

## **Esther Briefly Discusses "How *Badly* Can a Single Board Affect Your Overall Bridge Result?"**

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<https://esther-bridge.com/index.html>

### **Prefatory Comments**

Few, if any, people would enter a casino in Los Vegas, or elsewhere, and sit down at a Blackjack table, and begin wagering serious money, without first developing some basic understanding about how the competition is scored, and, in other words, How You Win! The same dynamic applies to learning to play tennis, or croquet! Nor would it be rational for people to progress very far in competing in duplicate bridge without first developing some basic understanding of *how duplicate bridge is scored*.

The processes for scoring duplicate (1) Pairs and (2) Swiss Team bridge competitions are explained in the "Duplicate Bridge Scoring Methods" on the "Esther Bridge Lessons" website. The duplicate Pairs scoring explanation is available at:

"How Duplicate **Pairs** Bridge is Scored"

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/scoring.pdf>

The Swiss Teams scoring explanation is available at:

"How **Swiss Teams** Bridge is Scored"

<https://esther-bridge.com/pdf/swiss.pdf>

### **Esther Says...**

**In duplicate bridge, a very bad result (i.e., a "Bottom Board", or a "Zero Matchpoints Board", can seriously impact both (1) your Overall Percentage, which ranks your Overall performance in the competition, and (2) your**

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<sup>1</sup> Esther actually is a fictitious, not real person. This "Esther Bridge Lesson" actually was written by Bruce Thompson.

## Overall Ranking, and Masterpoints, for the competition!!!

Here is an example from a competition in which my *malodorous misanthrope* student, Bruce, as Declarer, **badly** played a Board in a recent competition:

### Board #16

Knoxville 499er Game

September 19, 2023

Vul: **E/W**

**20 Pairs** sat E/W on Board **#16**. This means that the **Sum of ALL the Matchpoints** awarded on Board **#16** equaled:

$$\begin{aligned} & [20 * (20 - 1)] / 2 \\ & [20 * 19] / 2 \\ & 380 / 2 = \mathbf{190} \end{aligned}$$

The **lowest** mathematically-possible result, *assuming no other E/W Pair achieved the same very unfavorable result*, would be earning a "**Bottom Board**", which equates with earning **0** Matchpoints on the Board.

The **highest** mathematically-possible result, *assuming no other E/W Pair achieved the same very favorable result*, would be earning a "**Top Board**", would be  $20 - 1 = \mathbf{19}$  Matchpoints on the Board.

**19 of 20** E/W Pairs played a Heart contract. **15 of 20** E/W Pairs played a **4H** contract. Here are the results for the 15 E/W playing a **4H** contract:

**3** Pairs played **4H** making **+1**. Each of these **3** Pairs earned **18.0** Matchpoints out of the Maximum number of **19** Matchpoints on Board **#16**. And **18.0** Matchpoints translates into a Percentage of **18.0 / the Maximum Board Matchpoints of 19.0 = 18.0 / 19.0 = 94.7%**.

**10** Pairs played **4H** making **+0**, or exactly making their contracts. Each of these **10** Pairs earned **11.5** Matchpoints out of the Maximum number of **19** Matchpoints on Board **#16**. And **11.5** Matchpoints translates into a Percentage of **11.5 / the Maximum Board Matchpoints of 19.0 = 11.5 / 19.0 = 60.5%**.

**2** Pairs played **4H** making **-1**, or going down 1. Both of these **2** Pairs earned **0.5** Matchpoints out of the Maximum number of **19**

Matchpoints on Board #16. If only 1 E/W Pair had gone down 1, that Pair would have earned 0.0 Matchpoints on Board #16. But because 2 Pairs tied for "Bottom board," these 2 Pairs split the difference between earning 0.0 versus 1.0 Matchpoints on this Board. And 0.5 Matchpoints translates into a Percentage of 0.5 / the Maximum Board Matchpoints of 19.0 = 0.5 / 19.0 = 2.6%.

### **EXACTLY How Much Were Bruce and His Hapless Partner Hurt by Bruce's Poor Performance as Declarer on this Single One Board?**

If Bruce had exactly made his contract, +0, rather than -1, his Board Percentage would have 60.5% as against his actual 2.6%. The competition involved each E/W Pair playing 18 Boards. Thus, the results of Bruce's poor play as Declarer on this single Board lowered Bruce's competition **Overall Percentage** by:

$$60.5\% - 2.6\% = 57.9\% / 18 = 3.2\%!!!$$

If Bruce had made +1, rather than -1, his Board Percentage would have 94.7% as against his actual 2.6%. Thus, the results of Bruce's poor play as Declarer on this single Board lowered Bruce's competition **Overall Percentage** by:

$$94.7\% - 2.6\% = 92.1\% / 18 = 5.1\%!!!$$

### **Some COMFORT...**

While it is striking that the results of a single Board, bid or played very badly either as Declarer, or on Defense, can so *profoundly affect* your Overall Percentage. Furthermore, if you and Partner are in the middle of the competition Final Rankings, where many Pairs are closely grouped together, a change of 5.1%, or even of 3.2%, can **hugely alter the Rank Order** for your Pair, and determine whether you do, or do not, obtain Masterpoints!

However, there may be some comfort in realizing that the same thing can happen in the *opposite direction*, if you bid or play exceptionally well on a single Board! The *key to success* in competitive bridge is to avoid making big mistakes, and to actively do what you can about facilitating your Opponents themselves making big mistakes!

## **Lagniappe<sup>2</sup>: The Extreme Influence of an Extreme Score on an "Overall Average Percentage"**

Duplicate bridge outcomes are determined by your "Overall Average Percentage." But what many bridge players may not fully appreciate is the *statistical artifact* that "arithmetic averages" are *heavily* "pulled" toward aberrant, extreme scores in the scores being averaged. This "pull" toward "aberrant" scores is *greater* (1) the *farther* away the "aberrant" score is from the bulk of the scores, *and* (2) the *fewer* scores there are being averaged. The following Board Percentages illustrate these dynamics:

	Set of Board Percentages					
Board	<b>#1</b>	<b>#2</b>	<b>#3</b>	<b>#4</b>	<b>#5</b>	<b>#6</b>
#1	63.7	63.7	63.7	63.7	63.7	63.7
#2	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5
#3	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2	57.2
#4	53.9	53.9	53.9	53.9	53.9	53.9
<b>Average</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>59.3</b>
#5	<b>59.3</b>	<b>40.0</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>New Avg.</b>	<b>59.3</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>53.5</b>	<b>51.5</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>47.5</b>
Change	0.0	3.9	5.9	7.9	9.9	11.9
<b>% of 1<sup>st</sup></b>						
<b>Average</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	<b>16.6%</b>	<b>20.0%</b>

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<sup>2</sup>"Lagniappe" means "a little something extra", a phrase heard quite often in restaurants in New Orleans!