

Introduction to Teams Tactics

by Dave Riseborough

For teams competitions, seating and boards are arranged so that your N-S pair plays another team's E-W, and their N-S plays your E-W. This allows a direct comparison between their team and yours. Results from other matches are immaterial: it's just you and that other team.

You will probably play two 12-board matches each night. After each match you compare scores – for example:

you scored +140	your mates -110	your team is +30
you scored +100	your mates +90	your team is +190
you scored -300	your mates +140	your team is -160.

In the desk there are score sheets and cards which will show how to convert these scores to IMPs.

These show:

difference in points 0-10	= 0 IMPs
difference in points 20-40	= 1 IMP
difference in points 50-80	= 2 IMPs, etc, right up to
difference in points 4,000+	= 24 IMPs.

Using the card you will find that on the three results given above, you would have scored +1, +5, and -4, giving you a net of +2.

That score of +140 might have been a complete top at a pairs session; but here it has only scored you 1 IMP! How did you get that extra trick? Skill? Luck? Or did you take a chance, as you might in pairs, of going down, so that you could get a top board? Don't do that in teams.

Because of the scoring, teams are tactically different from pairs in all three areas.

1 Bidding

➤ The minors are the poor relations in pairs. In teams, play in them if that seems to be the safest spot. Always bid the safest denomination.

➤ I'm not going to go into the mathematics, but it is best to call a non-vulnerable game if it seems to be about 50+% (ie relies on a finesse), and a vulnerable game at about 35% (two finesses or the equivalent). A small slam about 65-70%, and a grand slam virtually certain.

➤ Contest part-scores but don't push the opposition into game unless you trust your defence to be good enough to put them down.

➤ If you are going to pre-empt or carry on your partner's pre-empt, do so to the limit of your hand before your opposition know their assets.

2 Play

➤ If you can see your contract and there is any danger in the hand, take your tricks and worry about over-tricks later.

➤ Is there a safe way to play a suit, eg:

KQ9xx opposite Axxx

KQ9xx opposite A10xx?

With the first holding, you are missing J10xx. You can guard against them all being under the KQ9xx by cashing the A first. With the second hand, you can guard against Jxxx in either hand by cashing the K first. (Try it!)

➤ If there has to be a favourable holding for you to make your contract, play for it; eg, AQ109 opposite xxx. You need four tricks – finesse the 9. Come back to hand – finesse the 10. This is your only chance of getting four tricks.

3 Defence

➤ If you have got the tricks to get them down – take them down.

➤ After the opening lead declarer should pause to count their tricks and think about the order of play so that they don't end up in the wrong hand at the wrong time. You should take this opportunity to think as well. If you decide that partner has to have a certain card or distribution to cause declarer any problems, play for it to be so. If you are right you could pick up 11 or 12 IMPs against the risk of losing 1 or 2 for over-tricks.

Finally, the above may all seem rather complicated: in practice it isn't.

After the first round the draw is made so that you play a team that is performing at the same level as you. The first round will be seeded.

If you've never played teams, get one together, play and enjoy!