

Action in Atlanta!

Report from District Director Margot Hennings
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Another Summer NABC with primary-event start times of 10 and 3—two in a row with Philadelphia just last year. For those of you who did not like the early start times and voted with your feet not to go or to play fewer sessions than usual, this is the last “early NABC” on the books for the foreseeable future. For those who like the early start times, many others did as well, with final Atlanta attendance at a respectable 12,363.5 tables. However, this figure is 8% lower than the last Atlanta NABC in 2005, which also featured the early start times—so it seems like NABC attendance is simply on a downward turn. Figuring out ways to help reverse this trend is one of the key items in the first couple of years of the current ACBL Five-Year Strategic Plan—see paragraph “*Exciting New NABC Events*” below for ways in which the Board of Directors (BOD) are trying to make NABCs special and fun.

Congratulations:

First, to ACBL and all of you who participated in The Longest Day bridge events on June 21. ACBL partnered with the Alzheimer’s Foundation and raised over half a million dollars through its clubs with one club in NYC alone raising over \$77,000! Altogether, 192 ACBL clubs ran special games, 564 in total, with more than 4500 tables in play. Two D6 clubs—one in Charlottesville and one in Northern Virginia (where youth in the active Bridge at Schools programs were instrumental in organizing and playing)—should be singled out for their yeoman’s efforts in this success.

Second, to District 6 (D6) players made themselves and all of us proud in Atlanta, most notably in many of the premier national events—there are too many overalls to mention here, so please see the October/November 2013 issue of TableTALK for a complete list. However, I would be remiss in not mentioning here that Beth Palmer added another national title to her collection in winning the Waglar Women’s KO; Robert Brady was second in the Mixed BAM, and Peter Boyd and Steve Robinson were third in the LM Pairs. Barry Spector, together with long-time VA resident and now resident of Albuquerque Randy Thompson, won the 0-5000 LM Pairs, while Josh Parks was on the winning team in the 0-5000 Mini-Spangold.

Kudos to Youth (and Their Mentors!):

This summer, Atlanta also played host to the Youth North American Bridge Championships (YNABC), held annually in conjunction with the Summer NABC, from August 1-4, and then to the World Youth Open Bridge Championships (WYOBC), which started August 5 and lasted for seven days. D6 youth (under 21) and juniors (under 26) not only had a great time at these events but also played very well in them. (See the October/November 2013 issue of TableTALK for a complete list of overall finishers in these two competitions.) Jim Davis from Williamsburg brought six youth from his area, who play in after-school bridge programs that he teaches, to Atlanta to compete in the YNABC—and compete they did, with Hailey Botkins and Bernadette Williams winning TWO Flight A CardrOOK Pairs (bridge game designed for less experienced players with fewer boards and more time per board) and one Flight B CardrOOK Pairs! In addition, Alex Prairie and Sylvia Shi snagged a Bronze medal in the WYOBC Junior Pairs, while David Soukup played in both the YNABC and the WYOBC, placing in the overalls in almost

every event in which he played. And, carrying on the tradition from their D6 bridge-playing parents, who also did very well in Atlanta, children with the last names of Berk, Manfield, Miller, and Schwartz showed up in lists of the overalls in YNABC and WYOBC events

Changes to NAP and GNT Flight Masterpoint Limits:

Not only did the Board vote to raise both the North American Pairs (NAP) and the Grand National Team (GNT) limits for Flight B from 2000 to 2500, but the full Board voted to raise the Flight A GNT limit from 5000 to 6000. Given the “Masterpoint creep” of the past decade, first with the popularity of Bracketed KO’s, and now with the similarly popular Gold Rush Pairs, players have been “playing themselves out” of NAP and GNT Flights C and B with alarming regularity—increasing the Masterpoint limit of Flight B will hopefully bring players back to both these grass roots events. After looking at the numbers of competitors eligible to compete in each district, there was concern by the BOD that the pool of players eligible for Flight A (formerly 0-5000) should be expanded in an effort to attract more players at that level back to the GNTs. If you have thoughts as to whether Flight C should now be increased to 750, please be sure to let me know, as that may well be advanced for the 2014/15 GNT and NAP competitions if there is a groundswell of opinion to do so.

Increasing the Number of Teams Eligible to Compete in the GNTs:

In many districts, the number of teams competing in each flight is MUCH smaller than we here in D6 are used to, so all four flights frequently play on the same day, which does not allow players who might wish to compete in more than one flight to do so. In a continuing effort to find ways to increase interest in grass roots events, a motion was put forward to allow a second team to represent the district in the national competition in a flight where more than 6 teams competed in the district finals. Although this seems like a small number to D6, out of the 100 events (25 districts x 4 flights) in 2012, 37 events did not have as many as 6 teams! This motion was withdrawn following intense Committee discussion before it reached the full BOD for a vote for two reasons: allowing two teams in a grass roots event is a big philosophical change, and even more importantly, the exact Conditions of Contest (CoC) for narrowing the field from Day 1 to Day 2 of the event so that the cut would not be too drastic need to be worked out. Concern was that competitors would be upset at having come all the way to an NABC just to experience a possible 60% cut the first day, but the event must be kept to its current five days due to the start of the Spingold on Monday. The Grass Roots Committee will work with the full Bridge Committee to work out specific CoC and will present a detailed Discussion Item for the BOD meetings in Phoenix this fall and then a motion for Dallas in the spring for the 2014/15 competition year. Again, your thoughts on this subject are most welcome!

Exciting New NABC Events:

The St. Louis NABC this past spring saw the debut of a new “10K” event—the two-day Swiss for players with fewer than 10,000 MP was a hit, drawing 81 tables. Analysis showed that players in the “10K” event did not reduce the number of players in the “premier” national events—the Open Pairs and the Platinum Pairs—held opposite this new Swiss, but drew players who might otherwise not have played those days as well as “regional” event players who were looking for something special that they can only find only at an NABC. Therefore, the BOD approved FOUR new “10K” events for players under 10,000 MPs for a total of FIVE such events, including the “10K” Swiss at the Spring NABC—a KO, to be held starting on Monday

of the Spring NABC (the same day the Vanderbilt starts); a Pairs, to be held the first Saturday and Sunday of the Summer NABC (the second and third days of the LM, 5000 LM and 1500 LM Pairs); and a Mixed Swiss, to be held the final two days of the Summer NABC (immediately following the Open Mixed BAM); and another Swiss, to be held the second Saturday and Sunday of the Fall NABC (the second and third days of the Reisinger and North American Swiss events). These events will award 10% platinum points, subject to a 10 point maximum, for overall awards only. The winners of this event will not qualify for Grand Life Master status. These events will be reviewed following a two-year trial period, so if you like 'em, come out and play in 'em! All four new events will start in 2014.

Small Events:

There is a regulation that states the BOD must review all nationally rated events that fall below 30 tables for three consecutive years. Accordingly, after this review, the National 199er (Summer NABCs), the National 99er (Fall NABCs), and the Non-Life Master Pairs (also Fall NABCs) were removed from the NABC nationally rated event schedules. At each NABC, at least one special, regionally rated NLM two-session event will be held. If interest increases as evidenced by significantly increased table count, these events could be returned to the national schedule. The two Fall events WILL be held as scheduled in Phoenix in 2013 and removed beginning in 2014. A much tougher call was what to do with two Women's events—the prestigious Wagar KO and the Machlin Swiss (the other three nationally rated Women's events—the BAM and two Pairs events—are not in jeopardy of falling below 30 tables at this time). After considerable debate and analysis and based on the “density” of the field and the quality of the entrants, both the Wagar and the Machlin were retained as national events (i.e., conferring a national title to the winners) with full Platinum points for overalls and section awards, but the winners would no longer be eligible to achieve Grand Life Master status with a win in one of these events.

Other News:

The Masterpoint Policy Committee continues to strive to bring masterpoint awards across club games, tournaments, and special events like GNTs and NAPs into synch. Work is ongoing in this area and the Committee will present in Dallas next Spring its results and recommendations of a “global” study that will help avoid the unintended consequences of the band-aid fixes that have been instituted in the past.

Conditions of Contest were approved for online NAP District Finals—together with the online GNT District Finals Conditions of Contest that were approved several meetings ago. The ACBL now allows online play of these events through *Bridge Base Online* (thank you, Fred Gitelman!), beginning this year.

Changes in CoC for score corrections and appeals to provide for director and player scoring errors were also approved. In addition, Hall of Fame voting procedures and conditions were changed.

Best practice in many non-profit organizations is to have term limits for its Board. Most of those Boards are self-selecting, however, and limiting the terms of those serving is the primary way to bring new blood into an organization. Your ACBL District Directors are elected by the people

they represent—you!—through the Unit Boards, and that democratic process was thought by the BOD to be enough to ensure that the “right” people represented their Districts.

District 19 Director Don Mamula resigned as ACBL President and District 10 Director Bill Cook replaces him in that position through the end of this calendar year. Don will remain on the BOD, where his considerable talents will continue to be put to good use. Bill and his wife Myra will attend our D6 Chesapeake MABC Regional in November. Plan now to attend—there will be multiple opportunities to speak with Bill during that Regional—he is looking forward to meeting you!

For specific information about any of the items presented in summary form above, please go to www.acbl.org/about/bodmeetings, and then click on the name of the city where the NABC was held—in this case, Atlanta.

As always, I welcome your feedback—my email address is at the top of this report.