

## Sun, Fun, and Work in San Diego

**The Fall NABC Venue and D6 Successes:** If Toronto had not been so fabulous, I would be writing that the venue for this fall's NABC was the best in many years. The Grand Hyatt in San Diego was an excellent site with many nearby restaurants to fit all pocketbooks, and the weather could not have cooperated any better than it did. I am fondly remembering mid-70s temperatures as I write this during one of the most prolonged severe cold spells the east coast has ever experienced. Hotter even than the temperatures in San Diego were District 6 (D6) partners **Bill Pettis** and **Ai-Tai Lo**, who placed **8<sup>th</sup> in the Blue Ribbon Pairs**, one of the two renowned three-day Pairs events at the fall NABC (the other being the Platinum Pairs, which kicks off the first weekend). This notable overall placement follows their even hotter win this past summer (with Beth Palmer and Bill Cole) in the final weekend three-day National Swiss.

**The New Year Brings a New ACBL President:** The President for the following year is elected at the Fall NABC meeting of the ACBL Board of Directors (BOD), and it has been recent practice for the new President to give the reins to his successor shortly after the vote has been taken. This year, Bob Heller, 2016 ACBL President and our neighbor from District 7 to the south, turned over the direction of the BOD to Jay Whipple, his immediate neighbor (District 9) to the south, following the vote tally of this year's competitive Presidential election. Many of you know Jay, and those of you who think you don't, know his work through his creation of both the Fast Results (FR) and the Common Game (TCG) programs. For those of you who are interested, there is a good article about Jay and the background of these programs in the D9 publication, The Sunshine News. You can find it at [http://www.district9acbl.org/SBN/SBN\\_Index.htm](http://www.district9acbl.org/SBN/SBN_Index.htm). Jay is dedicated, creative, always pushing forward (his email moniker is "What's Next?"), and perhaps the hardest working person I have ever met. Between Jay—who as President sets the Board agenda in response to the BOD's Strategic Plan and is instrumental in liaising with the ACBL CEO and Management to ensure strategic goals are met—and Bahar—your new ACBL CEO with lots of new "Big Ideas" (see below paragraphs of that name)—we can expect some interesting and fast-paced changes this year, with well-thought-out strategic direction from the Board helping to guide them.

**Special Recognition:** The Fall is also the time when ACBL recognizes key individuals for their extraordinary contributions to the organization. The first awardee is well-known to many of us in D6 and his appointment is so-well deserved—**Pete Misslin**, who co-chairs the Gatlinburg Regional with his wife, Julia, was named the **2017 Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year**. Gatlinburg is like a third NABC in terms of size, complexity, and the organizational skills required to run it successfully. I cannot say enough about Pete (and Julia)—the fact that Gatlinburg is an annual Regional and takes exceptional dedication year-round makes this an even more noteworthy appointment. Nadine would be very pleased. **Jan Martel**, who has done yeoman's work in making bridge accessible to all of us who like to kibitz national ACBL events online through BridgeBaseOnline (BBO), been instrumental in making the United States Bridge Federation a viable entity, and so much more, was named the **2017 ACBL Honorary Member of the Year**. Finally, **Nelda Linman** of Bend, Oregon was appointed the **2018 Aileen Osofsky ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year**.

**The First Big Ideas:** This past summer, you received ten proposed “Big Ideas” from ACBL Headquarters (HQ)/CEO Bahar. You ranked those ideas, as did the BOD, and in San Diego, we gave HQ our recommendations based on all input. The BOD applauds the hard work and out-of-the-box thinking by Management and Staff and is in favor of continuing this approach, albeit with an eye toward how plans and actions support the furtherance of the current strategic goals—increasing membership, investing in technology infrastructure to establish the future architecture of ACBLscore, and addressing Volunteer burnout and shortages. Regarding the first set of Big Ideas, the BOD suggested moving forward with the four that **seek** to Improve Teaching Results (with restrictions in the 2018 budget on the extent of funding that can be used for this), Advertise/Promote/Sponsor, Simplify Masterpoints, and Develop Strength-Based Ratings. Although not all of these directly support the current strategic goals, they do contribute to making bridge more understandable and accessible to Members and therefore will help attract new Members as well. The remaining six were considered non-starters or **in need of** significant improvement.

**More Big Ideas:** A number of motions and Discussion Items proposed by Management were voted on and approved in San Diego; others were voted down or withdrawn in Committee. Some Ideas that did not make the “Top Ten” list were considered examples of Management overreach—e.g., standardizing District financial reporting, conducting post-tournament surveys (there was a different emphasis in this than in what is currently distributed and collated by Fast Results—plus HQ wanted to mandate District participation and charge Districts for this!)—and gained little traction. More Big Ideas are coming—including some involving clubs and online play among others, as discussed in Bahar’s column in the December 2017 ACBL Bulletin. The BOD is vetting all proposed new Big Ideas and requiring that Management present the Idea’s relevance to a “Theory of Change” and a cost/benefit analysis for all the Ideas it wishes to pursue in Philadelphia this Spring.

**Experimental Regional Events:** In my report of the actions at the Summer meetings in Toronto and beyond, I explained in detail the opportunities District 6 had to be on the cutting edge of “new, experimental events” involving running **regionally-rated Gold point events in clubs** and tweaking **Knockout formats and bracket sizes** to encourage more player participation. The combined trends of decreasing Regional participation—almost 7% overall in the past three years—and a slight increase in the number of Regionals held, call for creative ideas to stimulate continued Member interest in attending. The experiments in which D6 participated in November were highly successful with **REACH** (**R**egional **E**vent **a**t the **C**lub **H**ouse) drawing more than 1,800 players across three masterpoint “pools” during the week of November 13-17 in daytime clubs in primarily the Eastern time zone. This first REACH event in clubs was run by Jay Whipple through **The** Common Game and more REACH-like events will be run by ACBL in 2018, with the first one coinciding with the International Fund Game over the weekend of February 3 and **continuing during “afternoons” of February 5-9 from the Eastern through the Pacific time zones**. Format changes such as the **“variable-board/three-session/same-day” KO** that was played on Saturday at the Chesapeake Regional and allowed teams knocked out in the first round to enter a second championship event the same day are being scheduled for other District 6 Regionals this year. Also tried in Chesapeake and being integrated in upcoming District 6 Regional schedules is a **“Mini-Soloway” KO-style format** (see bullet below about this new fall NABC event), where KO brackets are run as 2-session Swisses or Round Robins the first day, with the top four teams in each bracket qualifying for the semi-finals the second

day. As was done in Chesapeake, any event registered with ACBL as “experimental” may cut brackets at sizes smaller than have been prevalent in the past with no significant decrease in masterpoints awarded. The severe “hit” taken by sizing brackets smaller than 16 teams is one aspect of KOs that these new formats are seeking to address and correct. Other experimental formats are being tried by other Districts and District 6 may include some of those as well in its 2018 Regional schedules. Conditions of Contest will continue to evolve, with the goal of institutionalizing new formats and masterpoint awards by the end of the year at the latest. Please be sure to give tournament organizers your feedback on these events.

***BOD Member Term Limits:*** Yes, this finally passed, at least its first hurdle. Since a change in the term (currently unrestricted) a BOD Member may serve is regulated by the Bylaws, this motion limiting District Directors to four consecutive three-year terms—which passed 15-9 with one Member absent when the vote took place—needs a second reading at the Spring meetings in Philadelphia, and then to be approved by the Board of Governors (BOG). Article V, Section 5.3.3 is now proposed to read: “District Directors are limited. If an alternate assumes the position of District Director and is in office for a period of six regular meetings or more, the alternate shall be deemed to have served a full three-year term. Terms served or started prior to January 1, 2019 shall not be counted towards the four consecutive three-year terms.” Those who voted for this motion (of which I was one) believe that four terms are a reasonable amount of time to serve and will help usher in new blood and new ideas while maintaining a cadre of BOD members who have historical perspective and practical experience in ACBL administrative practices as well as detailed knowledge of the context of issues critical to moving forward. Those who voted against this motion feel strongly that Districts should maintain the ability to elect their representatives for as long as they wish (a feeling I shared when this was last brought up for a vote).

***Financial Topics:*** The **preliminary budget** is presented for review at the Fall meeting and revisited at the Spring NABC for final approval based on additional information and projections available at that time. After a great deal of discussion in San Diego, a loss of \$170,000 was approved. ACBL has a great deal of cash in the bank and a great many internal needs that require serious expenditures. including continued training and mentoring of tournament directors, technology support (a key strategic goal), and marketing efforts to promote ACBL membership—another key strategic goal. To help fund these efforts, ACBL hopes to attract new Members through the sale of **new \$7.99 temporary ACBL memberships** in 2018. Temporary memberships may be purchased by anyone who has not previously been an ACBL Member, but the player must be sponsored by a club, tournament or teacher, who will receive a recruitment bonus; these memberships will be valid for one month and can be renewed. All players in charity events and in events with an upper masterpoint limit greater than 20 who wish to play in ACBL-sanctioned sectionals and regionals must have valid membership numbers in order to participate. Sponsoring organizations will continue to charge a mandatory additional fee of at least \$4 per person per session for inactive members. The vote for this was 14-9 with one abstention and one absent, but those of us who voted for it believed that we should give Management the opportunity to flex its marketing muscle and implement this idea for growth of our membership organization. Also contributing to the projected \$170,000 loss is a \$100,000 commitment to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) to support the World Championships in Orlando this coming September, and the expected loss to be incurred in supporting the NABC in Honolulu this Fall.

***Other Key Actions:*** *Note:* More detailed information about all of the items discussed above and in this section can be found in the Minutes for the Fall meetings in San Diego at <http://www.acbl.org/about-acbl/administration/board-of-directors/meeting-motions-and-minutes/>.

- Following the success of the first **online Robot Tournament** during the summer NABC in Toronto—2,510 players participated in what became known as the “Pajama Games”—an NABC Robot individual tournament (format to be determined) will be added to the schedule for each of the three NABCs.
- Important news for **lapsed Members**: We have received numerous reports from NLMs that they are discouraged by the greater number of pigmented points required to attain LM status, and many have dropped their membership. If you know of Members to whom this applies, please be sure to tell them that: In San Diego, the BOD voted that if you joined the ACBL prior to 2010 and subsequently let your membership lapse, you can have your membership reinstated prior to July 1, 2018 at no charge and the LM rank requirements existing prior to 2010 will be applied to you. After July 1, 2018, you may rejoin for a \$50 fee and the LM rank requirements existing prior to 2010 will be applied to you.
- **Three-flighted Regional events** may be run with up to two strats in each of the top two flights and up to three strata in the third flight—this is a change from the current accepted practice of having three flights, each with two strats.
- A number of you have expressed chagrin about the way in which **overall awards** are calculated in **NABC+ events**. Now, for six-session NABC+ pair and team games, all pairs/teams that qualify for the final two sessions will be included in the overalls if there are at least 10/19 tables (pairs/teams) and the calculated award is not less than one (1.00) masterpoint. The depth of the award will be at least 10% of the number of pairs/teams in the field, up to a maximum of 25% of the number of pairs/teams in the field. Now we just need to get *ACBLscore* to implement this new requirement correctly!
- The **electronic device policy** in place at NABCs shall be adopted by all ACBL Regional tournaments. A similar proposal to require the same policy at sectionals was defeated 9-14-2—I was one of the nine who voted for it. If we expect to run Sectional Tournament at Clubs (STaCs) and other games in clubs, a consistent electronic policy at sectionals and in clubs should be followed.
- The **Mini-Blue Ribbon masterpoint limit** has been increased to 6,000 masterpoints from the previous 5,000 masterpoints, to match the upper limit of the GNT and NAP events.
- A **new extended team event**, the Soloway KO, will be introduced into the Fall NABC schedule, beginning in 2019. This will parallel the Vanderbilt in the Spring and Spingold in the Summer NABC, and will start with a two-day Swiss-qualifying event, after which the top 32 teams will proceed to the KO portion. This event is the request of the top-player-comprised National Competitions and Conventions Committee, and it is hoped that its format will encourage many teams that might not otherwise enter a high-level team event to do so.
- Any future NABC events with extended team games that have the quarterfinal of that event on the first day of a three-day team event will allow **drop ins**. Specific rules govern masterpoint awards.

- A decision on accepting the newly proposed **Basic Chart, Basic+ Chart, Open Chart and Open+ Chart** to replace the current General Conventions Chart, ACBL Mid-Chart, ACBL Superchart and ACBL Limited Conventions Chart was deferred until the spring meeting to ensure sufficient time to thoroughly review all provisions within these charts.
- The motion requiring each pair (in an event without screens) to have one **Convention Card** that includes the names of each member of the partnership legibly filled out and on the table throughout the session was defeated. This motion was proposed because currently, TWO identical convention cards with the names of the partnership are required and this requirement is frequently not met. The fear on the part of those who defeated this motion (I was among them) was that by reducing the number from two to one, there was even LESS chance of there being even one card on the table. As with enforcement of slow play, this requirement is one that needs to be emphasized as important when director training is done, and enforcement must be consistent—not an easy goal to achieve.
- As of this month (subject to existing contracts), **Masterpoints awarded at Regionals at Sea** will be reduced from 100% to 80% of the award generated by the appropriate formula for the event.

**BOD Meeting Durations:** Again, at the Fall NABC, BOD face-to-face meetings overlapped with the first nationally rated events and ran four-and-a-half days, including six hours on Thanksgiving. The Fall meetings always have a “heavy” schedule due to the first publication of the budget. In 2018, Jay has projected that face-to-face formal BOD meetings will last just three days and finish before the start of the tournament—this latter now a requirement for the Spring and Summer based on passage of a motion in San Diego. Not having meetings on Fridays and Saturdays allows BOD members to attend other functions on those days and still saves the League one or two days in hotel and per diem fees depending on whether the BOG holds its meetings on Saturday or on Sunday.

As always, contact me with any questions at [margot10bridge@cox.net](mailto:margot10bridge@cox.net). Hope to see many of you at the Williamsburg Regional at the end of February! ....—Margot