Suicide Squeeze Play Part II

"Coach Dunns Quick Pitches" — By Coach Jack Dunn

Suicide Squeeze Play

Part II: Variations

The Suicide Squeeze attempts to score a run by breaking the runner from third base and having the batter bunt the ball into fair territory. The batter must bunt the ball regardless of its location in or out of the strike zone.

The Suicide Squeeze is a one-out play and is usually run in the late innings of a close game. It is a “Do or Die” play!

The most common Suicide Squeeze play is that mentioned above; however, there are several variations that can be employed by the “gutsy” coach.

Squeeze Play

With runners on second and third bases, if the coach feels the Suicide Squeeze is an appropriate play, an attempt to score both runners, with one out, isn’t that big a gamble.

If the batter pops the ball up in his attempt to bunt, the runner breaking from third base will be doubled up, and the runner advancing from second base will be of no consequence, as the inning will be over.

This is presupposing the play is run with one out. If the play is run as a no-out play, a triple-play opportunity would present itself.

1. If the batter fails to bunt the ball, the runner breaking from third base will most likely be out at home plate.

2. The offense will now have a runner on third base with two outs and an opportunity to score one run.

Responsibilities

Coach:

1. Gives the verbal sign
2. Gives the physical sign
3. Waits for acknowledgement from all players!
4. No Acknowledgement, No Play!

Runner on Third Base:

1. Acknowledges that he has the sign by giving a reply - a brush down the pants, tugging on the ear or nose, touching the bill of the cap, etc.
2. Breaks for home plate when pitcher’s striding foot (front foot) hits the ground - no sooner, so as not to tip off the play.
3. Windup - If the pitcher uses a full windup, the runner on third base should walk quickly toward home plate to cover as much distance as possible - and break full speed when the pitcher’s striding foot hits the ground - no sooner.
4. Stretch - If the pitcher throws from the stretch position, the runner at third base must be more conservative and cautious. This is similar to the lead used when leading off first base.
   a. Lead off third base as far as the third-baseman plays from the base.
   b. If the third-baseman plays on the base, use a measured lead-off ... step, crossover and adjust - approximately ten feet.
   c. Be aware of a pick-off attempt by the pitcher, at third base.
   d. If the pitcher swings the “free foot” past the “back edge” of the pitcher’s rubber, it is a balk if he attempts a pick-off at third base.
   e. Break hard for home plate when the pitcher’s striding foot (front foot) hits the ground.

Runner on Second Base:

1. The runner on second base breaks for third base as if attempting to steal the base. He rounds the base
and, if the ball is bunted into fair territory, continues on to home plate as the fielder makes his throw to first base.

2. The play works best if the ball is bunted to the third-baseman. The runner from second base rounds third base and comes down the line (while staying behind), almost as far as the third-baseman must go to field the ball, and then attempts to score on the third-base-man’s throw to first base.

3. The third-base coach must be aware of the fact that an alert shortstop will cover third base and instruct the third-baseman to bluff a throw to first base and trap the runner off third base.

4. Acknowledges that he has the sign by giving a reply - a brush down the pants, tugging on the ear or nose, touching the bill of the cap, etc.

5. When to break for third base
   There are two methods of execution:
   a. As the pitcher starts his move to home plate, the runner on second base breaks for third base.
   b. As the pitcher starts his move to home plate, the runner at second base takes a series of rapid sideways shuffle steps. He breaks, full speed, for third base when the pitcher’s striding foot hits the ground.
   c. Observations:
      1. The early break may tip-off the defense and result in a pitch-out. If the infield is playing in, the chances of this happening are less likely.
      2. Even though a ball bunted to third base is ideal, the batter must bunt the ball into fair territory. A bunt to third base would be a bonus.

Batter:

1. Acknowledges the sign with the coach and runner at third base (example: runs hand up the bat).
2. KEYS ON THE PITCHER’S FRONTFOOT
   The batter must not turn too early, thereby “tipping-off the play.” The batter turns to bunt as the pitcher’s front foot hits the ground. At this point, the pitcher cannot change the direction of his pitch.
3. MUST BUNT THE BALL, REGARDLESS of its location!
4. Bunt the ball into fair territory! Do not attempt to place the ball into a particular area.
5. Catch the Ball on the Bat - don’t just jab at it.

Conclusion

The Double Suicide Squeeze is no more risky than the Single Suicide Squeeze.

In either case, a pop fly results in a double play, and the runner on second base is of no consequence. If run as a no-out play, a pop fly would result in a triple play.