

## Teams vs Pairs

Most experienced players rate teams competition highly and many prefer Teams to Duplicate Pairs.

Because of the differences in scoring, different tactics are appropriate.

In the regular club pairs sessions, your score is compared to all other pairs holding the same cards. You are awarded 2 match points for every pair whose score you exceed and 1 for each pair your score equals. If your score is the best on a board played 10 times, your score is 18, regardless of the margin over other scores. The key to success is **how often** you are ahead of your opponents (the other pairs sitting in your direction).

In teams, you have only one opponent. He or she is sitting in your seat at your current opposition's home table. The key to winning is **how much** you do better than your opponents on each board.

An example. In pairs you bid 3S and make an overtrick for 170. All other pairs bid the vulnerable game scoring 620. You have the bottom score on this board worth 0. But you can get it all back on the next hand by scoring 110 when your opponents all score 100. At teams you will lose 10 imps on the first board. The second board will be scored as no gain to either side, so you are still 10 imps behind.

This has the following implications for teams play:

1. Declarer's top priority is **making** the contract. Typically in teams you may deliberately sacrifice a possible overtrick if by doing so you can guarantee making the contract. This is usually incorrect at pairs.
2. Defenders' top priority is to **defeat** the contract rather than simply try and limit the overtricks.
3. Play in the **safest** contract. This applies at any level. Game, slam or partscore.
4. Keep your teams overcalls **sound**. Especially at the two level vulnerable. At pairs you are overcalling based on the probability of finding a playable contract. If two thirds of your pairs overcalls result in a good score, it doesn't matter how bad is the third one. A single big minus in teams can cost you a match.
5. **Bid your games**. At pairs (either vulnerability) you should bid a game if you rate it a 50% or better chance. Be more aggressive in Teams, especially vulnerable. Stretch to bid a vulnerable game with a 40% or better chance of making. You will be come out ahead (provided the failing games are undoubled, minus one).
6. Bid a **small slam** with a 50% or better chance of success. (As you should in pairs). But in Teams if there is a choice of denomination, choose the safest slam.

Bid a grand slam only if 13 tricks are **certain**. There is nothing worse than failing in a grand slam and then finding that your opponent played only in game or part score at the other table.

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7. Your main gains will come from bidding games missed by your opponents, and from accurate part score bidding. Small plusses at both tables really help your score along.

### Multiple Teams

Over one or more sessions you play only a few boards against each team, but each short match is still a head to head contest. On each hand you can identify **one** person playing your cards for the other team. Typically in an event run in this format, you will play all the other teams.

If you “know” you are behind because of a bad result, and you need a good result to make up for it, this good result does **not** have to be against the same team you have just given a good score to. Wait for a genuine opportunity. And bear in mind that not all results you expect to be bad necessarily turn out that way.

### Swiss Teams

In this format your opponent for the next round depends on your overall standing at the end of the round in play. Your next opponent will have a similar overall result with the proviso that you should not play the same opponents again. All teams should find their level and achieve some success. Typically 6 rounds will find a winner in a field of up to 20 teams. 8 rounds is appropriate for the Barrier Reef Congress field of 60+ teams. Running too many rounds for a given size field can make it hard to find suitable opponents for all teams.

### Butler Pairs

Butler Pairs is a hybrid between Teams and Duplicate Pairs. It is a Pairs competition with Teams scoring. The computer works out a reference datum calculated from all scores on a particular hand. (Sometimes extremes are ignored). Your score is IMPed against this datum. This format can be used for regular or Swiss Pairs movements. The Barrier Reef Congress has recently been run in this format in which you will get Masterpoints for each win.

For further information check out Ross Dick's book ***Better Bidding for Improving Players***, available from our library, or from the QBA