

"The 'Backwash Squeeze' Endplay"

Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen¹

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Bruce: Today, we are honored to have with us Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, Quintuple Gold Emerald Life Master (20 Million+ ACBL MasterPoints), who will discuss "The 'Backwash Squeeze' Endplay". Well, Esther, thank you for talking to us today!

Esther: D**n it, Bruce! How many times do I have to tell you to **NEVER, ever** call me Esther! Always, **ALWAYS, ALWAYS** instead call me, Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen!

Bruce: Errr, well, Est... err, I mean Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, sorry about that. Well, at the start would you first remind us what a "Squeeze Endplay" is?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will certainly try to help you. A "Squeeze Endplay" is a bridge strategy by which a Declarer "strips" the Opponents of most of their cards and structures the holdings of the Opponents such that when the Declarer pulls the "trigger" of the "Squeeze Endplay" an Opponent is then forced to discard **1** of his "winners" or an essential "guard" card "protecting" a potential "winner" (e.g., a K,x or Q,x,x holding) such that the Declarer can then take an "extra" Trick. I have previously discussed the "Squeeze Endplay" in my "Esther Bridge Dialogue Lesson #67: **How as Declarer to Execute an Endplay 'Squeeze'**":
<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/squeeze.pdf>

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¹ As noted in an article in the Winter/Spring, 2024 article in The American Bridge Teachers' Association (ABTA) Journal, https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/ABTA_1_24.pdf, Esther Klinktoast-Houstonhousen in fact is a hypothetical, and not a real person! So this article was really, really written by Bruce Thompson.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, ummm... Next would you now give us a bit of the history of how the "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" was discovered and later popularized?

Esther: Well, Bruce, one form of the "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" was first developed in rubber bridge by the Australian bridge giant Tim Seres (1925 - 2007), and so this squeeze is sometimes called the "Sydney Squeeze" or the "Seres Squeeze". This endplay was later described by bridge theorist Géza Ottlik (1912 - 1990) in a 1974 article in the oldest bridge magazine in the world, The Bridge World, and in Hugh Kelsey and Ottlik's 1979 book, Adventures in Card Play.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what does the term "*backwash*" refer to?

Esther: Well, Bruce, a "*backwash*" refers to a dramatic event, such as a hurricane storm surge, which rapidly floods land, and then just as suddenly the inundating waters surge back out to the ocean. Similarly, in a "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" there is a dramatic event followed by an equally dramatic reversal.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are the main features of the "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**"?

Esther: Well, Bruce, although the "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" can be executed from the Dummy against the Dummy's LHO, let's assume that you as Declarer are executing the "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" against your own LHO. In this scenario (2) your LHO holds **1** or more Trump cards, and you cannot or should not "draw" all the Trump cards. Also, (2) you as Declarer hold "threat" cards in **2** "side" Suits and your LHO also holds "menace" cards in the same **2** "side" Suits but obviously sits "after" or "behind" you.

Bruce: Errr, well Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you please give us an example?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course. Here is an example modified from one of the "BridgeHands" website entries² involving a Declarer, SOUTH, playing a Spade contract and needing 5 of the remaining 6 Tricks to "make" his contract. EAST bid Clubs during the auction and so since N/S are "long" in Trump Spades WEST was likely initially "long" in both red Suits.

NORTH (21)		
S:		
H: 5 3		
D: 6		
C: K 8 5		
WEST (5)		EAST (5)
S: 8		S:
H: Q 6		H: 7
D: T 4		D: 5
C: 6		C: Q J T 9
SOUTH (9)		
S: Q		
H: A J		
D: K 8		
C: 7		

On Trick #8 Declarer SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy's Club King and both EAST and WEST "follow".

NORTH (21)		
S:		
H: 5 3		
D: 6		
C: 8 5		
WEST (5)		EAST (5)
S: 8		S:
H: Q 6		H: 7
D: T 4		D: 5
C:		C: Q J T
SOUTH (9)		
S: Q		
H: A J		
D: K 8		
C:		

On Trick #9 Declarer leads the NORTH Dummy's Club 5 and ruffs from his own Hand with his Trump Spade Queen. The Dummy's lead and SOUTH's "high" ruff on Trick #9 forces

² See: https://www.bridgewebs.com/B/Backwash_Squeeze.htm.

WEST to discard. If on Trick #9 WEST discards a "low" Heart both of Declarer SOUTH's 2 Hearts are now "good" and SOUTH will take 5 of the 6 last Tricks. If on Trick #9 WEST discards a "low" Diamond both of Declarer SOUTH's 2 Diamonds are now "good" and SOUTH will again take 5 of the 6 last Tricks. Of course, in this example a thoughtful WEST might see that he can escape this particular "Backwash Squeeze Endplay" if on Trick #9 WEST instead "underruffs" under SOUTH's Spade Queen by playing Trump Spade 8!

Bruce: Errr, well Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, would you please talk us through the execution of a "Backwash Squeeze Endplay" on a complete bridge Board example?

Esther: Well, Bruce, of course. On my "Esther Bridge Lessons" website I have previously recommended the "BBO Bridge Master" website:

<https://www.bridgebase.com/v3/anon/bridgemaster>

The "BBO Bridge Master" website allows you to declare your skill level, then shows a series of Hands and announces the final contract, each of which you then play as Declarer. At the end of play you can then request a solution in which the optimal "Line of Play" is discussed step by step. Here as an illustration I will use the *free* "BBO Bridge Master" Level-5 **Lesson C-12** which gives you the opportunity to see and *repeatedly practice* for *free* playing a given bridge Board. I have altered a few of the cards in these Hands from the Board.

BBO Bridge Master Level 5 Lesson C-12

Dealer: **SOUTH**

	NORTH (12)	
	S: A K J T 9	
	H: A 6 5 4 3 2	
	D: 4	
	C: 2	
WEST (8)		EAST (9)
S: 3 2		S: 5
H: 8		H: K Q J T 9
D: Q J T 9 8		D: K 7 6
C: K Q T 9 7		C: 8 6 5 3
	SOUTH (11)	
	S: Q 8 7 6 4	
	H: 7	
	D: A 5 3 2	
	C: A J 4	

Bidding

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1S	2NT*	4NT	PASS
5H**	PASS	7S	PASS

*WEST's bid is the "Unusual 2NT"³ convention and says, "Partner, I hold 5+ cards in both Majors with good 'Suit Quality'."

**SOUTH 5H bid says, "Partner, I hold 2 Aces."

WEST leads the Trump Spade 3 thus lessening SOUTH's ability to ruff in the NORTH Dummy.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, what are all the things that Declarer SOUTH knows based on the auction and the NORTH Dummy once the Dummy is exposed?

Esther: Well, Bruce, I will try to help you. SOUTH knows that WEST holds 5+ cards in both Minors. N/S together initially held 5 + 5 = 10 Trump Spades. The E/W 3 Trump Spades are likely to "split" 2-1 rather than 3-0. Because (1) WEST is "long" in both Minors and (2) N/S are both "long" in Spades therefore EAST likely holds 5 Hearts.

Bruce: Errr, well... Err, I mean... Ms. Klinktoast-Houstonhousen, how should Declarer SOUTH approach playing this Board?

Esther: Well, Bruce, Declarer SOUTH should "win" Trick #1 with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Spade 9. SOUTH's general plan is to do a lot of cross-ruffing and ultimately "promote" the NORTH Dummy's Heart 6 into a "winner".

On Trick #2 SOUTH "cashes" the NORTH Dummy's Heart Ace. On Trick #3 SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy's Heart 2, EAST "follows" with the Heart Ten, SOUTH ruffs "low", and WEST as expected discards the Diamond Queen. SOUTH now expected that WEST began holding the Club K,Q and initially held a 2-1-5-5 distribution. SOUTH repeatedly cross-ruffs. On Trick #10 SOUTH leads a "low" Club from his own Hand while retaining the Club Jack and ruffs with the NORTH Dummy's Spade King.

After 10 Tricks N/S have "won" 10 Tricks and E/W have "won" 0 Tricks. The 3 cards now held in the 4 Hands are:

NORTH (12)

³ Within the "Esther Bridge Convention Lessons #3: Exploring Slam by Asking for Aces or 'Key Cards': Gerber, Blackwood, Blackwood Key Card, Roman Key Card (RKC), and 'Minorwood' Key Card": https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/RKC_1430.pdf

S: A
H: 6 5
D:
C:

WEST (8)
S: 2
H:
D: J
C: K

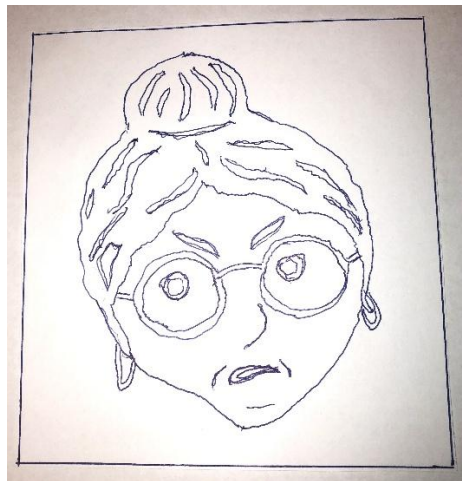
EAST (9)
S:
H: K
D:
C: 8 6

SOUTH (11)
S: Q
H:
D: 5
C: J

On Trick #11 SOUTH leads the NORTH Dummy's Heart 5 and ruffs with his Trump Spade Queen. This is the Trick on which WEST must inescapably surrender 1 of his 3 remaining "threat" cards.

1. If on Trick #11 WEST underruffs with his Trump Spade 2 the NORTH Dummy's Trump Spade Ace and Heart 5 "winners" can both be "cashed".
2. If on Trick #11 WEST discards his Diamond Jack then on Trick #12 SOUTH can "cash" his own "promoted" Diamond 5 and on Trick #13 lead his own Club Jack for a ruff with the NORTH Dummy's Trump Spade Ace.
3. If on Trick #11 WEST discards his Club King then on Trick #12 SOUTH can "cash" his "promoted" Club Jack "winner" and on Trick #13 lead his own Diamond 5 for a ruff using the NORTH Dummy Trump Spade Ace.

In any case by using a "**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**" Declarer SOUTH will exactly make his 7S contract! Notice that in our 2nd example Declarer's LHO has no escape from SOUTH's endplay on this Board.



Esther says:

“Why not proceed *immediately* to ‘**Bridge Base Online Bridge Master**’ Level-5 Lesson #C-12 to practice executing a “**Backwash Squeeze Endplay**” play? Search ‘BBO’, then Click ‘Bridge Master’, then Click ‘Play’, then Click ‘Level 5’, then Click ‘C-12’. You can play this Board *repeatedly* in Bridge Master for *free!*”

Esther also says:

“I have now prepared a ‘Map’ of all the ‘**Esther Bridge ‘Pop’ Quizzes**’ that use ‘BBO Bridge Master’ lessons to teach the ‘*Squeeze Play*’, the ‘*Elimination Endplay*’, the ‘*Loser-on-Loser Play*’, the ‘*Unblocking Play*’, and the ‘*Dummy Reversal Play*’”:

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/MAP.pdf>