

How Can I Win Gold Points...?

One of the most frequently-asked questions I encounter is: "What can I play in to get some Gold points?"

We all know that Regional tournaments (and North American Bridge Championships) are the only place that we can acquire Red and (those precious) Gold points. So it's important to understand which events qualify for awarding Gold.

You cannot win Gold in single-session events. Nearly all of the 299er and 199er games are single-session events. You can win trophies and you can get your picture taken, but if you want Gold points, seek elsewhere.

I have "rated" the eligible events based on the degree of difficulty and the number of points that are attainable in the event. The higher the "Degree of Difficulty", the less likely it is that the advancing player will be pleased with the investment of time in the pursuit of Gold Points.

A two-session **Open Pairs** will pay Gold points for its overall awards, except in the "C" stratification. So if you want to play in this event, you will need to either place in the overalls in "A" or "B", or to score a section top (independent of stratification) in one of the two sessions. Best thing about this event: It is a one-day event.

(For advancing players, Dave's Degree of Difficulty: 9)

If you elect to play in a single-session Side Game that is part of a "**Side Game Series**", it's possible to win Gold, but it takes some scheduling: any player that scores a section top (independent of stratification) in a Side Game can have those (Red) points converted to Gold if the player competes in another Side Game in the appropriate Side Game Series. If the Side Game is part of a series, that will be noted on the tournament schedule. In addition, all players that compete in more than one session of a Side Game series will have their two best scores added together to determine placement in the entire series. Overall Side Game Series awards are also Gold.

Best thing about this event: You can pick your sessions to match your schedule.

(Dave's Degree of Difficulty: 8)

Bracketed Knockouts are traditionally the most popular way for advancing players to acquire Gold Points. Teams of four (or five, or six) are grouped into "brackets", based on the average masterpoint holding of the team members. For a four-round knockout, up to sixteen teams of (relatively) even strength are pitted against one another, with the winners advancing to the next round. Awards for winning each match are Red, but for those teams that advance to the semi-finals (win their first two matches) the overall awards (first place through fourth place), the awards contain Gold Points. The amount of total points and the percentage of points that are Gold depend upon the average masterpoint holding of the players in that bracket. In all but the lowest brackets, the awards are 100% Gold. The most common complaints about this event are (1) it requires a commitment of two consecutive days, and (2) some players are not used to playing in a team game, and do not have regular teammates.

Best thing about this event: You are playing against players very much like yourself.

(Dave's Degree of Difficulty: 4)

Bracketed Compact Knockouts are exactly like the regular Bracketed Knockouts, except that the matches are shorter. Some Compact Knockouts are held in a single day, making this format more compatible with the advancing players' schedules. Other Compact Knockouts are held over several mornings or several evenings, which may also fit some players' schedules better. Because the matches are shorter, the size of the masterpoint awards is smaller, but otherwise, the general description above applies.

Best thing about this event: You are playing against players much like yourself.

(Dave's Degree of Difficulty: 4)

The **Golden Opportunity Pairs** (also known in other tournaments variously as "Gold Rush" or some other promotional term) is a recently-minted event. It is a two-session pair event that is off-limits to players holding in excess of 750 masterpoints. There are two stratifications (under 750 and under 300). The top stratification pays

Gold Points for its overall awards. Section tops (independent of stratification) are Gold. This provides players a chance to play in the format with which they are most familiar, to play in a single-day event, and to play in a field that is "shark-free". I urge all advancing players to consider these events.

Best things about this event: It is a one-day event; the level of the competition is not prohibitive; the overall awards are very generous in comparison to what is available playing in the lower brackets of knockouts. It is not unusual for this event to pay in excess of 15 Gold masterpoints for the winners.

(Dave's Degree of Difficulty: 1)