

Scoring the game, part 1

I/N Columnist, Vince Wilmot, vwilmot@comcast.net

There are several common forms of scoring for the game of bridge. The two most common in the tournament bridge world are match points and IMPS. In this series of articles, I will describe how these scoring systems work. We will then explore strategies that might differ between the two scoring methods. Match points is the usual scoring method for pair games. At match points, you earn one match point per board for each pair that you do better than, and $\frac{1}{2}$ match point for each pair you tie. If you are sitting North/South, you are compared to all of the other North/South pairs. Let's look at a simple example. In my example, the board will be played 4 times. The best score you can get on the board is 3 match points, if you beat all three of the other pairs, and the worst score is 0 match points if they all do better than you.

N/S Pair Number	Contract and Result	N/S Score	Match points
1	2 ^a North	made 5 +200	2
2	2 ^a North	made 4 +170	1
3	4 ^a North	made 4 +420	3
4	4 ^a North	down 1 -50	0

As you can see, all four pairs had different results. Pair 3 got 1 match point for beating each of the other three pairs, for a total of 3 match point, also referred to as a top on the board. Pair 1 received one match point, for beating pair 2, 0 match points for not beating pair 3, and 1 match point for beating pair 4. Poor pair 4 received zero match points, also referred to as a bottom, because their score was worse than any of the other pairs.

Let's look at a more complicated example, this time with 7 pairs. This time, top should be 6 match points.

N/S Pair Number	Contract and Result	N/S Score	Match points
1	1NT North made 1	+90	2.5
2	1NT North made 1	+90	2.5
3	2 ^a East down 1	+100	4
4	3NT North down 2	-100	0
5	1NT South made 2	+120	5
6	Passed out	0	1
7	3 ^a East down 2	+200	6

This time, pair 7 got the top score by beating all of the other north south pairs. One matchpoint for each of 6 pairs is the top score of 6 match point. Pair 4 got the bottom, as they were the only pair to get a negative score. Let's look at pairs 1 and 2. They both attained the same table result of +90. Pair 1 gets 1 match point for beating pair 4, 1 match point for beating pair 6, and $\frac{1}{2}$ match point for tying pair two. That gives them 2.5 for the board. At match points, you strive to get the largest plus score or smallest minus score you can.

Let's look at one more example with 7 pairs.

N/S Pair Number	Contract and Result	N/S Score	Match points
1	3NT East made 5	-660	2.5
2	4 ^{XX} South down 6	-1400	0
3	3NT East made 5	-660	2.5
4	4 ^a West made 5	-650	5
5	3NT East made 5	-660	2.5
6	6NT West down 1	+100	6
7	3NT West made 5	-660	2.5

Pair 6 was fortunate because their opponent bid too much and went down. They received the full six match points for defeating all of the other pairs. Pair 4 was also fortunate because their opponent played in a lower scoring contract and only made 650. As you can see, even the smallest number of point difference can result in a large match point difference. They earned a near top for beating all N/S pairs except pair 6. Pair 1 received 2.5 match points. How did I arrive at this figure? They receive 1 match point for beating pair 2, and $\frac{1}{2}$ match point each for tying pairs 3, 5, and 7. Finally, Pair 2, suffered a terrible defeat going down 6 tricks doubled and received 0 match points for their efforts.

Next time, we will explore how IMPS are scored.