

## Winning Teams (IMP\*s) Tactics—Mike Seldon

### Difference between Teams and Pairs: What are the odds to bid Games (& Slams)?

There is a major difference between the aim at teams and pairs. As Chris explained in his article (Newsletter 1), the aim of PAIRS is to beat *as many of the* other scores *as possible*, even by just 10 points, whilst in TEAMS the aim is to get the biggest score possible, as your score is added to your partners' score at the other table and the difference, positive or negative, is converted to IMPs. (positive score you get IMPs and negative score you lose IMPs).

Let's see how that works. The contract is NT and you are unsure whether to bid game of 3NT or leave the contract in 2NT.

If you bid and make 3NT you score 400 or 600. If your opponents at your partners' table settle in 2NT, they only score 150, and your team gains 250 or 450 on the board (+6 or +10 imps).

But what if you bid 3NT and go off for -50 or -100, and the opponents stay in 2NT for 120?

The maths here is:

Making a game in NT wins 400 or 600 compared to -150 and if opponents at partners' table stay in 2NT, for a gain of 250 or 450, whilst if you go off 1 trick for -50 or -100, you lose 170 or 220.

So, there are 4 possible outcomes if you bid 3NT and opponents at the other table stay in 2NT (making or not, vulnerable or not), illustrated in the following table.

Vulnerability	YOU	Tricks	Made score	THEM	Tricks	Your score	Your Team's Net Score	Net IMPs +/-
Not vul	3NT	9	+400	2NT	9	-150	+250	+6
Not vul	3NT	8	-50	2NT	8	-120	-170	-5
Vul	3NT	9	+600	2NT	9	-150	+450	+10
Vul	3NT	8	-100	2NT	8	-120	-220	-6

Over the 4 possibilities, the average result of bidding 3NT is +5

So, in teams, you should bid games on a 50% (or even less if vulnerable) chance of making. (It may need a finesse to make the contract for example).

The potential gains are even bigger for slams and most players would bid slam on a 40% chance if vulnerable.

It is often not easy to estimate the exact odds, but your opponents will not always find the best defence either. So good luck and good bridge!



**\*IMPs:** International Match Points - In international match point scoring, on each board the total point difference between the two scores compared is converted into **IMPs** according to a scale.