

Introduction to Matchpoint Scoring

Most sessions at a club are scored based on *matchpoints*. Many newer players find matchpoint scoring a bit of a mystery, but it is really quite straight forward. This document provides an introduction to how matchpoint scoring works.

Scores

When a board is played each pair gets a score based on the contract, the number of tricks made and the vulnerability. For example 4S vulnerable making 10 tricks scores 620 points for the declaring side and -620 for the defending side. The two scores always sum to zero. The scores for all possible results can be found on the back of the table number cards used at the club, and on the back of the bidding box cards. The Bridgemates show the points scored when the board results are entered.

Matchpointing

When a board is played multiple times in a duplicate session the scores are converted into matchpoints. All of the NS scores are ordered from highest to lowest and each pair is awarded 2 matchpoints for each pair they beat and 1 matchpoint for each pair they equal. The same happens for the EW pairs. This is the heart of how matchpoints work.

The number of times a board has been played determines the number of matchpoints available on the board. For example if a board has been played 8 times, 14 matchpoints are available as a single highest score would get 2 points for each of 7 scores beaten.

It is important to appreciate that your score on a board is being compared with the scores of other players in your direction, not against the pair you played the board with. In isolation the absolute score on a board is meaningless, it only has meaning when compared with the rest of the field. For example, a score of -130 points could be a top, a bottom or somewhere in between, it all depends on what others made on that board.

Percentages

Most of the time matchpoint results are displayed as percentages of the matchpoints available. If a single pair have the highest score for a board they will get all of the available matchpoints and therefore 100%.

Things change

It is important to understand that while the point scores on a board do not change (eg 4S vulnerable making 10 = 620 points), the matchpoint score may change every time the board is played.

Each time a board is played the matchpoints are recalculated to take the new result into consideration. When a board has only been played a small number of times the matchpoint scores are not meaningful. For example if a board has only been played twice there are only 3 possible scores you can have : 100%, 50% or 0%, corresponding to 2, 1 and 0 matchpoints.

This is why scores are not usually displayed until at least half way through a session.

Totalling it up

At the end of a session the matchpoints are calculated for each board. Each pair's overall result is determined by the total number of matchpoints earned as a percentage of the available matchpoints *on the boards they played*.

Note that maximum matchpoints available may be different between pairs in the same direction. For example a pair who have had a sit-out will have played less boards and therefore have access

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to fewer matchpoints than a pair who missed a sit-out. This is why the session results are ranked by percentage rather than total matchpoints.

This also explains why occasionally a pair with a lower number of matchpoints will beat a pair with a higher number (if the first pair had access to a smaller number of available matchpoints).

Directors try to select movements that provide the most equitable access to matchpoints for all participants.

An example

The following table shows the scores, matchpoints and percentages for a board.

Contract	Making	Scores		Matchpoints		Percentages	
		NS	EW	NS	EW	NS	EW
3NT N	11	460	-460	13	1	92.9%	7.1%
3NT N	11	460	-460	13	1	92.9%	7.1%
3NT N	10	430	-430	8	6	57.1%	42.9%
3NT N	10	430	-430	8	6	57.1%	42.9%
3NT N	10	430	-430	8	6	57.1%	42.9%
3NT N	9	400	-400	4	10	28.6%	71.4%
4D S	11	150	-150	2	12	14.3%	85.7%
3D S	10	130	-130	0	14	0%	100%

The board has been played 8 times so the total number of matchpoints available is 14 (7 x 2).

The number of match points awarded to NS and EW each time the board was played sums to 14.

Two NS pairs shared the top score (460 points, 13 matchpoints = 2 for each of 6 scores beaten + 1 for a score equalled, 92.9%) while one EW pair got the top score in their direction (-130 points, 14 matchpoints = 2 for each of 7 scores beaten, 100%)

Impact on strategy

Matchpoint scoring has an impact on your strategy when bidding and playing a hand. Your strategy "at matchpoints" will be different to the strategy you would use if the event were being scored using another system (eg. IMPs).

Matchpoints are based on the ranking of scores, not the absolute value of the scores or the amount of difference between two scores. This means that small differences in scores can have a big impact on matchpoints. For example making an overtrick that nobody else makes can be the difference between a top board and an average board. Conversely just making your contract while everybody else is making an overtrick will give a poor result, even though the absolute difference in scores might be just 20 points.

When playing at matchpoints you need to be aware of this in your bidding and card play.