

# Swiss Teams Strategies

*Etobicoke Bridge Centre*

## Detailed Version

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If you have no interest or ability to study any details, skip to the executive summary at the end. But ...

Scoring: contrary to match points scoring, Swiss scoring is done via International Match Points which are then converted to Victory Points. These provide a scale for the difference of the scores between 2 teams on a hand.

For example: on a given hand ....

Team Orange plays 4 Spades vulnerable, making 4, for 620 points

Team Blue plays 4 Spades, down one, for -100 points

The net difference on the hand is  $620 - (-100) = 720$  points

If you only wish the main strategies for Swiss teams, without the details, skip to the executive summary at the end of this document.

Here is the International Match Points (IMP) scale; hence on this example hand, Team Blue would be up 720 points = 12 IMPs

Difference in points	IMPs
20-40	1
50-80	2
90-120	3
130-160	4
170-210	5
220-260	6
270-310	7
320-360	8
370-420	9
430-490	10
500-590	11
<b>600-740</b>	<b>12</b>
750-890	13
900-1090	14
1100-1290	15
1300-1490	16
1500-1740	17

The purpose of the IMP scale is to downgrade the effect of big swings, so that one big win cannot decide a match.

The key difference in Swiss vs Matchpoints is that the key is the **amount** of the difference of the compared scores. In matchpoints, it is your **relative** position compared to all others who played the board. For example, in Swiss teams, making an overtrick in 3NT while the opponents are making only 3, just gets you 1 IMP, a very small gain. In matchpoints, it would get you a top or tie for top. Because of the scoring method, these are very important guidelines for Swiss team play

- Moves that can gain big point swings are risked more and conversely, plays that will cause a very small point difference are not important
  - Risking a contract to make an overtrick is bad strategy.
    - The difference between 4 Spades making five and making four is 30 pts = Only 1 IMP
    - The difference between 4 Spades making four and going down one, vulnerable is  $620 - (-100) = 720$  points -> 12 IMPs
    - Thus, the risk to reward ratio is 12:1, hence not even close to being worth it to try for overtrick
  - Similarly, you should always defend to beat the contract, do not worry about giving up an overtrick in the process
  - Safety plays should be made to ensure a contract, sacrificing the chance for an overtrick
  - Games, especially vulnerable ones, should be bid with greater risk, ie, more often
    - Bidding 3 NT vulnerable, making is worth 600 pts
    - Bidding 2 NT, making 3 is worth  $50 + 100 = 150$
    - The difference is  $600 - 150 = 450$  -> 10 IMPs
    - Comparing 3 NT down one (-100) to 2 NT making (120) is  $120 - (-100) = 220$  ->6 IMPs
    - Thus if 3 NT can make 6 times out of 16 (10+6), ie, 37.5%, it is even odds to bid
    - Non vulnerable games work out to odds  $(400-150)=6$  IMPs :  $(120+50)=5$  IMPs of 6:5, ie 45% is even odds
  - Big numbers are to be avoided, ie -1100 is 15 IMPs
    - Going for 1100 to save losing 620 is  $1100-620=480$  points = 10 IMPs
  - Only make “sure” sacrifices, avoid phantoms (opponents were not making their game), like this .....
    - You sacrifice in 5 Diamonds, down 2 doubled for 500
    - Partners go down one in 4 Spades
    - $500 - (-100) = 600$  ->12 IMPs
  - Only make very high probability doubles of games/slams
    - In matchpoints, succeeding on 3 penalty doubles out of 5 makes for a solid 60% game. In swiss teams, not so ...
    - 4 spades down one doubled vs down one(undoubled) =  $200-100 = 100$  ->3 IMPs
    - 4 Spades making vs making doubled =  $420 - 590 = 170$  -> 5 IMPs
    - Hence need  $5/8 = 62.5\%$  chance for even odds

- Especially important if your double might allow a game to make, now you are looking at a huge swing
    - 2H\* making vul =  $120+500+50 = 670$
    - 2H making = 110
    - $670 - 110 = 560 \rightarrow 11$  IMPs
  - **DO NOT DOUBLE PART SCORES THAT THEN BECOME GAMES**, unless you are quite **sure** it is going down 2 or more tricks
  - Play in the safer contract, ie if 5C is safer than 3NT, play there, the difference is negligible. Similarly play the safer slam, 6D = 920, 6NT = 990; difference is 2 IMPs. 6NT down 1 = 50; difference in making 6D is  $920 - (-50) = 970 = 14$  IMPs
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## Executive Summary – Swiss teams vs Matchpoints Strategies

- Bid close games, especially when vulnerable
- Only make “sure-thing” doubles of a contract that if made becomes a game. Always expect to beat the contract 2 tricks, never just one
- Play to make your contracts, do not risk the contract for an overtrick
- Defend to beat the contract, don’t worry about giving up an overtrick
- Only sacrifice when you are pretty sure 1) they can make their contract and 2) you won’t go for a big number
- Play in the game or slam that is more likely to make, which might, on occasion, mean 5 of a minor instead of 3NT

**What a Game!!**