

How to Play IMPS

Excerpts from what Mr PITBULLS wrote some time back :-:-:

There is a gambling aspect of bridge and those who ignore that element of the game will not do well in IMPS .

If I were to critique all the IMP matches that I have played over the decades I would give **the main reason for teams losing is that they can not or will not change away from the Match Point mentality.** Match points is where they learned their game and their “style” is match point oriented. What do I mean by that?

The Holy Grail in match points is the plus. Get a plus at all costs. Do not bid iffy games, close slams or compete too much as to get a minus. There is no such thing as “taking out insurance” for a small minus to avoid a big disaster. **Its only 1 board in match points but it may be 17 IMPS in IMP scoring** and take a lot of energy to get it back.

I notice that match point players playing IMPS over use game tries and try to be too precise. They do not take calculated risks in slam or game bidding .Again the take a plus at all costs mentality. They will not “fight” as much as IMP players in the psychological aspect of the game. **Super light lead directing bids in 3rd seat seem to be non existent. Tactical psyches** to try and keep opponents out of vul games when they are not vulnerable are not in their repertoire. Mind games to keep the opponents guessing is not something you see from Match Point Players very often. **Sometimes you make bids to pressure opponents into making wrong decisions.** These bids do not come without risk but they are part of the psychological warfare of IMPS.

Match points players take unnecessary risks though in IMP games. As a partial is just as important as a grand slam in match points, they make “match point “ overcalls . These can back fire quite often and they go for a horrible set. Again thus can be 14 IMPS and take many boards to win back.

An IMPS player makes sound overcalls and may balance later if the water is fine. In IMPS, balancing is far less risky then an overcall on Jxxxx of clubs and 13 HCP . Match point doubles of partials should be avoided in IMPS. If you “know” they are going down, a pass is quite often good as partner might pull the double or weird distribution might allow them to make it . It is not a good poker style risk.

The play of the cards, opening leads , and defense show me a Match Point player from an IMPS player. Match point players are afraid of aggressive opening leads even if the auction calls for it. They will choose a passive lead because deep in their subconscious they remember a –650 being a cold zero because of the overtrick. **An IMPS player makes much more aggressive leads as overtricks virtually mean nothing.**

In defense too , Match point players are scared of making a switch as it may give up an overtrick. They do not go all out to beat a hand but tend to be overly passive. They do not have the beat the game mentality instead the “I will not give anything away mentality”. **Counting distribution, tricks and HCP’s guide the good IMPS player in defense and play.**

In the play of the cards, safety plays are the last thing Match Point players think of. **If the hand looks cold then an IMPS player starts thinking of bad breaks and safety plays to ensure the contract.** The match point player is probably thinking of an overtrick. **Playing IMPS you can go on “autopilot” and play instinctively.** Your instincts have been formed in the Match Point game.

If your Bridge background is rubber bridge then O.K, but if it is Match Points you are well on your way to losing

Post script by Editor of Bridge India :- The following points are highlighted above:-

- (1) Change from Match Point mentality.
- (2) Change from “A plus at all costs attitude” Close slams must be bid in IMP since Its only 1 board in match points but it may be 17 IMPS in IMP scoring and take a lot of energy to get it back.
- (3) In IMP, take calculated risk in bidding games and slams
- (4) Make Super light lead directing bids in 3rd seat
- (5) Tactical psyches - make bids to pressure opponents into making wrong decisions
- (6) player makes sound overcalls and may balance later if the water is fine
- (7) Match point doubles of partials should be avoided in IMPS
- (8) An IMPS player makes much more aggressive leads as overtricks virtually mean nothing
- (9) Counting distribution, tricks and HCP’s guide the good IMPS player in defense and play
- (10) If the hand looks cold then an IMP player starts thinking of bad breaks and safety plays to ensure the contract