

Dallas Details

Report from District Director Margot Hennings
Margot10bridge@cox.net

The North American Bridge Championships (NABC) held in Dallas this spring were a welcome respite from the snow and ice that covered much of District 6 in mid-March even though the temperatures in Dallas were lower than I might have hoped! Attendance was good, coming in right around expectations at 9891 tables. The second running of the 10K was somewhat smaller than its inaugural appearance last year, but the IMP Pairs and the Platinum Pairs, which run head-to-head against it, drew larger than expected attendance so the jury is still out as to the lasting success of this 10K event, as well as a second 10K event—a KO—that debuted in Dallas.

Congratulations:

Although the temperatures might have been a bit chillier than expected, things heated up for many of our D6 participants during the competition and special recognition goes to Sumner Steinfeldt and Hal Hindman for two top-ten finishes in NABC events. They finished 5th Overall in the North American Pairs (NAPs) Flight A competition that always kicks off the Spring NABC and begins with grass-roots competition in all 25 districts. They completed a well-played NABC by finishing 9th Overall in the Silver Ribbon Pairs. Other D6 pairs did well in the NAPs; Jim Gaarder and Jimmy Ritzenberg finished 4th Overall in Flight B, and Alan Skvirsky and Bette Kramer finished 11th Overall in Flight C. Congratulations to all!

Other high-level Overall finishes in NABC and NABC+ events include John McAllister and Alan Sontag—12th and 21st, respectively in what is considered the toughest Pairs event at any NABC, the Platinum Pairs; Dick Wegman playing with Arnold Malasky from Florida and Mark Laken playing with Barry Bragin—3rd and 27th, respectively, in the Silver Ribbon Pairs; Greg Humphreys—4th in the Mixed Pairs, along with Ellen Cherniavsky and Gene Kales—16th, and Alex Prairie and Sylvia Shi—40th in that same event (Sylvia and Alex were also 34th with Michael Gill and Noble Shore in the Jacoby Open Swiss); Cecily Kohler—3rd/4th and Barry Spector—5th/8th in the inaugural appearance of the new 10K KO event; Jay Kelkar—5th, Mark Laken and Barry Bragin—40th, and Beth Palmer—41st in the Silodor Pairs; and last but certainly not least, Alan Sontag—3rd/4th and Steve Robinson and Peter Boyd—17th/32nd in the Vanderbilt.

Special Tribute

Kitty Gottfried of Silver Spring MD shares the 2013 Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year award with Silvana Scotto of Long Island. Both of these wonderful Volunteers were honored at the Goodwill Reception in Dallas. Kitty's contributions to bridge and bridge hospitality in the DC area and throughout D6 are legendary. Silvana's bridge club led the nation in the ACBL/Alzheimer's Association partnership for The Longest Day, raising nearly \$80,000 for the cause. Many ACBL Board of Directors (BOD) members came up to me afterwards to say that this Goodwill ceremony, which Kitty attended with her son, was the most meaningful and touching of any they had ever been to. The Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year, Karl Dencker of Lake in the Hills IL, and Honorary Member of the Year Jay Baum, former ACBL CEO, were also honored at the Dallas Goodwill Reception.

A New Schedule of Events at NABCs

After the fall meetings in Phoenix last year, I reported that the ACBL BOD is working to make NABCs special and fun with the introduction of multiple new national events geared to players with fewer than 10,000 masterpoints. At the same time, an “NABC Fantasy” Committee worked hard all last year to come up with a new schedule for NABC and NABC+ events that would hopefully plug gender, age, and masterpoint “holes” in the existing schedule. As is often the case, there was a great deal of controversy surrounding the proposed changes and about two events in particular—the Committee’s proposal to move the Blue Ribbon Pairs to the first weekend of the Fall NABC and to shorten the final Fall Swiss from 3 days to 2. After a vote of the full Board, the Blue Ribbon Pairs will stay in its current mid-week position (I voted to keep this event where it is), but the current fall 3-day Swiss on the last weekend will be shortened to 2 days (I voted against this, as it leaves a “gap” now on Friday after the conclusion of the Blues and the Senior Swiss on Thursday). Changes to all three NABCs were made after a great deal of research into current attendance at events, the ability of current hotel contracts to accommodate players since room blocks are set with an expected rise and fall in attendance based on historical patterns, and surveying many players who consistently play in the NABC and NABC+ events. The proposed NABC and NABC+ event schedules for all three annual NABCs (attached to the Dallas BOD minutes and available online at acbl.org/about/bodmeetings) will be implemented in 2015 on a trial basis, subject to board approval of any/all new event(s) included in these schedules as well as any additions, deletions and tweaks. ***Your input is very much needed as you participate in the 2015 NABCs, as a Board vote will be required to continue the new schedule beyond its trial period.***

ACBL Technology News

As noted above, change is never easy, even more so when it involves a major software program such as ACBLScore. The new program, ACBLScore+, is behind schedule, but will be brought in-house with a transition period to include the current vendor/developer. An additional \$220,000 was approved by the BOD to help ensure that this project is completed as soon as possible. ACBL BOD members Merlin Vilhauer from Oregon, who was involved with the original ACBLScore program, and Russ Jones from western Tennessee, a new Board member with a great IT background, came to ACBL HQ in March to work with management to figure out the best path forward.

Also in the works at ACBL HQ is an Online Partnership Desk, with a developer having been selected and just beginning coordination with the ACBL IT Department.

TourneyTrax continues to be modified and improved at user request—again, as with any software, user requests must be coordinated and implemented based on urgency of need and availability of finances. Most recently, the name of a Tournament Correspondent may now be entered for every sectional and regional—this can be the same person across many or all tournaments so that staffing plans can be viewed by this “Correspondent” as well as by the respective Tournament Chair (TC). Tourney Trax is still a work-in-progress but is getting better. Your feedback is welcome!

2014 Calendar Year Strategic Projects

There are a total of five strategic projects that ACBL is committed to this year. The first two—ACBLScore+ and the **Online Partnership Desk**—were discussed briefly above. The other three

deserve mention as well. There is a critical need to develop a more coherent **Tournament Director (TD) structure** throughout all of ACBL, including recruitment, a career path to advancement, and consistent regulations for work and pay. A number of you who attended to Williamsburg Regional earlier this year met ACBL Human Resources Director Sylvia Hardin and had an opportunity to hear her outline the proposed plan for a “Tournament Director University (TDU).” Sylvia will be traveling throughout ACBL to meet with TDs and TCs with plans to have a completed TDU “syllabus,” including online courses for not only laws and movements but also customer service, by the end of the year. A fourth project focuses on **membership retention**—why Members do not choose to continue their membership in ACBL. So far, three reasons stand out: they need help finding a partner, they need help finding club games, and they want to receive an invoice (which everyone now does). Online apps are now available that can easily help with the first and second of these and The BOD approved an automatic credit card renewal plan to help with the third. The final project for this year is an **online Learn to Play Bridge** program for beginners—this program was beta tested across teachers and players and is now being rolled out via the ACBL website.

Non-Member Fees

Last year, the BOD passed a motion requiring a \$3 and \$4 fee be added to the entry at sectionals and regionals, respectively, for non-members with more than 20 MPs when they play in games with a masterpoint limit of more than 20. Several of us thought that was too restrictive and I sponsored a motion in Dallas to raise the upper limit to 100 of games that players with up to 20 masterpoints can play in. However, most of the membership, according to their district representatives, thought that was not best for the ACBL as a whole—that we want to encourage membership in our organization for all players who play in games with a masterpoint limit of more than 20. So, the motion was rather soundly defeated, but.....the additional fee is retained by the sponsor (the unit/district) and need not be turned into the ACBL, so the unit/district can simply “give back” that extra fee to a non-member (if you choose to do so) in the form of a \$3/\$4 chit for the snack bar or a reduced entry the next time that person plays. The long and short of it: encourage the people who play in your sectionals and regionals to become members—the benefits are many and inexpensive for all that you receive in return—but if they do not want to do this, there are ways to return the required additional non-member fee to them at your discretion.

Items of Special Interest

- A topic that has been of recent interest here in D6 is understanding the roles and responsibilities of Directors-in-Charge (DICs) and tournament sponsors—the units and/or district—and where the boundaries lie. A Roles and Responsibilities document—containing specific rules and highlights areas where communication prior to and during tournaments is required so that nothing is assumed or falls through the cracks—was reviewed in Dallas and will be posted online very soon.
- One new rule voted on in Dallas and included in the Roles and Responsibilities document is that Swiss team matches, although random draw within each stratum for the first match, must use the results of the previous round for the second and all subsequent matches.
- Conditions of Contest regarding the number of boards to be played during the KO stage were revised for the Spingold, Vanderbilt, Wagar KO Teams, Senior KO and the GNT

Championship Flight Final. Matches will now be 60 boards long instead of the previous 64. In addition, the matches during the KO stage for GNT Flight C were shortened from 56 to 52 boards. A motion to reduce the number of boards played in the KO stage of the 0-1500 Spingold KO Teams was defeated and 56- board matches will continue for the KO stage of play.

- The Spring NABC is the time when the Auditors present their report on the financial activities of the previous calendar year and make recommendations to upgrade the financial health and well-being of the ACBL—last year, for example, based on just such a recommendation, ACBL began engaging an armored transport service several times throughout an NABC to make bank deposits in lieu of keeping monies in hotel safety deposit boxes. This is a best practice that was long overdue. This year, ACBL received a clean report.
- Don't forget to come out and play bridge as much as you can from sunrise to sunset on June 21st. Again this year, the ACBL and the Alzheimer's Association are partnering to sponsor *The Longest Day* bridge event to raise funds for the care, support and research efforts of the Alzheimer's Association. June 21st is the summer equinox and, fittingly, the longest day of the year. Many clubs have organized teams—30 are registered to date—and local Volunteers are creative in their efforts to help raise money for this event, such as silent auctions, raffles, and the like. Registration info and FAQs about how to organize *your* team can be found at <http://www.acbl.org/play/thelongestday>. Look for announcements from your District President about special efforts in your area!

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, Dallas.

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