

WINNING TEAMS AND SWISS PAIRS TACTICS

With Peter Smith

Tactics when playing Teams-of-Four, Swiss Teams or Swiss Pairs differ significantly from Duplicate Pairs because of the different scoring method.

At Duplicate Pairs the aim is to beat as many other scores as possible, even if just by a small amount. A difference of just 10 points is often "huge". It can be overkill to outscore the others by hundreds of points.

At Swiss Pairs and Teams it's the SIZE of the swing that matters, as the bigger the swing the more IMPs (International Match Points) you score (see table below). A difference of just 10 points is completely insignificant, whereas differences of hundreds or more give much greater rewards.

IMP TABLE

Difference	IMPS	Difference	IMPS	Difference	IMPS	Difference	IMPS
20-40	1	270-310	7	750-890	13	2000-2240	19
50-80	2	320-360	8	900-1090	14	2250-2490	20
90-120	3	370-420	9	1100-1290	15	2500-2990	21
130-160	4	430-490	10	1300-1490	16	3000-3490	22
170-210	5	500-590	11	1500-1740	17	3500-3990	23
220-260	6	600-740	12	1750-1990	18	4000+	24

WINNING TACTICS IN THE BIDDING

GENERAL

Once you've decided whether the hand is a partscore, game or slam choose the safest contract, not necessarily the highest scoring one. Whether you score a few extra points for a major suit or no trump contract is unimportant. Minor suit contracts that make are just as acceptable as any others.

BID THIN GAMES WHEN VULNERABLE

Because vulnerable games are worth more than non-vulnerable ones you stand to score even more IMPs if you bid a successful game that the opponents don't reach.

e.g. 4♠ making, vulnerable, is worth 620. If your opponents bid only 2♠ making 4, they score 170. The difference of 450 is worth 10 IMPs. Not vulnerable your game is worth only 420, making a difference of just 250, worth just 6 IMPs.

COMPETE KEENLY (BUT NOT RECKLESSLY) FOR THE PARTSCORE

Balance freely but save your bad overcalls for Duplicate Pairs. Don't let the opponents get away with many two level contracts but once you've pushed them to the three level usually defend. The main aim is to get a plus score. Unlike at Pairs where it's important to score +140 rather than say only +100, at Teams and Swiss Pairs such swings are insignificant.

CONSIDER 5 OF A MINOR RATHER THAN 3NT

It's hardly ever worth bidding five of a minor at Duplicate Pairs, but at Teams or Swiss Pairs it's more attractive if 3NT looks dangerous, although still not common due to the extra points required to make.

DOUBLING

- * Be conservative when doubling partscores into game. Double only if the contract looks like going TWO light.
- * Double vulnerable games if you have a surprise such as a bad trump break and side ace(s). Remember that your opponents are stretching to bid vulnerable games.
- * Double slams only if you think you'll increase the chances of defeating the contract (e.g. Lightner, lead-directing). You should also be satisfied that the opponents have no better place to run.

SACRIFICING

At Duplicate Pairs if you sacrifice for minus 500 against 620 it might be a top. At Teams and Swiss Pairs it's less significant (just 3 IMPS) and can be costly if you've misjudged i.e. the opponents' game wasn't making.

* The best time to sacrifice is at favourable vulnerability. Pre-empt freely and if you are going to sacrifice do it straight away for maximum pressure and effect.

* In general, though, sacrifice less than at Duplicate Pairs.

* If the opponents sacrifice usually just take the money by doubling, especially if fairly balanced. "The five level belongs to the opponents" is a good adage.

DON'T BID DICEY SMALL SLAMS

As at Duplicate Pairs, only bid "good" slams (50% or better i.e. requiring a finesse at most). This is especially the case if you feel your team/pair is stronger than the opposition. However if you feel that your team/pair is clearly the underdog it's good tactics to hope to get lucky by bidding a thin slam that your opponents mightn't bother bidding.

ONLY BID "CERTAIN" GRAND SLAMS

If you can underwrite 13 tricks bid seven. If not six is plenty.

CARD PLAY

Play safe. Only look for overtricks if there is absolutely no risk to your contract. Forgo overtricks if you can improve your chances of just making the contract.

DEFENCE

Go for broke to defeat the contract. Even just one down is fine. After that think about two down. Take risks to defeat the contract even if it might mean conceding extra overtricks.