

Stamford Bridge Club : Teams Bridge – Some More Information

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Vulnerable Games : The Holy Grail of Teams Bridge

When playing match-pointed pairs it's good strategy not to bid thin games, i.e. games that probably have less than a fifty-fifty chance of making. Why? Well in deeming a contract to be thin we're saying that we expect it to fail more often than it makes. Bidding such games may result in 90-100% but are far more likely to garner a poor 0-10%.

Playing teams is quite different and this is as a direct result of how the imp scale works.

Let's assume, for simplicity, that there are no penalty doubles and that declarer will make nine or ten tricks in a spade contract.

Vulnerable Games

If we bid and make a vulnerable 4spades, but our opponents stop in 3spades, we gain a net board score of 450 (620 less 170). This converts to an ***imp gain of 10imps***.

If we bid but fail in the said 4spades (losing 100 points), where our opponents stop at the making three level (for minus 140), we lose a total 240 points which converts to ***loss of 6imps***.

In other words when we bid game we are trading a possible gain of 10imps that may, in practice, see us lose 6imps. If you are mathematically minded this can be reduced to saying "***Bid a vulnerable game if you think it has a three-in-eight chance, or better, of making***". [if you prefer looking at percentages, it's 37.5% or better].

Non-vulnerable Games

If we're not vulnerable, the stakes are not as high. When we bid a making 4spades (plus 420) and the opponents stop in 3spades (minus 170) we make a net gain of 250 (420 – 170) on the board. This translates to an ***imp gain of 6imps***. When we fail in this contract by one trick (conceding 50 points) and the opponents are again staying at the making part score level (where we lose 140 points) we lose a total 190 points. This converts to an ***imp loss of 5imps***.

In this scenario, when we bid game, we are trading a possible gain of 6imps knowing we may have to swap it for a loss of 5imps. We can state that mathematically as "***Bid a non-vulnerable game if you think it has a five-in-eleven chance, or better, of making***". [as a percentage that's a shade over 45%].

Real World Decisions

... now if only we had the judgment to apply the rather abstract looking statements above. These calculations aren't easy (don't we all muddle through?) but if you can apply the sort of practical thoughts below you'll be on the right track:-

When vulnerable, bid game if you think it's a little better than needing both a finesse (a 50% chance) and a 3-2 break in a key suit (a 68% chance).

When non-vulnerable, bid game if you think it needs a little less than a straight finesse (a 50% chance).