

Grand National Teams

Are teams really the most perfect form of the game of bridge? There are many players who think this is so. Let's see how it is played and then come back to this question.

Team movement: A team is made of two pairs of players who play another team of players. Team 1 sits NS at table one and Team 2 sits NS at table two. Their EW partners each go to the other table. Teams 1 and 2 play the same set of 6-8 boards. Let's say four rounds of six boards for a game. In round one, each table will shuffle and play three boards. When you finish, you ask for a caddy to take your boards to the other table and bring you the three you have not yet played. Say "Caddy please!" Do not approach the other table. After all the teams have finished the first six boards, the director will take your "IMP" scores and tell you where to go for the next round of six boards where you shuffle and play another six boards. Some directors may try to have each team play every other team or may match teams each round based on how well they have done so far.

IMP Scores: In the old days, teams just added up their board scores over the six boards. That was not fair because if your team was dealt a slam and none were dealt at other tables, you might win by luck, so IMPs (international match points) were invented to try to move towards standardizing scores across rounds. First you score the way you usually do at matchpoints. Then the second step is to compare your score with the score at the other table. The difference in scores is turned into an IMP score using the table on inside bottom of your convention card. You add up your IMP scores on each board to get a sum and the winning team confirms that number with their opponent team and turns in the sum to the director. Let's consider an example:

Let's consider a board where Team 1 NS bids and makes 4H but Team 2 only bids 3H but makes 4H. Here are the scores:

Team 1	NS	EW	Difference	IMPs
NV	+420	-170	250	6
VUL	+620	-170	450	10 WOW

Note that the difference is much larger when a vulnerable game is bid and made. So we will push for vulnerable games, and similarly vulnerable slams.

It's best to be in the safe partial and the safe game because the difference between scores is small so no need to try to be in NT for the extra points if a suit is safer. When vul, 3NT=600, 4H,S=620, 5C,D=600. A difference of 20 is only 1 IMP. Even if you make 4NT, the difference of 630 to 620 is only 10, 0 IMPS.

Here is what a six board match might look like for Team 1 NS compared to Team 2 (the EW scores):

Board	NS	EW	Difference	IMPS	
				+	-
1	420	-420	0	0	
2	450	-420	30	1	
3	600	-630	-30		1
4	980	-680	300	7	
5	90	110	200	5	
6	-200	140	-60		2
				+13	-3
Sum				10	

Team 1 won over Team 2 by 10 IMPS.

The last step is to turn IMP scores into Victory Points but we leave that to the director. You can do this yourself by looking at the 20 VP or the 30 VP score on the convention card bottom. For 20 VP, each round gets 20 VPs. If you won by 10 IMPS, you would get 14 VP and your opponents would get 6 VPs. These are summed over the four rounds and the team with the most VP wins first place, and so on, with or without strata.

So since the important thing is to make your contract, especially vulnerable games and slams, and the difference between types of games or part scores do not highly impact the results, the emphasis being on being in safe contracts and not doubling the opponents into games they might make. Some people think teams are a more representative form of the game of bridge as compared to matchpoints where a difference of 10 points can change a result from average to top but is of little consequence in team scoring. What do you think?