

DANNY ON DUPLICATE (7)

Down with Decimals!

Do the contestants in matchpoint duplicate games understand fractions? I can understand halves, thirds, quarters and fifths, but why must I or anyone else understand myserious decimal fractions to understand matchpoint scores? Why should we see scores like 1.19 and 4.56 matchpoints on any board, and what do those decimal fractions represent anyhow?

Well, perhaps it's okay to count half-matchpoints for scores obtained by even numbers of pairs, though in other countries the scoring system eliminates halves by awarding 2 matchpoints for every rival pair beaten and 1 matchpoint for every rival tied.

However, I dislike a scoring system that assigns 7.94 matchpoints in a nine-and-a-half-table game to the pair that beats all seven of the rivals who have played the board. Presumably, some computer program (or rather, some statistician's theory) estimates that if a ninth pair had played the board, then there would have been a 94% chance that it would have scored worse and a 6% chance that it would have scored better than the pair achieving the top. I hate counterfactual conditionals and unverifiable hypotheses.

Here's a way to eliminate decimals easily. Base matchpoints only on actual comparisons, not hypothesized. If 90% of the boards are played only eight times, score them on a 7 top, and score the 10% of the boards that are played nine times on an 8 top. Then show the number of matchpoints earned by each pair during the session as the numerator (representing *achievement*) of a meaningful fraction whose denominator (representing *opportunity*) is the total number of matchpoints available to that pair on the boards played.

This method will also serve adequately when a board is pulled by the director or an "average-plus" is assigned, and when a board is fouled and scored among two "fields" (one "field" having played the board prior to the fouling and the other "field" having played it afterwards). The only decimal fractions needed will be in the percentages shown in the final standings as calculated from the numerators and denominators defined above.