

Introduction

There have been occasions where members have queried results or asked for an explanation of the scoring system. For example -

Question 1 "How is it that we bid and made 4♥ against N/S but, when we looked at the result on the Bridgemate, they had 100% and we had zero!"

Question 2 "We were sitting E/W and scored exactly the same number of points as Fred and Freda who were sitting N/S. How can they get a much better result on that board than we did?"

This information sheet is intended to provide members with an explanation of how duplicate bridge is scored. And, all being well, the reasons for the apparent anomalies raised by the questions above will become clear in due course.

Background Information

There are basically three scoring systems used in bridge and while they are all similar there are critically important differences.

If you have played rubber bridge you will be familiar with points being scored above and below the line and, if you have played in a team event, you may be familiar with IMP's (International Match Points)

The Australian Bridge Federation uses Matchpoint Scoring to calculate results and award masterpoints at the conclusion of a duplicate bridge session run by an affiliated club such as ours

Throughout a session at NDBC, as the data is entered via the Bridgemate table units, the information is uploaded and stored in the Bridgemate server.

We then use a computer program called Compscore2 to take the data from the Bridgemate server and calculate the results using the Matchpoint Scoring system

If required Compscore2 could provide players with their progressive scores and ranking at the end of each round!

Rubber Bridge v Duplicate Bridge (Matchpoint Scoring)

When playing rubber bridge a large score, say bidding and making a slam, will make a huge contribution to your final result. Likewise a large minus score, going down five doubled and vulnerable, is a total disaster.

By and large the main aim in rubber bridge is to make the contract that you bid and not concede any points by going down. So although hands with small scores, such as bidding and making 2♣, will contribute relatively little to your final result, it does deny the opposition a chance to gain points

At the end of play, the pair with the highest total score wins, which is all very simple.

Duplicate bridge (matchpoint scoring) is totally different because the raw score you achieve for any hand is used solely to rank your performance against all the other pairs playing that board. Once the ranking order has been determined then matchpoints are distributed

So if you are sitting E/W your one and only objective is to beat all the other pairs sitting E/W on that particular board. It does not matter how comprehensively you defeated N/S to achieve your raw score it just has to be the best on that board to take maximum matchpoints for E/W

And it is precisely the same for N/S pairs. If you have the best N/S raw score for that board you will receive the maximum matchpoints available

Scoring the Hands

The scoring for each hand is very similar in all systems. Major suits are more valuable than minors and bonus scores will apply for game and slam contracts.

But please remember computers are very simple machines and to avoid confusion as to which pair receives the points North/South scores will always show as a positive (+) value and East/West as a negative (-) value when using Bridgemates

I do not propose to go into detail here but here are some examples.

Example 1: North/South bid and make 2♠. N/S score is +110. This represents 60 points for making 2♠ plus 50 points for a part score.

Example 2: East/West bid and make 3NT when they are vulnerable. So the score for E/W is -600. 100 points for making 3NT plus 500 points for a vulnerable game.

Example 3: East/West bid 3♠ when vulnerable but make only seven tricks. N/S score +200 points

In days of yore these scores were recorded on the traveller and at the end of the session we would transfer the information to a computer to calculate the result

At NDBC we now have Bridgemates and the entry into the Bridgemate system is always viewed from the North position (as opposed to Declarers)

If the contract information has been correctly entered into the Bridgemate table unit the appropriate score will be presented on the screen. And this is where it is important to ensure that the data is correctly entered and verified immediately after playing that board.

So let's have a closer look at how the matchpoint system works

The table below shows typical results for a board and we will use this to show how the matchpoints are allocated. The raw scores are shown in the two columns on the right

N/S Pair	E/W Pair	Contract	By	Result (tricks)	Score	
					N/S	E/W
1	1	3♠	N	10	170	
2	3	4♠	N	10	420	
3	5	4♥	E	8	100	
4	7	3♥	E	9		140
5	8	3♥	E	8	50	
6	2	3♠	N	10	170	
7	4	3♠	N	9	140	
8	6	4♥*	E	8	300	

Awarding Matchpoints

At the end of the session the raw scores for each board are compared and ranked. You will receive 2 matchpoints for every pair in your direction that you beat, and 1 matchpoint for every pair in your direction that you tie.

Should all pairs in your direction beat you, your score will be 0.

Ultimately the matchpoints for each pair are added up for all boards played and the winner is the pair that has the most matchpoints in that session.

Let us assume you are sitting N/S. Since you can receive 2 matchpoints for every other N/S pair you beat, the maximum matchpoint score on the above board will be 14. This is because there are seven other N/S pairs you can beat ($7 \times 2 = 14$)

In all cases therefore, the number of matchpoints available for distribution, is determined by the number of times the board is played. So take the number of times the board is played minus 1 and then multiply by 2 to get the matchpoints. ie $(\text{Times Played} - 1) \times 2 = \text{matchpoints available per board}$

On some occasions you may have a situation where there is a sit-out and so not all boards are played the same number of times. And, with Howell movements in particular, you will often change the direction in which you are sitting. This makes no difference as it simply means that you are competing against other N/S on one board and against other E/W on the next. Ultimately, by converting the result to a percentage value, as long as every pair plays a minimum of 24 boards in a session, a fair result can be calculated

But let's not get too complicated and muddy the waters. Instead let us look at how the matchpoints for North/South are allocated on our typical board

N/S Pair	Match Point Score	Comments
1	9	This pair beat N/S pairs 3, 4, 5 and 7 (2 matchpoints each), and tied with pair 6 (1 matchpoint).
2	14	This pair beat every other N/S pair, getting a "top" on the board (14 matchpoints).
3	4	This pair only beat two other N/S pairs (4 and 5).
4	0	This pair was the worst performer getting a "bottom" on the board (0 matchpoints). The only pair to let E/W get a score!
5	2	This pair only beat N/S pair 4.
6	9	This pair got the same matchpoints as N/S pair 1. They beat the same N/S pairs (3, 4, 5 and 7) and tied with N/S pair 1.
7	6	This pair beat N/S pairs 3, 4 and 5.
8	12	This pair came second on the board, beating every N/S pair except pair 2.

OK? So let's look at how the matchpoints are allocated for each East/West pair

E/W Pair	Match Point Score	Comments
1	5	This pair beat E/W pairs 3 and 6 (2 matchpoint each), and tied with E/W pair 2 (1 matchpoint).
2	5	This pair beat E/W pairs 3 and 6 (2 matchpoint each), and tied with E/W pair 1 (1 matchpoint).
3	0	This pair did the worst by getting the lowest E/W score (ie, the highest N/S score).
4	8	This pair beat E/W pairs 1, 2, 3 and 6
5	10	This pair beat all E/W pairs except 7 and 8.
6	2	This pair did poorly, losing to all E/W pairs except pair 3
7	14	This pair did the best, beating every other E/W pair. This was the only E/W pair to get a score.
8	12	This pair did second best, winning 12 matchpoints, beating every E/W pair except pair 7

Finally let's bring all this information onto one table and see what we can learn.

N/S Pair	E/W Pair	Contract	By	Result (tricks)	Score		Matchpoints	
					N/S	E/W	N/S	E/W
1	1	3♠	N	10	170		9	5
2	3	4♠	N	10	420		14	0
3	5	4♥	E	8	100		4	10
4	7	3♥	E	9		140	0	14
5	8	3♥	E	8	50		2	12
6	2	3♠	N	10	170		9	5
7	4	3♠	N	9	140		6	8
8	6	4♥*	E	8	300		12	2

The first thing to note is that this now looks very much like the information you get when you bring up the details for a particular board on the results page of the website. Only the names and lead card are missing

Next you will see that the matchpoints awarded must total 14 for each pair

And lastly, as you can now clearly see, in matchpoints to get a good score you only have to beat the raw scores of other pairs in your direction.

Here's a scoresheet to illustrate the point:

N/S Pair	E/W Pair	Contract	By	Result (tricks)	Score		Matchpoints	
					N/S	E/W	N/S	E/W
1	1	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
2	2	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
3	4	3NT	N	10	430		14	0
4	6	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
5	8	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
6	3	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
7	5	4♠	N	10	420		6	8
8	7	4♠	N	10	420		6	8

On this board, everyone played in 4♠ by North, except for N/S pair 3 who played in 3NT. Everyone made the same number of tricks, but pair 3, because they played in no trumps, gained an extra 10 points on the raw score (430 versus 420). This 10 point difference on the raw score resulted in the allocation of 14 matchpoints and a top board. Feel sorry for E/W pair 4, who received zero matchpoints!

Calculating Percentages

As indicated earlier the Bridgemate/Compscore2 system is constantly updating and storing the results in real time. Although players tend to look at the percentages on the Bridgemate after playing each board, it should be remembered that this is simply an indication of your performance on that board at that time.

After playing the first board in a session the percentages will always be 50/50.

More importantly your final percentage as presented in the results is the 'total matchpoints gained' divided by the 'total matchpoints available' expressed as a percentage. This value adjusts for any variations in the number of boards played in a session and is also used to rank players over time. At NDBC the club champion is the person achieving the highest average percentage during the year.

.... so what did we learn?

1. If you play 24 boards in a session each board will contribute 1/24 of your total score
2. You can only compare your results with those sitting in the same direction.
3. You need to maximise your score when declarer and minimise their score when defending.
4. Statistically you will be declarer for 25% of the time; dummy for 25% of the time and therefore you will be defending for 50% of the time. Good defence therefore makes great sense!
5. I hope you can now answer the anomalies posed at the beginning
6. And lastly, while the objective of bridge is to compete and win, I think it is important to remember that at the end of the day, it is just a game and we do it to enjoy both the contest and the company. NDBC has earned a reputation for warmth and friendliness that is unique and very precious. Aggressive and intimidating behaviour has no place in our club - so while I encourage you to strive to be the best; please remember to do it in the nicest possible way.