

KNOCKOUT TEAMS

The name of this event is most apropos—the winners advance to the next round and the losers are knocked out of the competition. There are many kinds of Knockout (KO) events, but basically they come down to this—two teams face each other in head-to-head competition, and only one survives. There are variations on this theme, but the above explanation fits the vast majority of Knockout situations.

The setup is similar to Swiss Teams in that two members of your team sit North-South at one table, and two others are East-West at a different table. The team against which you are playing fills the other four seats at the two tables.

In light of the popularity of Knockouts and in line with flighting/stratifying events, with a sufficient number of teams, KO events group teams into brackets based upon the Masterpoint holdings of the top four team members.

Knockout matches usually are much longer than Swiss matches—24 boards are common but sometimes it is as many as 64. After the match is finished, the East-West pairs return to their home tables to compare scores. In matches of 24 boards or more, there is often a break at the midpoint to compare scores and determine who is leading and by how much. As in Swiss Teams, the IMP scale is used. The team with the greater number of IMPs is the winner and advances to play in the next round. The losers are no longer in the event.

Given the all-or-nothing nature of each head-to-head match, if your team is way behind at the midpoint, you should work out a team strategy to “go for broke” in the 2nd half. On the flip side, if your team is way ahead, consider how you’ll handle the opponents’ kamikaze actions. Judicious penalty doubles could play a role here. If you are in a 3-team round robin (vice head-to-head), your strategy may vary depending upon whether 1 or 2 teams advance.

Specific conditions of contest vary. Each team has a responsibility to be aware of the conditions and to conform accordingly.

Knockout Team Strategy Tips

- Stretch to bid Vulnerable games.
- Stretch to Invite game/small slam, but not to Accept the invitation.
- Bid the safest slam or game or part score if game is not possible. Don’t worry if it’s a minor, a major or no trump.
 - With a long suit and a likely wide-open suit, don’t sit for 1NT; pull to 2 of your long suit.
- Because the opponents are reluctant to double low-level contracts, be more aggressive (but not foolish) in competing for part scores.
- Don’t double a low-level contract into game, unless you’re 120% sure you’re going to beat it, even if both opponents have highly distributional hands.
- Don’t psych or take other unnecessary risks.
- Don’t sacrifice unless it is very clear they are making their game.

- Don't risk the contract to make overtricks, which are usually not significant.
- Defend to set their contract. Here too, overtricks are usually not significant.
- If you're way behind in a match, decide which partnership will play sure and steady and which will take chances in an attempt to "pull it out."
- Try to absorb these tips, but don't become preoccupied by them; better to play your normal game than introduce confusion trying to remember one of these tips