

**Article by Rowen Bell, 10/11/12**

In October 1992, I arrived in Chicago as a new graduate student in the math department of the University of Chicago and was promptly taught how to play bridge by my fellow students. I recently decided to commemorate the 20th anniversary of my introduction to the game by making a trip to the ACBL-sanctioned bridge club at the U of C for one of their Wednesday-evening club games (which are student-oriented, but open to the general public).

The following hand from that club game was of interest:

|       |       |        |
|-------|-------|--------|
|       | AQTxx |        |
|       | AJx   |        |
|       | Ax    |        |
|       | A8x   |        |
| Jxx   |       | xx     |
| Qxx   |       | Tx     |
| Jxxxx |       | Kxx    |
| KT    |       | Q9xxxx |
|       | Kxx   |        |
|       | K98xx |        |
|       | QTx   |        |
|       | Jx    |        |

I declared the hand in a game-level contract, quickly claiming 12 tricks after learning the favorable positions in both major suits.

However, when I looked at the hand record, I discovered to my surprise that Deep Finesse asserted there was exactly one strain and position in which it was possible to take all 13 tricks on any lead; and, it happened to be the strain and position that I had declared.

In which strain and position can North-South make 13 tricks, and how?

***(Continued on next page)***

The answer is that North (but not South) can take 13 tricks in hearts (but not spades or notrump).

This hand is an example of a trump squeeze. It also happens to be an example of what bridge theorists have christened the Vondracek Phenomenon, where the weaker of two potential trump suits happens to be the better strain.

How might North arrive in hearts, you ask? Well, we happened to arrive there as a result of a strong club auction with several artificial bids. However, one can imagine some Norths would choose to open 2NT in standard methods, with South transferring to hearts then offering a choice of games, North choosing 4H over 3NT.

The lead doesn't really matter, but let's assume a low club is led, covered by the jack, king, and ace. North plays three rounds of hearts (successfully finessing West for the queen), then plays the ace of spades followed by a spade to dummy's king. The key to the hand – which I missed, at the table – is that declarer now needs to cash a fourth round of hearts, pitching the low diamond from the North hand. Only after that does declarer continue to run the spades.

With four tricks to go and North on lead, this produces the following end position:

|     |     |    |
|-----|-----|----|
|     | x   |    |
|     | --  |    |
|     | A   |    |
|     | 8x  |    |
| --  |     | -- |
| --  |     | -- |
| Jxx |     | Kx |
| T   |     | Q9 |
|     | --  |    |
|     | 9   |    |
|     | QTx |    |
|     | --  |    |

When North now cashes the last spade, East is in trouble. If East bares his king of diamonds, then North can cash the diamond ace next, which makes dummy's queen good. Alternatively, if East bares his queen of clubs, then North ruffs a club next, which makes his eight of clubs good. (The potential need to ruff a club in order to establish the extra trick is what makes this a trump squeeze, which is why this squeeze isn't available in notrump, or with spades as trump.) Either way, declarer can take the remainder of the tricks.

Two final notes for the interested reader to verify. First, there is no squeeze on East if declarer doesn't cash a fourth round of hearts before running the spades. (This is an example of a general principle of squeeze play, namely the need to "tighten the position".) Second, there is no squeeze on East if South is declarer in hearts and West leads a diamond.