

# Ask Jerry



Well-known teacher and player **Jerry Helms** answers your bridge questions. Send your questions to "Ask Jerry," c/o Jerry Helms, 5000 Montclair Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28211.

**Dear Jerry:** What is the difference between matchpoints and IMPs ... or is there any difference?

W. Alexander  
Ottawa, ON

**Dear W.A.:** Matchpoints is the scoring format typically used in duplicate pair events. At the end of the session, your result on each deal is compared to those of all the other pairs playing in the same direction. You get 1 matchpoint for every result you beat and 1/2 matchpoint for every result you tie. The matchpoints are totalled for all the deals you played and this determines your overall score.

IMPs ... International Match Points ... is the form of scoring typically

used in team events. One partnership plays a deal sitting North-South at one table while their teammates play the same deal sitting East-West at the other table. The net score is then converted to IMPs on a scale that rewards bidding games and slams rather than making overtricks.

The scoring format impacts your tactics. At matchpoints, the frequency of being right is more important than the magnitude of the score.

For example, suppose you play two deals against another pair. On the first, you have a bidding misunderstanding and reach a vulnerable 7♥ slam missing an ace. The opponents double and you lose 200 points.

Everyone else in your direction stops in 6♥ and collects 1430 points. You are 1630 points worse off. On the second deal, you stop in 1NT and make an overtrick for a score of 120. Everyone else plays in 3♣ making nine tricks for a score of 110.

Even though you are still 1620 total points behind the other pairs, you are back to average in matchpoints! You have one bottom board and one top board.

At IMP scoring, it is the magnitude of the score that is important. If you brought these two results back to your teammates ... when their opponents played in 6♥ and 3♣ ... you'd lose 17 IMPs on the first result and the second would be worth 0 IMPs. You'd be a long way behind in the match!

At IMP scoring, it's important to bid and make your games and slams, and to defeat the opponents' contracts. At matchpoints, you might risk going down in a game for a chance to make an overtrick. If you're right two out of three times, you're well ahead of the game! —**JH** ♦