

What is IMP Pairs?

On Friday June 22, the Blue Ridge Spectacular will be holding a single session stratified IMP Pairs event.

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IMP Pairs is a form of duplicate bridge, but instead of every board being match pointed across the field, it is "imp-ed" across the field. In match points, you receive 1 match point vs. every pair where you got a better result and a ½ match point vs. every pair that you tied. In imp scoring, a "par" result is calculated for each board. Your result is then compared against par. For example: Suppose a hand is played 12 times and there are four results of +620 and eight results of +170. Par for the board is +320. If you happen to be one of the ones that bid the game, your 620 is 300 points better than par. Held up against the IMP Scale you've won 8 imps on that board. A +170 is -130 vs. par and a loss of 4 imps. Usually, the top and bottom scores are thrown out when calculating par so that a freak -1100 that somebody got doesn't skew the par calculation.

What's the strategy?

Although the play is exactly the same as a match point event, there are some changes in strategy.

- When declaring, never put your contract at risk. Overtricks are virtually immaterial.
- Never double close part scores for a 1 trick set. In match points, going +100 when you were making +110 is a poor result. Doubling the opponents even if the contract makes does not matter when you were getting a poor result anyway. At imps, -670 is a huge disaster while going +100 vs. +110 is immaterial.
- Giving up an overtrick on defense in the hopes of defeating the contract is OK
- Never duck the setting trick
- Bid close vulnerable games. Note the example above. You won twice as many imps as you lost when you bid the close vulnerable game that may have hinged on a finesse. Non-vulnerable games are a 50 - 50 proposition. Close slams are also 50 – 50.
- Bid to the safest part score. Going +90 instead of +110 is better than going minus.
- Minor suit games that make vs. 3NT making +430 is not the disaster it is in match points

Good luck!