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EDUCATION AND ENTERTAINMENT FOR BRIDGE PLAYERS

1<sup>st</sup> July, 2009

## DECLARE & DEFEND

Bridge is replete with “coups”, many with exotic or whimsical names. There’s the Trump Coup, Merrimac Coup, Scissors Coup, Coup en Passant, and many more. Let’s look at a few of them, starting with the **Crocodile Coup**.

Here you are defending 6♦ against the great Bob Hamman in the 2006 World Championships.

♠ KQT9 ♥ 8732 ♦ K6 ♣ 843	North  Dummy Hamman  South
	♠ J63 ♥ J5 ♦ 932 ♣ KT976

You lead the ♠3, Hamman calls for the King, covered with Partner’s Ace and ruffed by Hamman. Next is a Diamond to the King, Diamond back to the Jack, and the ♦A, on which Partner plays the Queen. Hamman now cashes ♥AKQ, Partner following with Four, Six, Ten.

Before Hamman makes his next play you already have the hand counted out. Partner’s low heart on the first round was no doubt a count signal, so you know that he started with three of them. So, Partner’s original distribution can be nothing other than 6=3=3=1.

Now, Hamman casually leads a low Club from his hand. Thanks to your diligent counting of the distribution, you see the danger right away! Partner has nothing left but Spades and a singleton Club. If that Club is the Jack or the Queen then playing the Nine or Ten on the first round of Clubs would be disastrous! Partner will be forced to win the trick and lead into Dummy’s ♠QT9. This is the full hand:

	♠ A87542 ♥ T64 ♦ QT7 ♣ J	
♠ KQT9 ♥ 8732 ♦ K6 ♣ 843	North  Dummy Hamman  South	♠ AKQ9 ♥ AJ854 ♣ AQ52
	♠ J63 ♥ J5 ♦ 932 ♣ KT976	

Nicely done! Your play of the ♣K swallows up Partner’s Jack, you return the ♣T and will eventually score another Club trick for down one. When this hand was played in real life, South failed to find the Crocodile Coup and 6♦ squeaked home.

Next, a **Trump Coup**.

	♠ T9 ♥ AQJ ♦ A543 ♣ AQ52	
♠ 2 ♥ T83 ♦ JT96 ♣ JT984	Dummy  West East  Declarer	♠ K765 ♥ 9654 ♦ Q72 ♣ K7
	♠ AQJ843 ♥ K72 ♦ K8 ♣ 63	

Against 6♠, West leads the ♣J and the Queen loses to the King. Now the contract depends on the trump finesse. East returns a Club which is won in Dummy. The ♠T is successfully finessed, then the Nine, but West shows out on the second round. Rats! East still has ♠Kx but there is no trump left in Dummy for another finesse. No matter, the Trump Coup will work just as well, but first Declarer must ruff twice in her hand in order to get her trumps to the same length as East. So, after the second trump finesse the play goes: ♦K, ♦A, Diamond ruff, over to Dummy with a Heart, Diamond ruff, back with a Heart. Another Heart is cashed, but at Trick 12 East is forced to ruff in front of Declarer. Great stuff! Be sure to realize that Declarer had to get those two ruffs in her hand, if she doesn’t shorten her trumps then there is no Trump Coup.

For the **Morton's Fork Coup** we need look no further than the Wednesday Game Archives (7<sup>th</sup> June, 2006) to unearth this little gem:

	♠ Q7 ♥ 73 ♦ AK642 ♣ K743	
♠ A865 ♥ 654 ♦ Q98 ♣ QT5	Dummy West          East Declarer	♠ JT432 ♥ J8 ♦ JT73 ♣ 86
	♠ K9 ♥ AKQT92 ♦ 5 ♣ AJ92	

Declarer is in 6♥ and West leads a trump. After trumps are drawn in three rounds, what's your plan? Of course, if the Club finesse works, 12 tricks are easy. It would be just grand if Dummy's Diamonds could be set up, then the Club finesse is not needed. But there are not enough entries for that. Or are there? Yes, here's the chance for a Morton's Fork, that might well be renamed the "damned if you do, and damned if you don't" coup.

After drawing trumps, Declarer crosses to the ♦A and ruffs a Diamond. Now she leads the ♠K and West is skewered on the fork:

- If he ducks the trick then Declarer crosses to the ♣K, cashes Dummy's ♦K (pitching her remaining Spade), gives up a Club, and romps home with 12 tricks.
- If he wins the trick with his Ace he manages to score a Spade, but not without cost. Now Dummy has an extra entry (in Spades) and Declarer has the timing to ruff out the Diamonds. Now Declarer no longer needs the Club finesse, he has his 12 tricks via a Spade, 6 Hearts, 3 Diamonds and 2 Clubs.

This hand required perfect timing! It was necessary to cash just one high Diamond and then ruff a Diamond before playing on Spades. If Declarer had neglected to do that then she had no chance of getting the long Diamond established. And it would have been fatal for Declarer if she had cashed both Diamonds before playing on Spades, that would have rendered the fork's second prong inoperable. A very pretty hand!

Next, we have the **Bath Coup**. Here's a typical situation:

	Dummy	
	9643	
West		East
KQT2		75
	Declarer	
	AJ8	

West leads the King, Declarer ducks. Now what? If West continues he gives Declarer a second trick in the suit ... but if he shifts and it turns out that East has the Jack then the defense will have lost a tempo and may not score their second trick in the suit. The rule for East here, when holding Jxx, is to *encourage* with his higher spot card, hopefully that agreement will save Partner from going wrong.

Finally, what has been termed the **Anti-Bath Coup**:

	♠ KJT ♥ 865 ♦ 72 ♣ AQT96	
♠ 962 ♥ KQT94 ♦ JT8 ♣ 42	Dummy West          East Declarer	♠ 8743 ♥ 73 ♦ KQ953 ♣ K3
	♠ AQ5 ♥ AJ2 ♦ A64 ♣ J875	

West leads the ♥K and Declarer (Ira Chorush of Texas) could see that a Diamond shift might be fatal. So he played the Jack (!) on the first trick. Who could blame West for assuming that Declarer started with ♥AJ? So, he continued the suit, won by Declarer. The Club finesse was lost, but East was out of Hearts and Declarer had 9 tricks. Of course, a Diamond shift at Trick 2 beats the contract, but Declarer's clever false card diverted West from the winning shift.

Yes, West goofed! After the first trick (King, Five, Three, Jack), he should have smelled a rat. Where was the Two? East would not play the Three from 732, and an alert West, one who trusted his Partner to signal correctly, could have figured out that Declarer had false-carded. But, in the heat of battle, that maybe not so obvious!