X-IMP scoring, e.g. for the Brown Trophy.

We used to run the Brown Trophy using Butler Scoring but switched to X-IMP a couple of years ago. Some players aren't familiar with the scoring method, which is intended to give a contest more like Teams than Pairs. Whilst the scoring calculations are very tedious to carry out by hand, the computer can do it instantly. A factored score may be calculated where there's a missing pair, since not all pairs will have played the same number of boards.

On one board a pair's IMP score is calculated by subtracting the score of another pair sitting in the same position on that board. That difference is then converted to IMPs. Thus, a difference of +100 points will give a result of +3 IMPs, while a difference of -100 points will give -3 IMPs. That is repeated by comparing your result with every other score recorded on that board – say 5 more times. The total IMPs for that board are, for convenience, divided by the number of times the board was played to give an average score of a reasonable size.

The same process is repeated for each board that each pair plays. For the cumulative position (under Competitions on the web site) the session's scores are converted to VPs on a 20 VP scale, mainly to ensure that one lucky session doesn't give anyone an overwhelming position. Conversely one bad result of, say, -30 IMP may be discarded on playing a fourth time in this competition. By looking at one's scorecard on our website (just by clicking on your pair names in the results) one can see the impact of missing games or slams or of making them when others don't.

The results are more like a Teams match because bidding a slam that others don't will give an 11 IPM swing, as will making game while most others miss it. Overtricks still help but aren't as significant as at Pairs. It follows that Teams tactics apply, so that it is very important that games be bid if there's about a 40% chance of them making and slams are likely to be worth bidding on a 50% chance of their making.

Results that show up on the Bridgemates in the course of a session tend to be the total IMPs scored up to that point on that board. In the early stages it isn't very significant, although it shows whether you did well or badly.

More recently, X-IMP scoring is recommended for any Pairs session where there are 5 tables or fewer.

AH