

Better Bridge

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John Morton, English prelate and statesman, lives in bridge lore though he antedated the game by some four and a half centuries. A supporter of the Lancastrian party during the War of the Roses, Morton became Henry VII's principal counselor when that first Tudor monarch ascended the throne. Within a period of seven years, Morton was made archbishop of Canterbury, lord chancellor and finally cardinal.

Morton habitually extracted money from wealthy London merchants for King Henry's coffers. His argument was forceful — if the merchants lived ostentatiously they obviously possessed sufficient income to spare some for the king. If, on the other hand, the merchants lived frugally, they must have substantial savings and could therefore afford to contribute to the treasury. Either way the victims were impaled on "Morton's Fork."

A version of this coup — from which there is no escape — was presented here several weeks ago. Here is another, with South playing at six hearts.

West leads the king of diamonds and declarer considers two losers, a club and a spade. A discard at the first trick cannot benefit South so he plays low from dummy

and ruffs in hand. The outstanding trump is drawn and, judging West to hold the ace of clubs for his opening bid, declarer leads a low club toward dummy.

West must duck. Were he to win the ace, South would cash the queen of clubs on gaining the lead and subsequently discard his two low spades, one on the king of clubs and the other on the diamond ace. Only one club would be lost.

When West ducks the first club lead, declarer wins dummy's king and then discards his queen of clubs on the ace of diamonds. Again the slam is claimed, South giving up a spade trick instead.

West's opening bid is declarer's key to success. Had the opening bid come from East, declarer would work the same coup against that defender. The initial low club lead would be made from dummy and East's threat neutralized in the same fashion.

On hands such as this the defense is at the mercy of a competent declarer. Hindsight suggests that neither defender indicates who holds the ace of clubs. Declarer might then go wrong.

However, it is the rare bridge player indeed who, when given the choice of passing or bidding, chooses the former. At least the bridge player's fate is in his mouth. Poor Cardinal Morton's oppressed were doomed by their life-styles.

				North			
		S	A	8	4		
		H	K	Q	9 7 5		
		D	A	10			
		C	K	9 6			
				West	East		
S	Q	9	5	S	J	10	3
H	10			H	—		
D	K	Q	9 8 4	D	J	7 6 5 3 2	
C	A	J	10 3	C	7 5 4 2		
				South			
		S	K 7 6 2				
		H	A J 8 6 4 3 2				
		D	—				
		C	Q 8				

West was the dealer. East-West vulnerable.

West	North	East	South
1 D	Double	5 D	6 H
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West led the king of diamonds.

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