A Few Notes on Duplicate Bridge Structure and Scoring
By Chuck Johnson

Some people have told me that they still don't fully understand the reports that I have been sending. Let me try to remedy that. For illustrative purposes I am inserting below a copy of the score sheet summary from BOARD.TXT for the first board we played one evening. Understanding it should help clear up a lot of the mysteries.

Statesboro Pairs, Tuesday Eve, August 8, 2017

 RESULTS OF BOARD 1

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   SCORES         MATCHPOINTS    NAMES
  N-S    E-W      N-S     E-W
         130      1.00    2.00  4-Miller-Huling vs 2-Bailey-Hickman
  100             3.00    0.00  6-James-Li vs 5-Miller-Trapnell
   50             2.00    1.00  7-Johnson-Johnson vs 3-Schneider-McLean
         400      0.00    3.00  8-Rogers-Thomas vs 1-Lantz-Eller
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Here is how you read it.

Taking the luck-of-the-deal out of the scoring. Note that the "Scores and "Matchpoints" columns are each subdivided into N-S and E-W. That is fundamental to duplicate scoring; it means that your results are judged only against pairs who played the same cards that you played. That's one big reason why we say that duplicate scoring takes the luck-of-the-deal out of the game. It's why you can get really awful hands all evening and still win; all you have to do is take one more trick than everyone else who played those awful hands. The other big reason is that matchpoint scoring causes every hand to be equally weighted. The top board you get for taking an extra trick on defense counts exactly the same as the top board you get for being the only pair that bid and made 7NT; and the bottom board you get for going down 5 tricks, doubled and vulnerable, is no worse than the bottom board you get for allowing the opponents to make one extra trick in a minor-suit, part-score contract.

Matchpoint scoring. This hand is a good illustrative example because there are no ties in the raw scores. In matchpoint scoring a pair is awarded one point for each pair whose score they beat. This board was played four times, meaning that there are three other N-S or E-W pairs whose scores you can beat (obviously, you can't beat yourself.) Note that on each line (board, hand) the matchpoints add up to 3.0, meaning that matchpoints constitute a zero-sum game. If N-S beats all of the other 3 N-S pairs then they get a 3, which means that E-W did not beat any of the other E-W pairs and they get a 0. Each hand has 6 matchpoints available for N-S and 6 for E-W (3+2+1+0=6), so each matchpoint column adds up to 6.0.

Ties. Look at board 5 below to see how ties are handled.

 RESULTS OF BOARD 5

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   SCORES          MATCHPOINTS   NAMES
  N-S    E-W       N-S    E-W
         420       0.50   2.50  1-Lantz-Eller vs 4-Miller-Huling
         110       3.00   0.00  5-Miller-Trapnell vs 3-Schneider-McLean
         420       0.50   2.50  7-Johnson-Johnson vs 6-James-Li
         400       2.00   1.00  8-Rogers-Thomas vs 2-Bailey-Hickman
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You see that E-W pairs 4 and 6 tied at 420 raw score points. The matchpoints for the tied positions are shared by the tying pairs: first would have gotten 3 and second would have gotten 2, so those points are combined and divided by 2 ((3+2)/2= 2.5). That uses up 2.5 of the available 3 points on those lines and leaves only one point to be shared by the corresponding N-S pairs, so they each get a half.

The big picture. Each of the three reports contributes to the big picture.

   RECAP.TXT. This report gives the most summarized version of the session and is divided into two parts. The first part shows the results by pair in descending order of performance. The "Score" column shows the sum of the matchpoints for that pair for the entire session. The theoretical maximum for 21 boards, each played 4 times, would be 63 (21 X 3). The "Pct" column expresses the "Score" column as a percent of the theoretical maximum. Pairs 2 and 7 each achieved a score of 37 matchpoints, which is 58.73 percent of the theoretical maximum score of 63. An ACBL site I browsed this morning stated that a score in the 60-65 percent range will win most tournaments. The highest I have ever seen was a little over 80 percent. The second part shows the matchpoint scores for each board, with a separate column for each pair. Look at your column for a recap of the session. For example, pair 7 (Jean and I) got 9 tops or tie-for-tops out of the 21 boards.

   SUMMARY.TXT. This report shows a separate summary for each pair, with results listed in board-order. We played three boards in each round so you can easily see how you did against each of the opposing pairs. The summary for pair 7 (Jean and Chuck) shows that on boards 16-18 we got our butts kicked by pair 2 (Ree and Verna), getting only 2 of the possible 9 points for 22.22 percent.

   BOARD.TXT. This report gives the grisly details of each board. the example that served as the basis for the above explanation of matchpoint scoring came from this report.

I hope this helps. I will furnish all three reports for future sessions. If you have a question please send me an email. I will reply and almost certainly will copy everyone with that reply, since it is likely that someone else will have been wondering the same thing.

Best to all,

Chuck