



Ask Jerry

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Hi Jerry,

I just read your July article in the Bridge Bulletin comparing matchpoint scoring with IMPs. On BBO, the speedballs offer both types. I don't understand how IMPs work there when you aren't playing in a team game. Can you explain?

A comment: It seems to me there are lots of higher-level players in the IMP games. If that assessment is accurate, why would that be?

Thank you, love reading your column every month!

Cathy

Hi Cathy,

Good to hear you love my column and glad the July "Ask Jerry" was helpful to you! Just to be sure everyone understands your question, the BBO website has thrown a lifeline to literally thousands of duplicate players who no longer have their local clubs or tournaments as an option for play.

Yes, it seems odd that BBO can provide IMP scoring if you don't have teammates, but I can explain. BBO does IMP scoring similar to an IMP pairs event. Think of IMP pairs as a hybrid of a bridge club using a matchpoint pairs format but with IMP scoring:

Just like any matchpoint event, the same hand is played by multiple different North-South and East-West pairs.

However, you use the IMP scoring table against the "average" of the scores in your direction (as in a team game) instead of determining your

relative position of your score on that board (matchpoint game).

For simplicity's sake, pretend 40 BBO pairs play a deal, and 20 of them make nine tricks in 3NT vulnerable (plus 600) and 20 of them go down one trick in 3NT vulnerable (minus 100). The average score for this board is plus 250. If you took nine tricks for plus 600 at 3NT, you would be net plus 350. If you check the IMP scale found, among other places, on the inside of a convention card, plus 350 converts to winning 8 IMPs. If you went down one trick in 3NT, you would be net minus 350, and the same chart would show you losing 8 IMPs.

When playing in a BBO IMPs game, the important thing to remember is to just play as if you are playing in a team game. Overtricks, while always somewhat important, are far less important at this form of scoring. What really matters: Bid and make your games and slams. Defeat the opponents' contracts.

I think many higher-level players prefer IMP games because IMP games may have less randomness in the results. Matchpoints is a lot of fun also, but there is more luck involved in determining who is the winner. Someone told me that playing IMPs is like having a steady significant other, while playing matchpoints is like meeting 12 new people at the bar. In the first case, you have a good idea of what is going to happen. In the second case, it might be really good or it might be really bad, depending on the luck of the draw! ■