

## The Hearts Were Relentless

At a weekly rubber bridge game where everyone likes to be heard, our opponents are vulnerable and I deal myself

S A K J 10 9 x x  
H -  
D Q x x  
C 9 x x

It has been a slow night for my partner and me, and a certain level of intoxication has been reached around the table, so I reject any thoughts of One Spade and simply blurt out THREE SPADES. West and my partner pass quickly and for a moment I am regretting not opening at game level. However, East has seen some of my past pre-empts and chimes in with FOUR DIAMONDS. Of course no one could fault me for passing now but my diamond queen looks to be well placed and there's always the 100 honors, so, fully aware of the ridicule I'm about to endure, I press on with FOUR SPADES. As expected, partner looks at me like I'm completely crazy, and the opponents are so amused by the bidding that they forget to double. West leads the King of Diamonds and I'm not feeling too optimistic after partner tables

S x x  
H A 9 x x x  
D x x x  
C 10 x x

S A K J 10 9 x x  
H -  
D Q x x  
C 9 x x

Hmmm. Fourteen points between the two hands, four of which are unreachable. Looks like we could lose two diamonds, a diamond ruff, three clubs and the trump queen for down four, although down three is more likely since the trump queen will probably fall if they get a diamond ruff. Well, with the 100 honors that's a probable loss of only 50 points so my somewhat non-standard bidding won't be too costly. Anyway, a second diamond is led to East's Ace and on the third diamond, my Queen holds the trick as West surprisingly follows suit. All right! If I find the spade Queen we'll break even on this mess.

There is nothing to do but cash the Ace and King of trumps, and they split as East drops the Queen on the second round. I'm safe for down two now. I think I'll run some trumps and see if dummy's hearts will be perceived to be a threat. Partner tries not to giggle while giving me that familiar look which says "you're a pseudo-squeezing slimeball." Things look promising as I cash four trumps, West discarding a club and three hearts, and East a heart and three clubs, including the Jack and Queen. My last four cards are a trump and three clubs, while dummy is down to the club ten and three hearts.

Now only three clubs are still out so I may have a chance. It's time to lose my third trick so I lead a club towards dummy's ten. West jumps up with the king and East, letting out a most gratifying groan, tops it with the Ace. Unbelievable as it seems, ten tricks are beginning to appear on the horizon! East's clubs are gone and he finally decides to lead the thirteenth diamond, which I ruff, and on which West throws his last club. I finish by cashing my two "long" clubs to make the contract as each of the opponents, as well as dummy, discard a guarded heart honor. My partner is rolling on the floor with laughter while noting just how "pseudo" the squeeze really was. Although the board took not a single trick, the Hearts looked like a threat from start to finish, relentlessly urging East and West to throw those clubs.

	S x x	
	H A 9 x x x	
	D x x x	
	C 10 x x	
S x x		S Q x
H Q x x x x		H K J x
D K x x		D A J x x
C K x x		C A Q J x
	S A K J 10 9 x x	
	H -	
	D Q x x	
	C 9 x x	

The position after nine tricks was

	S -	
	H A 9 x	
	D -	
	C 10	
S -		S -
H Q x		H K J
D -		D x
C K x		C A
	S x	
	H -	
	D -	
	C 9 x x	

West could have saved the day by not going up with the club King when I led to the 10, but he would have looked bad if I'd held the Ace of clubs. Once he played the King, it was all over.

### Post-mortem

The bidding and play on this hand are best forgotten. The only lesson is the old one: never, never, never, never give up.