably, 2♠ was bid on five spades and some shape. Either way, you expect the ♢ K to be onside, and if it isn't, you can expect a sharp heart switch through the King.

Obviously, with overtricks at stake, we're not going to do anything theatrical like a diamond to the Ace to guard against a stiff King. When diamonds are three-two with the King onside, this will simply give up a trick unnecessarily, and it will even give up a trick when the diamonds are four-one onside!

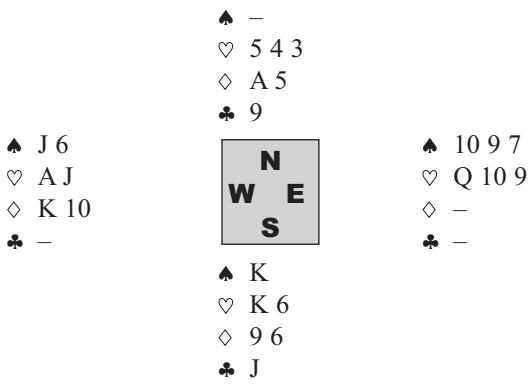
When diamonds are four-one onside, you will only have three diamonds winners and nine total tricks, but with the aid of an imaginary triple squeeze, you can surely boost that number up to ten. If West has the diamond guard, along with the ♡ A, you can catch him in an imaginary squeeze by using the fourth round of diamonds as your throw-in card. On the run of clubs, he'll have to unguard a red suit or reduce his spade length, which will allow you to strip and endplay him.

But wait! The imaginary triple squeeze is a three-loser squeeze. If you win at trick one, take a couple of diamond finesses, discovering the break, and run clubs, this will be the position:



On the last club, no squeeze will occur because West has enough breathing room to escape. West will throw a spade, and now what can you do? Your only hope for a tenth trick is endplaying West, so you cash the ♠ K, but West can counter this by throwing the ♠ J, creating an entry to his partner's hand. Now throwing him in won't be a very smart thing to do!

Since the triple imaginary squeeze is (primarily) a three-loser squeeze, you will have to duck a trick to rectify the count, and the only safe time to do this is at trick one! Ducking the opening lead removes West's breathing room, and now the ending will be tight enough for you to enforce the squeeze. But as you do so, an interesting thought occurs to us:



After ducking the lead, West continued spades and you took your diamond finesses to arrive at this position. Earlier, I noted that to enforce a strip squeeze, you needed a winner in one of our suits and that it didn't matter which one it was. Here you have a winner in both diamonds and spades so is the imaginary squeeze even necessary?

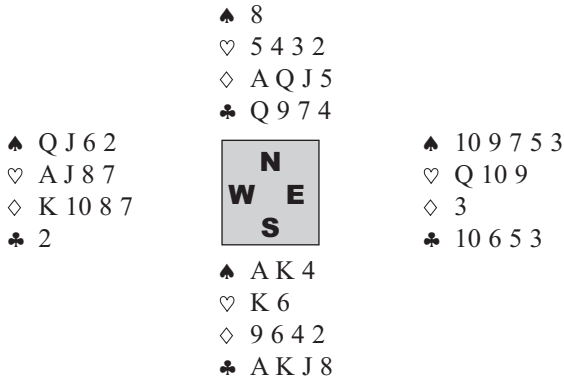
Yes, yes it is. To enforce a strip squeeze, you need a winner in one of your suits, but an imaginary menace has an extra edge over the more mundane two-card menace. When your opponent has an excess winner, it doesn't matter which you have, but West doesn't have an excess winner, he has an access card which can be used to reach his partner's hand!

If you cash the ♠K in this position, West can beat you by underplaying the ♠J. On the ♣J, West will throw the ♡J, and when you concede a heart, he will cross to his partner's hand in spades, and you will have gained nothing.

To cope with an unwanted access card, you need to use an imaginary menace. So, when you reach the above position (after ducking trick one and discovering the four-one diamond break), it is the ♢A that is unnecessary.

Regardless, the play of the ♣J will crush the life out of West. A diamond discard concedes a trick immediately; a heart discard allows you to establish your ♡K while you still have control; and a spade discard allows you to strip West of his holding and throw him in with the fourth diamond to enforce the endplay. Ten tricks and a good start to the event!

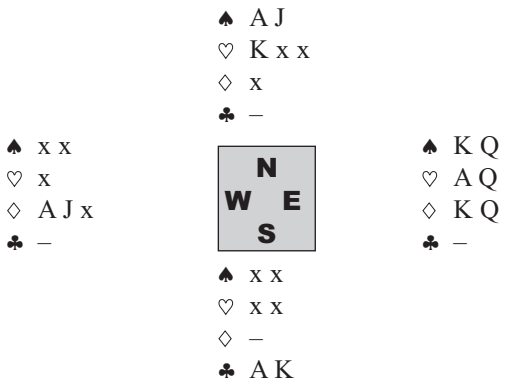
The full hand:



You did well to make ten tricks on this board, but you can't take all the credit; you must thank West. If West had led a low spade, you would have been held to a humble nine.

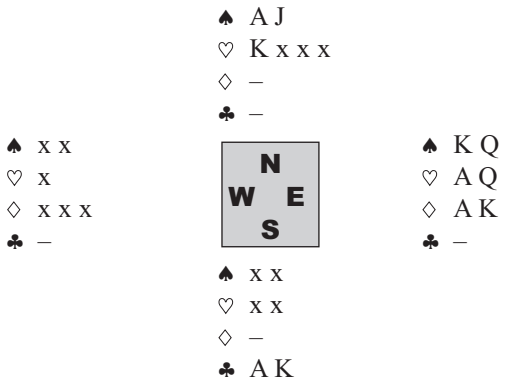
With some time between rounds, you reflect on what just happened. Realising that your imaginary menace was needed to prevent the opponents communicating with each other and that the squeeze wouldn't work if the loser count hadn't been rectified were important steps towards fully understanding this type of squeeze. These elements will occur repeatedly as we move forward.

But before we move forward, we should probably take a step back. In simple and double imaginary squeezes, we normally used an ordinary winner as our imaginary menace, but occasionally, we used a trump opposite a loser. After squeezing our opponent, we ruffed out his exit card. Does this same principle apply to triple imaginary squeezes?

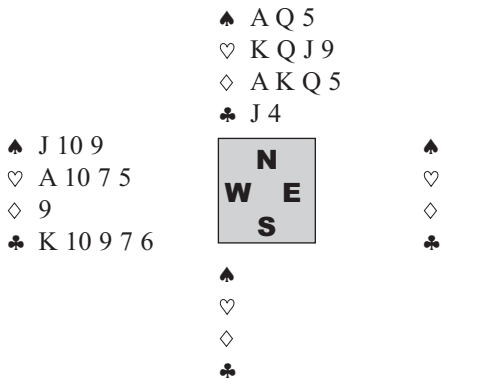


Why yes it does! On the ♣A, East is caught in a triple imaginary trump squeeze! Since this is a trump squeeze and we need to ruff a diamond if East discards once, we need an entry to dummy, hence the ♠A. On the ♣A, we throw a heart and East is out of options. A spade discard establishes a trick for us immediately; a heart discard allows us to establish our ♡K while we still have control in the form of a trump; and a diamond discard allows us to cross to dummy with the ♠A, ruff a diamond, and throw East in with the ♠J to enforce a heart lead.

A little complicated but nothing you shouldn't be capable of. While grasping this ending is certainly within your skill set, it's unlikely that you'll ever find a hand that requires such a play. Usually, there will be some other (more normal) line that will work because it's unlikely that the opponent's exit cards will prove a problem. If you have trump length in both hands, a partial elimination will usually get the job done (though I suppose an imaginary triple squeeze would be preferable). Even when such a play isn't possible, you will only need a triple imaginary trump squeeze if the opponent's exit cards are access cards and not winners:



If East's diamonds are just winners, then it plays out like a fake triple imaginary squeeze, as he is forced to hold onto his spades. Noticing all the aspects that call for a triple imaginary trump squeeze will be difficult. Especially if you're not the one playing the hand:



West	North	East	South
	2♣	pass	2♡
pass	4♡	all pass	

2♣ 18-19 Balanced or 22+ any
2♡ to play opposite 18-19

For a change, you find yourself in the West seat, on lead against the opponent's 4♡ contract. After all, this is a high-level pairs event, and your opponents certainly didn't pay their exorbitant entry fee to defend and watch you pull off an array of exotic squeezes against them.

You kick off with the ♢ 9, and declarer goes up with the Ace, partner following with the ♢ 8 (standard count). Next comes the ♡ K. Partner discards the ♠ 3 (reverse attitude), and declarer grimaces. Since taking the ♡ A now would be an inordinately kind gesture, you hold off. Declarer plays another top heart from dummy which you also duck, partner discarding the ♣ 2 (standard count). Since another heart lead from table would prove unsatisfactory, declarer crosses to hand with the ♣ A and leads a third heart. How will you play?

This is a pretty tough problem; it's not like your partner has given you count in two suits, shown out in a third, and given you an attitude signal. But even if you are playing blindfolded in an underground bunker with a lone matchstick, you still have a decision to make.

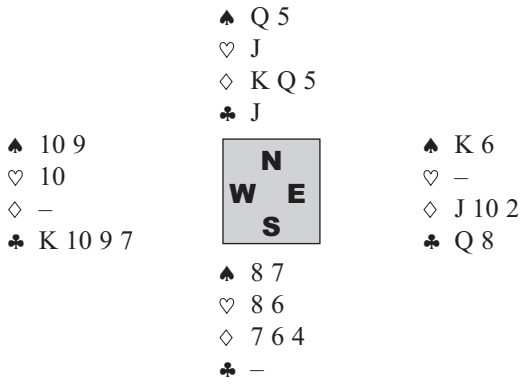
The most instinctive play is to rise with the Ace and lead the ♠ J. Partner signalled that he has the King, and this will free it up, but let's think back to those count signals partner gave us. Partner started with an even number of diamonds, probably four, and an odd number of clubs, probably five. We think he has four diamonds because he would likely have discarded one with six of them, and we think he has five clubs because declarer playing a club to the Ace confirms that partner has the Queen (for a couple of reasons), which suggests he has Qxxxx because discarding a club from Qxx is unlikely.

Now that we think partner has something like:

♠ K x x x
♡ –
♢ J x x x
♣ Q x x x x

Is a spade switch really going to help? No, it won't. Declarer will also be watching partner's discards, so he will know that partner has the King, and even if he is the untrusting sort, he will still assume that partner has the ♠K because you have fewer empty spaces. On the ♠J switch, declarer will rise with the Ace and plan to endplay East in diamonds.

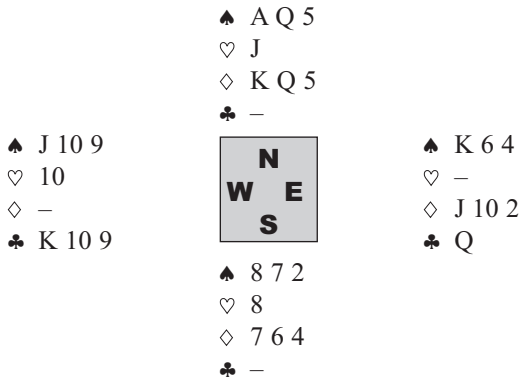
A partial elimination won't work because you can ruff the top diamonds, but the triple imaginary trump squeeze will fall into his lap without any preparation at all. After rising with the ♠ A, he will draw your last trump, and partner will be in a spot of bother:



On the ♡ J, partner will curse you with every fibre of his being. A diamond discard is no good, a spade discard is no good and a club discard… Is no good! If declarer reads the position correctly, he will ruff

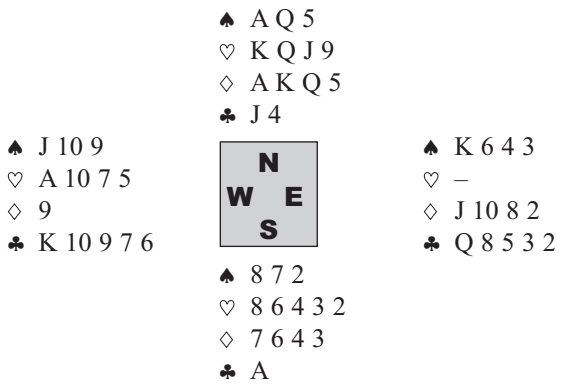
his club, stripping East of his club holding, and play three rounds of diamonds, putting partner on lead and forcing him to write up minus 420.

But you're not going to put partner through that, are you! Switching to a spade may knock out the Ace, but the ♠A won't help declarer keep control of partner's access card in clubs! The only thing keeping a lock on East's club holding is the ♣J in dummy! While that club is in dummy, declarer can use it as an imaginary trump menace against partner, and to defeat the squeeze, you must switch to a club after taking your ♡A and smother that Jack in dummy. Without it, declarer will have no squeeze to play for.



Now when declarer draws the last trump, East can throw a spade and retain his club. If declarer tries to throw partner in with diamonds, he can cross to your hand in clubs, and this rather good 4♡ contract will be defeated.

The full hand:



ADVANCED

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

Those who have read *Crocs on Squeeze Play Volume One* will know what to expect with this one: another fantastical leap into the world of squeeze play, this time with a bit more kick.

Volume One introduced many new concepts and it is only natural to continue to explore them. In this second volume you will see the return of Imaginary and Winkle squeezes, butt heads with the Guard squeeze, and discover all-new types of squeezes, like the Rectification squeeze.

The journey looks to be adventurous, but above all, it will be fun.

STEPHEN KENNEDY (better known as 'Crocs') lives in Sussex, England. He has represented the UK many times at the junior (under-25) level.

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