

How Duplicate Pair Competition Board Matchpoints, Total Matchpoints, and Total Percentages Are Computed

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In any competition, one of the first things you must first understand, *in order to compete optimally*, is **how the competition is scored**, so that you know exactly what you must try to optimize in order to win. What do you score for a touchdown? What do you score for a field goal? What do you score for a safety? No serious football player would attempt to win (or play) at football without first understanding how football is scored. The same applies to duplicate bridge!

Actually, there are different systems for scoring duplicate bridge. For example, there is one system for scoring Swiss Team competitions involving 4-person teams consisting of 1 Pair always sitting N/S, and the other Pair always sitting E/W, and playing all the same Boards at different times at different tables. And there is also an entirely different system for scoring duplicate Pair competitions.

Board Bridge Scores

Most bridge players are *already familiar* with how Board Bridge Scores are computed. These scores are the *initial* building blocks for computing other duplicate bridge scores. These scores are determined by how many tricks the Pair securing the contract make on a given Board. For example, regardless of vulnerability, a Pair securing a 1NT contract, and making 1, earns a Board Bridge Score of 90. For the same contract, a Pair making 1 overtrick earns a Board Bridge Score of 120.

A Pair securing a contract of 4 Hearts, not Vulnerable, making 4, earns a Board Bridge Score of 420. One overtrick results in a Board Bridge Score of 450.

A Pair securing a contract of 4 Spades, Vulnerable, making 4, earns a Board Bridge Score of 620. Two overtricks results in a Board Bridge Score of 680.

Setting the Opponents 1 Trick when they are not Vulnerable, and not Doubled, results in your Pair Board Bridge Score being +50. Setting the Opponents 2 Tricks when they are Vulnerable, and not Doubled, results in your Pair Board Bridge Score being +200.

Setting the Opponents 1 Trick when they are Vulnerable, and Doubled, results in your Pair Board Bridge Score being +200. Setting the Opponents 2 Tricks when they are Vulnerable, and Doubled, results in your Pair Board Bridge Score being +500.

Understanding Board Bridge Scoring is **critical** to your successfully playing Duplicate bridge, because in Duplicate Pairs competitions these Board Bridge Scores, as noted previously, are the building blocks of Duplicate Pair Board Matchpoint scores, Total Matchpoint Scores, and Total Percentages, which determine the final ranking of the Pairs in the competition. When you are bidding, you must try to take into account, while making risk/reward bidding decisions, the relative dangers of making or not making a contract, setting or not setting Opponents, and doubling or not doubling your Opponents, with respect to the resulting Board Bridge Scores! Afterall, if you will make 420 for making 4 in a 4 Spade contract not Vulnerable, you will still get a higher Board Bridge Score from setting you Vulnerable and Doubled Opponents 2 Tricks, resulting is a Board Bridge Score of 500!

Duplicate Board Matchpoint Scores

When you play in a Duplicate Bridge Pairs competition, you are not competing against the Pairs whom you actually played. Instead, you are competing against all the Pairs sitting in the same direction as you on the same Board played by them either before or after you played the Board! Your degree of success is measured by computing **Board Matchpoint Scores** from the Board Bridge Scores for all the Pairs sitting only in the same direction on a given Board.

For example, let's say 4 Pairs played a given Board each sitting N/S, not Vulnerable, with 4 other Pairs sitting E/W. Let's also say that at all 4 Tables N/S got a 4 Heart contract, and that the results were as follows:

Board #1

<u>N/S Pairs</u>	<u>Making</u>	<u>Bridge Score</u>
Tom & Holland	6	480
Kay & Elyse	5	450
Frances & Diane	4	420
Bruce & Kelly	3	-50

Board Bridge Scores are then converted into Duplicate Board Matchpoint Scores based on several **principles**:

1. The mathematically lowest possible Board Matchpoint Score is always 0.0.
2. The mathematically highest possible Board Matchpoint Score is always (# of Pairs - 1) (e.g., 4 - 1 = 3.0). You can think of this as the top Pair receiving *1.0 additional Matchpoints for every Pair sitting in the same direction that they beat.*
3. The **sum** of the Board Matchpoint Scores always exactly equals [# of Pairs x (# of Pairs - 1)] / 2. For example,

$$[4 \times (4 - 1)] / 2 =$$

$$[4 \times 3] / 2 =$$

$$12 / 2 = \mathbf{6.0}$$
4. All Pairs with **tied** Board Bridge Scores must also receive **tied** Board Matchpoint Scores. For example, if all 4 N/S Pairs bid 4 Hearts, not Vulnerable, and all Pairs made exactly 4, all 4 N/S Pairs would have Board Bridge Scores of 420, and would then all receive Board Matchpoint Scores of 1.5. Note that 1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5 + 1.5 = **6.0!**

For the current example, Board Matchpoint Scores on Board #1 would be:

Board #1

<u>N/S Pairs</u>	<u>Making</u>	<u>Bridge Score</u>	<u>Matchpoint Scores</u>
Tom & Holland	6	480	3.0
Kay & Elyse	5	450	2.0
Frances & Diane	4	420	1.0
Bruce & Kelly	3	-50	0.0
Sum			6.0

Now let's consider results for Board #2, N/S now Vulnerable, with the following Contracts.

Board #2

<u>N/S Pairs</u>	<u>Contract</u>	<u>Making</u>	<u>Bridge Score</u>
Tom & Holland	4H	5	650
Kay & Elyse	4H	4	620
Frances & Diane	4H	4	620
Bruce & Kelly	6D x	2	-1100

"~~x~~" = Doubled.

The Board Matchpoint Scores would be computed as follows.

Board #2

<u>N/S Pairs</u>	<u>Contract</u>	<u>Making</u>	<u>Bridge Score</u>	<u>Matchpoint Scores</u>
Tom & Holland	4H	5	650	3.0
Kay & Elyse	4H	4	620	1.5
Frances & Diane	4H	4	620	1.5
Bruce & Kelly	6D x	2	-1100	0.0
Sum				6.0

The *critically important* point to recognize is that the Top Board is awarded to the Duplicate Pair with the highest non-tied Board Bridge Score **completely irrespective of how much higher the Pair's Board Bridge Score was!** By the same token, the Bottom, or Zero (0) Board, is awarded to the Duplicate Pair with the lowest non-tied Board Bridge Score **completely irrespective of how much lower the Pair's Board Bridge Score was!** By the way, this not the case in other scoring systems, such as Swiss Teams.

Total Matchpoint Scores

Total Matchpoint Scores are computed by adding together all the Board Matchpoint Scores accumulated by a given Pair. These Total Matchpoint Scores are then used to rank order the Pairs from highest to lowest. The Pair with the highest non-tied Total Matchpoint Score wins first place. The Pair with the second highest non-tied Total Matchpoint Score wins second place. The Pair with the lowest Total Matchpoint Score places last in the competition.

These Total Matchpoint Scores are then used to compute **ACBL Masterpoints**. About 40% of the Pairs in a given competition will receive some Masterpoints. The first-place Pair will receive the most Masterpoints. But the gaps between Pairs narrows as you go down the Pair rank orders. For example, the gap between the Masterpoints awarded the first-place Pair versus the second-place Pair will be *larger* than the gap between the Masterpoints awarded the second-place Pair versus the Masterpoints awarded the third-place Pair.

Total Percentages

Total Percentages are also computed for each Pair. These Total Percentages will rank order the Pairs in exactly the same order as the Total Matchpoint Scores, assuming that all Pairs played all Boards, as is usually the case. The Total Percentages are computed by dividing a given Pair's Total Matchpoint Score by the mathematically-maximum-possible Matchpoint Score in a given competition. For example, if the competition involved 3 Pairs sitting North/South, the mathematically-maximum board Matchpoint Score on each Board would be 2.0. And if each Pair played a Howell movement with 4 Boards in each of 5 Rounds of play, the mathematically-maximum Pair Total Matchpoint Score would equal $20 \times 2.0 = 40.0$. If Tom and Holland had a Total Matchpoint Score of 29.5, Tom and Holland's Total Percentage would equal $29.5 / 40 = 73.75\%$.

The Total Percentage is not the percentage of Pairs who had lower Total Matchpoint Scores. Instead, the Total Percentage is the percentage of the *mathematically-maximum-possible Total Matchpoint Score* that each Pair scored!

Summary

1. In most competitions the first-ranked Pair will have a Total percentage between roughly 62% and 72%. If the top Pair made a Top Board on every Board, their Total Percentage would instead be 100%. So, you do not have to be perfect on every Board in order to win at Pair duplicate bridge!
2. In a sense the Total Percentage is a kind of average, and, mathematically, averages get disproportionately pulled toward any extreme scores. Thus, a few Bottom (or 0) Boards can really hurt. So, focus on **avoiding 0 Boards!**
3. A single mistake, such as missing a single Overtrick, can lower your Total Percentage by 1% to 3%. If you are at the

extremes of the Total Percentage rankings, this may not re-order your Overall Ranking very much, if at all! But Pairs in the middle of the Total Percentage distribution will tend to be closely "clumped" together. So, a small shift in your Total Percentage, if you are in the middle of the distribution, can change your Pair Rank Order by 2 or 3 ranks! So, be as careful as you can be! But, of course, remember, "It's a game!" And you can always do better tomorrow!

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