

IMPs vs MatchPoints

IMPs is a game of seizing opportunities. If both teams squander opportunities, a lucky board at the end decides the winner.

Why do these opportunities arise and why are they different for the two teams? After all, we play the same hand at both tables, but the results may be different. Maybe only one of the two dealers open the bidding with a preempt, maybe the teams play the same contract, but from different sides of the table.

Many pairs have loaded convention cards, but no idea which bids are forcing or what certain bids mean. Competitive bidding creates the most and the largest swings. Everyone bids a lot in modern IMPs.

IMP history is filled with players trying to get a bad result back and end up producing more bad results.

Any attempt to duplicate a decision that your opponents faced is a terrible mistake: Their auction could have gone very differently. You can cut the odds of a major swing by bidding ever close vulnerable games and slams — more on that later.

Systems matter!

You have nine points and partner opens 1NT. Standard 1NT bidders have 15-17 points and will probably end up in 3NT. Precision 1NT bidders have 13-15 points and probably play 1NT.

Every systems book guarantees instant success with almost no labor if you use their systems, but the evidence points the other way.

Interesting Tactical Hand:

S: 98756
H: 86
D: AKQx
C: 78

Compare to:

S: Axxxx
H: xx
D: AJx
C: xxx

The auction has gone: P - P - ? OR P - 1C - ?

Here is an example where you might invest a few IMPs to prevent a vulnerable swing. In both cases bid 1D (where your high cards are — and thus want a diamond lead!)

Red IMPs:

Close games and slams are a better proposition — when you are **vulnerable**. You stand to gain 10 IMPs (620 as opposed to 170) and lose 6 IMPs (-100 as opposed to +140) if you go down. So if the vulnerable odds are 10 to 6, you should **bid any vulnerable game with reasonable prospects**. For example, you hold:

S: A954
H: KJ3
D: QJ4
C: KQ7

You open 1NT and partner bids 2NT (invitational 8-9 pts). What do you do?
Answer: Pass if you are non-vulnerable. Bid 3NT if you are vulnerable.
Remember: **Defense is Hard!**

You hold:

S: KJ1065
H: A107
D: 64
C: KQ3

You open 1S and partner limit raises to 3S. What do you do?
Answer: Bid 4 spades if you're vulnerable, and pass if non-vulnerable.

Slams:

IMP odds change dramatically. No longer is vulnerability a factor — Both are even odds.

Vulnerable: 13 to 13

1430 points as opposed to 680 points. (13 IMPs)
650 points as opposed to -100 points. (13 IMPs)

Nonvulnerable: 11 to 11

980 as opposed to +430. (11 IMPs)

480 as opposed to +50 (11 IMPs)

Finally, bid grand slams **only** if you can count 13 sure tricks even if a key suit does not break. If you bid a grand that goes down, and the opponents stopped at game, you just gave up 26 IMPs.

Tactical Bidding:

Tactical bidding is done with highly distributional hands. You may think that correct assessment of these hands is largely a matter of guess work — Not True!

Try to force the opponents into making a crucial decision at the five or six level. If you bid high very quickly, the opposition often will be basing their decision on inadequate information. When in doubt, bid one more! From IMP mathematics, this is a must!

Small Swings and Part Scores:

Unlike match points, your primary concern is a **plus score**. You do not worry if you play No-trump, the majors or a minor suit. You may have to risk an extra under trick to make your contract.

Example:

You are in a vulnerable 1NT contract, and have 5 tricks. The opponents spades have been set up. You have AQx of Clubs opposite xxx (three small clubs). If the finesse loses, you go down for -200, and if the finesse works you make your contract.

Competitive Bidding:

Example:

	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
	1H	P	2H	X
	P	3D	P	P
	?			

You Hold: A104 KQ954 A94 J7

At match points, bid three hearts. At IMPs, pass.
Whether you are +140 or +100 makes little difference. You don't want to be -100 at both tables for -5 IMPs.

As a general rule, in part-score battles "fight the enemy up to the 3-level, and play for a plus score."

Sacrificing:

Sacrifices against enemy games are a far better proposition playing match points than at IMP scoring. At match points you may earn an excellent result by losing 500 points instead of 620 points. Playing in Swiss Teams, these savings only amount to 3 IMPs, but if there is any chance you may beat the enemy game — Defend!

In almost all penalty doubling situations at IMPs, the odds favor the coward because:

- 1) the opponents may have hidden distribution;
- 2) you might locate important cards for declarer.

Lead directing doubles are a far BETTER proposition playing IMPs — If you know your conventions.

What about this auction?

	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
	1D	1H	1S	1NT
	P	3NT	X	P
	P	P		

What suit does South want North to lead?

Preempts at IMPs:

A preempt has a primary purpose of cutting down the opponents bidding space. Recommendation:

- 1) Your long suit should not contain more than two losers opposite a singleton in partner's hand.

- 2) Your hand should not contain a four card side suit.
- 3) Your hand contains no void.
- 4) Your hand should not contain more than one A or K outside the trump suit.

Third hand Pre-empts: You hold:

J953 — KQT8642 Qx

Anything goes, but your suit should be reasonable.

Your partnership has pre-empted 4H, and the opponents bid 4S. You bid 5H. Why? Even if 4S makes, 5H may also make - there are singletons and voids all over the place.

Tips:

Do not overcall unless you want to buy the contract or desire a particular lead. You Hold:

K9543 AJT Q84 Q2

Overcalling merely locates the high cards.

But:

1H P 2H P
P ?

Partner has values so now bid 2S.

Interesting hand I played at Larry's team game:

Both vulnerable you hold:

x QT98xxx AQTxx x

You are the dealer. What's your call?

By the Rule of 20, bid 1H.

The auction proceeded:

1H 2C 2S 4C
?

Now what?

Bid 4D. Partner bids 4H which buys the contract. The layout:

		x	
		QT98xxx	
		AQTxx	
		x	
Axx			QJT
Jx			A
Jxx			xxx
KJxxx			AQxxxx
		Kxxxxx	
		Axx	
		Kx	
		xx	

4H made easily and our teammates were +130 in 4C - a 14 IMP pickup.

The discussion afterwards used two of duplicate's worst words in making bidding competitive decisions.

*** _____ and _____ ***

Remember: Be aggressive and bid one more!

Bridge is a game played by humans and humans are not infallible.

***** You are simply trying to convince the opponents that your hand has greater potential than it really does. *****