

## Understanding the Firecracker Game Schedule

There are two main types of games that are played at the **Firecracker** sectional (and at almost any bridge tournament): team games and pair games.

### Team Games

Team games consist of a series of matches between teams of 4 players (2 pairs) each. (Note: Depending on the event, teams may be allowed to have up to 6 players, but only 4 play at a time, in any given match.)

There are several variations of team games, explained in more detail below. Swiss Team events typically consist of a series of short matches (5 to 8 boards) played in 1 or more sessions; all teams play the same number of matches. Knockout teams typically have longer matches (12 or more boards), where the winner advances to the next round and the loser is eliminated.

In each match, your team has its home table, where one of your pairs sits North-South. Your other pair sits East-West at the opposing team's home table. The match consists of a series of boards (hands). When the match starts, approximately half the boards are at one table and half are at the other table. You play the boards and score them. When finished, the boards are taken to the other table (usually by a caddy at the tournament) where they are played by the other 4 players, and vice versa.

When all the boards have been played, you get together with your teammates and compare scores. On each board, the result of the play is a standard duplicate score (for example, +400 if a team makes 3NT not vulnerable or -150 if the opponents bid 3 clubs and make 5). Each pair in the team ends up with a score on each board. For each board, you add the scores for the two pairs together and get a net score, either positive or negative. (In the above example, assuming they were results for the same board, the net score would be +250.)

You convert the net score for each board to International Match Points (IMPs). (The IMP scale can be found on the Team Score Sheet.) For the above example, +250 corresponds to +6 IMPs. Then you add all the IMP scores together to get the final match result, either positive, negative or zero.

### Knockouts (KOs)

In knockout matches, teams are bracketed, as far as possible, in groups of 16 based on the team's average masterpoints. Bracket 1 has the highest masterpoint average, Bracket 2 the next highest, etc. That way players can compete against other teams of corresponding masterpoint level.

The event consists of 4 rounds (matches). The winner of each match is awarded masterpoints and advances to the next round.

If the number of teams in a bracket is not an exact multiple of 16, in the first round there will be round-robin events where 3 teams play each other and 2 teams advance to the next round. That way, in round 2 there are 8 teams in each bracket.

### **Compact KO**

Compact KOs consist of 2 sessions with two 12-board matches (rounds) per session.

Note: Teams in compact KOs may have only 4 players per team, unlike other team events where 5 or 6 are permitted so that there can be substitutions.

If you win your match, you advance to the next round.

- If you lose in round 1, you play a match in round 2 against another losing team to complete the session. After that, you are eliminated from the event. (Your team then has the option of playing in a 1-session Swiss Team game in the next session.)
- If you lose in round 2, you are eliminated. (Your team then has the option of playing in a 1-session Swiss Team game in the next session.)
- If you lose in round 3, you play a match in round 4 against another losing team.

### **Bracketed (Full) KO**

The Bracketed KO event consists of 4 sessions with one match of 24 boards per session.

Teams containing 4, 5 or 6 players can change players at any time but usually do this at the halfway stage of each round. Individual players are awarded masterpoints only in those rounds in which they played at least half the boards.

Teams knocked out in in any round are eliminated but have the option of playing in a Swiss Team game in the next session

### **Swiss Teams**

In Swiss Team games, teams play a series of short matches (usually 6, 7, or 8 boards). A single event may have between 3 and 7 matches.

At the end of each match, the teams compute the IMP results and the winner reports the outcome to the director. Unlike knockouts, when you lose a match, your team is not eliminated. Each team is assigned an opponent for the next round. Usually you are assigned an opponent whose record so far in the event is close to yours. This assignment is done by means of victory points (VPs). VPs are calculated by the director from the IMP scores, using the 20 VPs or 30 VPs scale (which is printed on the Team Score Sheet). This way, teams with good records play with each other and those with bad records play each other, so if you are losing your chances of winning your next match improve.

In the Swiss Team events at the Firecracker sectional, the teams will be divided into brackets, as far as possible, based on the average masterpoints of the teams that enter the event. The brackets contain between 3 and 8 teams. Each team plays other teams in the same bracket.

If the Tournament Director decides there are insufficient entries for an effective bracketed game, she has the option of playing a stratified game, in which everyone plays in the same event but you can get masterpoints based on your standing in your strat (see Pair Games for more information). The pairings for the first round are random and pairings for subsequent rounds are based on each team's win/loss record or Victory Points (VPs) total.

Final team rankings in Swiss Team events are based on each team's total VPs.

**NOTE:** Sunday Swiss will be two separate Events.

- A/X Swiss for the top teams (any team can opt to play in this group even if their team does not have a lot of masterpoints).
- Under 4000 Bracketed Swiss: No single player can have more than 4000 masterpoints in order for their team to qualify to play in this event. Teams in this Event will be separated into groups of eight teams based on total masterpoints so your team will be competing against teams of similar strength throughout the day.

### **Bracketed Single-session Swiss (Every day except Sunday)**

Teams compete against other teams in their bracket, in matches of 5, 6 or 8 boards, depending on the bracket size. Teams may have 4 players only.

### **Bracketed Two-session Swiss (Sunday)**

Teams compete against other teams in their bracket, in 7 rounds of 7 board matches. Teams may have 4, 5 or 6 players. Teams may make substitutions after any match, although this is often done approximately halfway through the event.

### **Pair Games**

The game schedule mirrors the games played every week at the Palo Alto club, with the intention of providing familiar games for our players.

Some pair games are open, meaning that anyone can play in the event, and some have upper master point limits, such as 499er or 99er pairs. The master point limit is based on the player with the higher number of master points. Pair stratification is based on the average of their

master points. This may help mentees playing with their mentor to earn master points in a lower stratification.

All pair games are open and stratified (except the 0-5 games on Saturday). The stratifications (strats) are shown on the game schedule on the tournament flyer. For example, in the open pairs, the strats are A: 2000+; B:751-2000; C: 0-750. You play against players of any strat; however, you can receive masterpoints based on your showing in your strat. For example, if you are in strat C, you play with the players in the other strats, but you are eligible for masterpoints based on your rank in C, as well as in B or A.

### **Open Stratified Pairs, 2 Sessions**

All pairs are required to play in both sessions; usually in one direction in the first session and in the other direction in the second session. The scores for both rounds are combined to calculate the ranking after the two sessions. Winners receive extra masterpoints.

### **Side Pairs**

These games run at the same time as the 2-session games to accommodate pairs who only wish to play one session.

### **0-5 Beginner Pairs (Saturday)**

Specifically intended for beginners of all ages with fewer than 5MPs.

### **Masterpoints**

All masterpoints awarded at this tournament are Silver points.