

Phabulous Philadelphia

Another Great NABC: Following on the heels of Toronto and San Diego would have been a hard act for any city, but our neighbors to the north in Philadelphia did a tremendous job in another good venue. The snow that fell at the beginning of the Spring NABC in March did little to dampen players' enthusiasm for playing, and the final total table count ended up about 500 above estimate at 10,317½. The regional event playing site was at the Convention Center, with the shortest distance to where the games were played not easily accessible through the connecting walkway, but even that did not stop large numbers of attendees from playing in the pairs and team/KO events held there.

Overall, temperatures in the playing rooms were more moderate than usual, events got started within reasonable parameters, hospitality was creative—including the most-appreciated registration gift of a \$5 discount card to any of the fabulous food stalls in the Reading Market, conveniently located right across the street; an Atlantic-City-style Boardwalk one night with cotton candy, funnel cakes, hot dogs, balloons, arcade games and photo booths all lending a festive air; and three performances by a terrific a cappella group from the University of Pennsylvania.

One final note: In addition to the traditional sessions of duplicate bridge play that we all go to the NABCs for, there was a free rubber bridge room where many top players stopped by to play a few hands with anyone at the tournament or from local clubs. This could become a standard feature at our NABCs as we search for ways to expand the visibility of duplicate bridge and encourage rubber bridge players to try duplicate. Together with the fine bridge play by those named below as well as the many local players who took advantage of the proximity of this venue and who did well in regional events, this made for a memorable NABC experience.

D6 Successes at the Spring NABC: Kudos to Mark Dahl who won the nationally rated *Fast Pairs*—noteworthy in and of itself, but even more-so in that it is the second year in a row that he has won this same event, and with the same partner. Less than 6 matchpoints behind in 2nd were Leo Lasota and Brad Theurer, who led for the first two sessions only to be overtaken by Mark in the third and fourth—a hard-fought four-session battle between D6 pairs. Ed Lazarus was 14th, Harry Gellis and Dewayne Jones 26th, Helene Bauman and Jim Wakefield 29th, and Marshall Kushner 40th. Chen Zhou scored an impressive 5/8 finish in the Vanderbilt, the premier team event in the Spring NABC. Also finishing in the Top Ten of an event were Fred King and Becky Duty, who scored a 4th place finish in the *Mixed Pairs*, with Greg Humphreys in 5th and Muh-sha Crawford and Andy Gofreed in 6th close behind. Mary and Alan Tenenbaum ended up 22nd, Annie and Alan Schwartz 27th, and Linda Marshall and David Ruderman 30th. D6 players were also well-represented in The *Silver Ribbon Pairs*: within just 2 matchpoints of each other, Barry Falgout and Lyle Poe finished 8th, Harry Gellis and Dewayne Jones 9th, and Cecily Kohler 10th. Marty Nelson and Gil Cohen (24th), Brad Theurer, with Barry Bragin—until recently, a long-time D6 member (34th), Marty Graf and Mark Shaw (39th), Lou Reich (41st), Alan Tenenbaum and Andy Gofreed (48th) and Joan Lewis and Robbie Hopkins (49th) rounded out the many D6 players who achieved Silver Ribbon overalls. 12th in the *IMP Pairs* was Dick Wegman, with Harry Gellis and Dewayne Jones placing 20th. Others with national overalls were John McAllister with a notable 5th in the two-day *Jacoby Swiss*, with Steve Robinson and Peter

Boyd coming in 26th, Li Yitang and Jian Jian Wang 30th, Ai-Tai Lo 31st, Chen Zhou 40th and Jim and Judy Fox 41st. The Silodor Open Pairs also boasted numerous D6 overalls, with Ai-Tai Lo and Beth Palmer 19th, Kenton Schoen and Mickie Kivel 22nd, and Bill Pettis 44th. Adrienne and Gene Kuehneman and Margot Hennings were 11th in the *10K Swiss*, with Barry Ko coming in 16th. Margot Hennings and Shawn Stringer were 11th in the *Women's Pairs*. And, last but not least, of the nine total pairs who went to the Philly NABC to compete in the *NAP Finals*, D6 was well-represented with Robin Taylor 27th in *Flight A* (with Alan Sontag, who is a District 24 member but also a long-time resident in D6), and Joe Siqueira and Peter Haglich 8th and Jim Gaarder and Jimmy Ritzenberg 22nd in *Flight B*.

CEO Progress Report: I'm sure you remember hearing and reading about our CEO Bahar Gidwani's Big Ideas last Fall and again this past Winter. In addition to these Big Ideas and in support of many of them, Bahar reported on a number of actions and projects including:

- REACH2—the second gold point regionally-rated pairs event to be held in the clubs, which ran for six days in 547 clubs with over 3,294 players participating—raised over \$75K for the United States Bridge Federation, the Canadian Bridge Federation and Mexican Bridge and returned \$21K to the districts whose clubs and players participated.
- Online marketing test using key word searches to determine when bridge is searched for—“Improving mental fitness” triggered the biggest response.
- Changing the focus of the Teacher Accreditation Program (TAP) on “how to play bridge” instead of “how to teach bridge.” (Doug Grove has been very involved in helping to manage this change in focus.)
- Purple Pass, a program that allows payment of entry fees with credit cards. D6 will be using this in Reston and Hunt Valley as part of this experimental rollout.
- And, on the downside, overall tournament attendance was down 6% in 2017 over 2016, and membership continued its decline, down 1,500 despite 11,000 new Members due to the continuing passing of so many.

Still More HQ Big Ideas: In Philly, the BOD reviewed progress on the Big Ideas that had been thought might bear the most fruit (see above from CEO Report) plus a number of new ones. We continue to strive to align limited staff and money with the most promising Ideas that support our current strategic goals: increasing membership, investing in technology infrastructure to establish the future architecture of ACBLscore, and addressing Volunteer burnout and shortages. A number of Ideas that you may have heard about such as reducing the number of sectionals and actively working to change the way tournaments are staffed and how staff are evaluated were put on hold until after the next meetings. Key actions thought to be high priority by the BOD include:

- Continue testing online ads and club-level promotion and build a back-end to refer leads to teachers and clubs
- Reach out to Groupon, ValPak, Pennysaver, etc., and decide if we can leverage these media to help grow membership. Look into placing newspaper ads near bridge columns (e.g., the Tribune partnership)
- Finish Phase II of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system
- Finish developing the “gateway” between the new masterpoint program (engine) and Club and Tournament files to allow changes and accessibility to masterpoint awards and scoring across the field

- Update the Volunteer Manual and other support documents available on the website

Financial Topics: The **preliminary budget** was presented at the Fall meeting in San Diego and revisited in Philly for final approval. Passage was not unanimous (21-3 and one abstention), but the overall sentiment was that despite going in the red this year, it was appropriate to use the two \$500K+ surpluses from 2016 and 2017 to fund overdue projects and much needed actions. The primary focus of these expenses is to remove dependency on the outdated AS400 computer systems and move to upgraded cloud-based technology (e.g., the CRM mentioned above as well as the new General Ledger accounting software) that will enable ACBL staff to better access marketing and member service tools. Four new technology positions were funded in conjunction with these updates. In addition, we are making a significant (\$200K) investment in tournament director training. Careful future budgeting with realistic assessments of tournament profits and assignment of tournament directing staff should allow a break-even scenario for 2019.

New Convention Charts: *Four new ACBL Convention Charts* were unanimously approved. These are the work of two members of the Competitions and Conventions Committee—Danny Sprung and Tom Carmichael—who devoted countless hours to developing charts that will be conducive to different levels of competition and ***will replace the old Standard Card and mid-chart and super-flight charts***. Details will be available in upcoming issues of the ACBL Bulletin before these new charts take effect at the start of the Fall NABC in November.

New Rule for Sectionals Held Concurrently with NLM Regionals (in time for an Upcoming NLM Regional in D6!), More Gold for NLM Regionals and Flight C GNTs and NAPs, and More Masterpoints in District Finals of Grassroots Events:

- Two motions that passed in Philly should help make Non-Life Master Regionals held concurrently with Sectionals an even more attractive tournament alternative than they have been in the past. The first NLM Regional to be held in D6 was in Fairfax, VA last fall and was so successful that its attendance actually matched the concurrent sectional—255½ tables. But, those who played in the sectional received far fewer masterpoints than usual at what was one of the NVBA’s usually large 420-450-table sectionals because of the much smaller table count at the sectional. And per then-current regulations, the proportion of Gold was capped at 25% for those participating in the NLM Regional. Following a successful second reading at the NABC in Atlanta this Summer (required for motions that increase masterpoint awards), ***2/3 of the tables playing in an NLM Regional during any session of a concurrent sectional will be counted towards the table count of the sectional for the purposes of awarding masterpoints***. And, ***the percentage of Gold that will now be offered at an NLM Regional will be 33%***. The former passed 20-4 with one abstention, so there is every reason to think that this will pass easily in Atlanta and be in effect for the upcoming second NLM Regional and concurrent Sectional to be held in Williamsburg September 28-30. The motion increasing the percentage of Gold (not the formula for calculating the number of masterpoints awarded, so no second reading is needed) passed 22-1-2 and became effective April 2.
- One more motion that will require a second reading in Atlanta because it both increases the percentage of Gold awarded and the overall number of masterpoints is one that was proposed in part to create more parity with the gold point awards in the recent REACH experiments held in the local clubs. Pending a second reading: 1) ***In the finals of District GNT/NAP Flight C events, the percentage of Gold that will be awarded will be***

increased from 25% to 50%; and 2) depending on the number of sessions and field size minimum requirements, *the overall masterpoint awards in all flights will be substantially increased* (more than 30%); for example, winners of a four-session Flight A District NAPs would receive 48 MPs instead of the current 36, and winners of a two-session Flight C District Final NAP event would receive 15 MPs instead of the current 10. Like the motions above, this one carried easily 22-3 so the expectation is that it, too, will be in effect immediately following the Atlanta NABC.

Changes to the Spring NABC Schedule and Unsuccessful Changes to NABC Start Times:

- Starting in the Spring of 2019, *the days that the Lebhar IMP Pairs and the Silver Ribbon Pairs are held will be reversed*. This is being done to ensure that players under 60 will have a national event to start play in on the first Sunday—currently this is not the case. This motion carried 21-3-1.
- Also effective in the Spring of 2019, *the Flight B and C National Finals of the NAPs will move to the final weekend of that NABC*. The original idea to hold these NAP finals on the final weekend following the Red Ribbon Pairs when that event was first introduced was well-thought-through, but the Red Ribbon Pairs were moved to the Summer NABC in 2016, thus “stranding” the B and C NAP Finals on the first Sunday and Monday. Moving these Finals responds to suggestions by players in those flights that they would be more likely to attend if these Finals were on a weekend. This change will also have the effect of spreading out attendance across the ten days of the NABC. In addition, the BOD is considering adding a two-day national event on the final Thursday and Friday of the Spring NABC for Flight B and C players so that there is again a good four-day slate of events for these players.
- By one of the closest votes at these recent meetings, a motion that would have changed NABC start times from 1pm and 7:30pm to 1 and 7 failed by a vote of 10-15. Many advocated for the shorter break, but others thought the flexibility to give some players time to go to a restaurant of their choice, and others the chance to grab a quick bite and then rest between sessions, as well as not to rush the wrap-up of one session of play and start the next, plus give directors time to relax a bit, outweighed the benefits of decreasing the break time. Individual NABC organizers can still petition the BOD for an exception to the standard prescribed starting times.

Board of Directors’ Attendance at Board of Governors (BOG) meetings and a Task Force to Look into the Roles of the BOD and the BOG: A motion that would have no longer required BOD members to attend the BOG meetings on the first weekend of each NABC was defeated 1-23 with one member absent. The Board felt that it was important to attend the BOG meetings to watch and listen to the dynamics and reactions to HQ reports and the summaries of the motions we had just voted on. Tied in with this motion was the duration for which BOD hotel nights and per diem would be paid, so the decision to approve or defeat it took on a political twist. As part of the discussion about all this, as Chair of Governance, I suggested that we set up a joint BOD/BOG Task Force to document and update the roles of both Boards and forge a path forward toward better communication and cooperation. The ACBL President, the Board and the BOG Chair Richard Popper agreed, and the Task Force is underway. I will report on its progress after our Atlanta meetings.

Complete details of the above actions plus others involving updates to the Bylaws, Limited NAP Club Games, and Limited and Invitational Games at STaCs and more can be found on the ACBL website under Administration and then Board Minutes. As always, contact me with any questions at margot10bridge@cox.net. Hope to see many of you at the Reston and Hunt Valley Regionals over the summer!—Margot