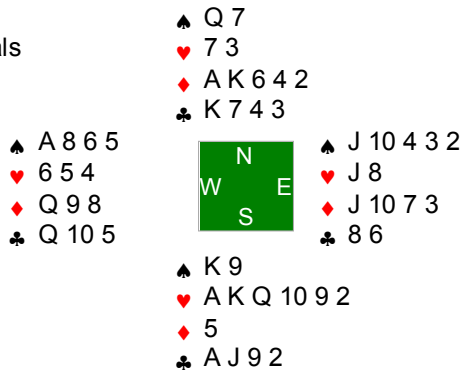
Morton's Fork Coup

By Brian Gunnell

We continue our look at some of bridge's exotic coups, and today it is the Morton's Fork, a play which offers an opponent a choice of evils. Here, the Fork allows declarer to bring home the six heart contract.

Board 1
North Deals
None Vul



West leads a trump. As declarer, what is your plan? Of course, if the club finesse works then twelve tricks will be easy. Alternatively, it would be just grand if dummy's long diamond could be set up with a couple of ruffs, then the club finesse would not be necessary. Alas, there are not enough dummy entries for that. Or maybe there are! Yes, here is your chance to skewer the defense on a Morton's Fork, offering two losing options.

After drawing trumps, you cross to the ♦A and ruff a diamond. Now you lead the ♠K and West will be impaled on one of these prongs:

First Prong: If West wins the ♠K with his ace he manages to score his spade, but not without cost. Now dummy has an extra entry (in spades) and you have the timing to ruff out the diamonds. You no longer need the club finesse, you have your twelve tricks via a spade, six hearts, three diamonds and two clubs.

Second Prong: If West ducks the ♠K then you cross to the ♣K, cash dummy's ♦K (pitching your remaining spade), give up a club, and romp home with twelve tricks. In this variation the defense never scores a spade trick.

This hand required perfect timing! It was necessary to cash just one high diamond and then ruff a diamond before playing on spades. If you had neglected to do that then you had no chance of getting the long diamond established. And it would have been fatal to cash *both* diamonds before playing on spades. That would have rendered the fork's second prong inoperable.

A very pretty deal!