

## **FUN AND FRENZY IN PHILADELPHIA, ESPECIALLY FOR D6 FLIGHT C GNT!**

*Report from District Director Margot Hennings*

In keeping with the new format of citing only highlights from the recent NABC and ACBL Board meetings, please let me know if you would like to receive an extended report covering all of the Board of Directors (BOD) motions from Philadelphia—contact me at [margot10bridge@cox.net](mailto:margot10bridge@cox.net).

By the time you receive this issue of TableTALK, ACBL management and the Executive Council of the BOD will have had detailed discussions about Philadelphia, most importantly the results from the survey that was sent out immediately upon the conclusion of the Summer NABC to all attendees asking for their input about the 10 AM and 2:30/3:00/4:00 PM start times for national events, instead of the usual 1:00 and 7:30 PM start times. In addition to the electronic survey sent to attendees, I encouraged those of you who I knew did NOT attend because of your dislike of the start times, to send me a note stating this. Since only those folks went who thought they could play at the earlier times, it was important to capture the thoughts of those who did not attend.

While it is highly unlikely that the BOD will reverse its decision to allow the Atlanta locals to have the early start times next year for the 2013 Summer NABC, we will be looking for constructive suggestions to pass on to Atlanta regarding, in particular, the second session start time. Although many folks I talked to disliked the early start time of 10 AM, others liked it a lot, but the almost universal comment was that the second session start time had to be set later than it was—2:30 for the Knockouts (KOs) when the first day of a new KO often did not get started until 10:30 by the time all the brackets were set was simply untenable. Reading Market right across the street was jammed and lines were long between the morning and afternoon sessions, necessitating most of the break being spent in line rather than eating or relaxing. Since that wonderful market was not an option for many of us, it was even more important that the hotel snack bar be well-staffed and well-stocked, and there were problems in that regard as well. For the National Pairs events to start at 3:00 PM was another decision that was not well-thought out in advance, again because the actual morning game start time was often at least 20 minutes after the published start time.

So, we need to figure out a better way for Atlanta to accommodate the players given its first session start time of 10 AM and the inherent problems of meals and down-time to relax between sessions. Holding the national events during the daylight hours left players no time to tour the city and enjoy one's family. During the summer especially, players tend to treat the NABC as a family vacation and bring along their non-playing spouses and children.

All of that said, I enjoyed Philadelphia for its history and national significance, great chef-owned restaurants where one can bring in wine without corkage, and good schedule of events. One thing that Philadelphia did very well, given the early start times, was to have plenty of bagels, donuts, and muffins most mornings beginning at 9 AM—it was a great way to ensure hospitality for all. Their special entertainment—Casino Night—was fun for those who attended, but the end time of the second session meant that the crowd dispersed to grab a quick bite to eat and most unfortunately did not return.

***Bridge in Philadelphia***—The most exciting news from Philly for District 6, as I alluded to in the title of this report, was the success of your teams representing D6 in the Grand National Teams Finals. Although our team representing the Championship Flight did not make it out of the first day Round Robin, the Flight A (0-5000) made it all the way to the Finals, after dominating its opponents in every round along the way and fighting the good fight but bowing to the dominant team from LA in the final quarter to come in 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our Flight B Team made it to the Round of 8, also a good showing. Last, but not least, our Flight C team WON its flight, beating the team from New England easily in the finals.

***Youth and Juniors in Philadelphia***—The accomplishment by the D6 Flight C GNT Team was the talk of the NABC since the team comprised 14-year-old David Soukup (Arlington, VA), 15-year-old Hakan Berk (Potomac, MD), 23-year-old Sylvia Shi (Baltimore, MD), and 24-year-old Alex Prairie (Washington, DC). Three of these four players left right after the NABC to represent the U.S. in the World Youth and Girls divisions of the World Youth Championships held near Shanghai, China. It was a great moment for Junior Bridge! The hiring of Bryan Delfs, himself a former U.S. Junior representative in world bridge, to be Education Program Manager at ACBL HQ, bodes well for the near-term future of our Junior Programs—Bryan has re-structured the Junior Reception held at every NABC to focus on interactive discussion among the youth, juniors, BOD Junior Task Force members, and ACBL management reps. He was also in charge of this year's Youth NABC, held every summer, that featured 164 players under the age of 20 including dozens of youth from China, along with U.S. youth from as far away as Alaska. Many thanks to *Bridge Baron* and Fred Gitelman of *Bridge Base Online (BBO)* for their sponsorship of team and pairs' winner scholarships, and to John McAllister from D6 for sponsoring the \$1,000 Sportsmanship Award.

***BOD Strategy Session***—ACBL CEO Robert Hartman and ACBL President Sharon Anderson continued their impressive leadership roles—Robert with another upbeat report to the Board of his accomplishments to date since assuming the CEO position in November 2011, and Sharon and Robert together with another team-building approach to prioritizing actions and activities. The BOD affirmed the mission of the ACBL “to promote and sustain the game of bridge and serve the bridge-related interests of our members.” Our vision is to have “a growing, thriving organization that actively meets the diverse needs of our members and bridge players.” The top five areas of our strategic focus in the next few years will be to 1) Develop & implement focused programs for members; 2) Identify and replicate best practices & innovations; 3) Integrate technology to meet member needs; 4) Retain more members; and 5) Provide top-quality directing at tournaments. Although these focus areas are listed in order of priority, we will work on all simultaneously.

***Strength of Field***—After deferring the motion to re-structure the awarding of masterpoints at Sectionals and Regionals ever since it was first introduced in Toronto a year ago, the BOD narrowly defeated Strength of Field (SoF) as the method to be used to better allocate masterpoints across all non-KO events—KO changes were implemented a few years ago. “Shadow testing” of SoF began on approximately May 1, and the results were reviewed by both management (including numerous field directors) and the BOD Masterpoint Committee and were reported to the Board prior to its Summer meeting. Shadow testing focused on but was not

limited to effects if any on masterpoint inflation, on masterpoints awarded at both Regional and Sectional events, and any geographic and demographic variations that might occur across ACBL. The objective results of the testing with somewhat marginal actual analysis and a lot of subjective opinion suggested that although the masterpoints awarded for Pairs events have gotten distorted over the years as more and more events have been added to the schedules, SoF might not be the best formula for correcting perceived inequalities. The decision to postpone any definitive re-structuring is wise, but those of us who have favored such re-structuring from the beginning expect that the coming year will see a renewed effort to correct the most obvious faults, such as including a one-session Swiss team event that starts at a different time from a Pair event in the total number of tables for that Pair event. Clearly, there will be more to come on this subject in future reports.....

***GNT/NAP/Special Events***—The hybrid GNT/NAP/Special Events Task Force (TF) comprising three BOD members and six GNT&NAP Coordinators was especially busy this summer, with a telecom during the formal Board meetings, a face-to-face meeting following the BOD meetings, and a joint meeting with the GNT/NAP Coordinators' Forum (CF) the day after that. As Chair of the TF, I worked with the TF members in advance to develop a motion for the full Board to consider during these Philly meetings. The motion was given to the Governance Committee for formal comment and its evolution, which was passed by the full Board, provided for December to be designated as “Grass Roots FUNd Month.” No month may be designated as a fund-raising month for a cause if there is already a special ACBL-wide event in the proposed month or if a month is already “taken” by another cause—e.g., Juniors, Education Fund. So, although December is not optimal given the fact that a number of districts, including your own, already sponsor a large STaC and the holidays further limit the number of times a club can hold a special game to support the current Grass Roots events—the GNTs and NAPs—it is a start in furthering the ability of the districts to support the teams that win their district finals and have the opportunity to represent their district at the Spring (for the NAPs) and Summer (for the GNTs) NABCs.

The NAP winners and second-place finishers in all three flights are currently given a stipend (\$700 for first and \$300 for second) by the ACBL to help defray their expenses to the Spring NABC to compete in the National NAP Finals. Any stipend that the GNT winners of the four flights receive, however, is paid totally by their district and the districts are responsible for raising the money for the stipends. D6 is very successful in encouraging its clubs to hold GNT qualifiers, and this year, a total of \$1600 or \$400 apiece for a four-person team, was given to each flight. However, with transportation, hotel rooms, food, and entry fees all to be paid, \$400 a person does not go very far. Therefore, the passage of this new motion offers an opportunity for D6 to increase its support to the GNT and the NAP finalists. Clubs who wish to hold these special games will collect \$1 per player in addition to their usual club fees and send \$4 per table to ACBL along with the usual sanction fees. ACBL will then return the funds collected by March 31 of the following year to each district—districts will receive back the exact amounts collected from the clubs in their district. The immediate action for club owners / managers is to know that a charity event may *not* now be held in December but should be moved to a game in another month. STaCs *may* continue to be held. D6 hopes that its clubs will schedule as many Grass Roots FUNd Games as possible so that the winners of our District Finals for both the GNTs and NAPs can receive a stipend that truly is a prize to be coveted.

In addition to designating December as the Grass Roots FUNd month, the Grass Roots motion the Board passed in Philadelphia provides for the Grass Roots FUNd to be considered an additional, eligible beneficiary from regionally rated games at sectionals along with the ACBL Charity and Educational Foundations, and the ACBL International and Junior Funds. This means that sectionals may hold regionally rated but still silver-point games at sectionals and collect an additional dollar per player that can be designated for the Grass Roots FUNd as well. A sectional will send in this \$4 per table together with its sectional sanction fees to ACBL, and ACBL will return those dollars to the respective district. I urge Sectional Tournament Chairs to consider running at least one of these regionally rated games (two are allowed per sectional) at their sectionals and designate the proceeds to the Foundation or Fund of their choice as a way to increase interest in lower-attended sessions and reward the players who turn out for those events.

As always, any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at [margot10bridge@cox.net](mailto:margot10bridge@cox.net).

Below is the notice to be placed somewhere in the same issue of TableTALK as the above report:

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#### **NOTICE TO CLUB OWNERS/MANAGERS**

A new Special Events month—December—has been designated by the ACBL Board of Directors as Grass Roots FUNd Month. This means that no other special games, notably the charity games frequently held in conjunction with club holiday parties, may be held in December. Instead, clubs are encouraged to hold special games in support of NAPs and GNTs—the current Grass Roots events—in lieu of charity games. Please see the “GNT/NAP/Special Events” paragraphs at the end of the District Director Report on page(s) \_\_ (and \_\_). Additional information will also be provided in the electronic Club Newsletter sent out by ACBL Director of Club and Member Services, Carol Robertson.

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