

August 2003

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings

Long Beach NABC, July 2003

This is the 31st report I have written since I assumed the position of District Director. It will be the first one that will not receive the red and green editor's marks from Jim Wood. (Red is mandatory corrections and green is suggested.) That is why I am having a difficult time getting started because my friend and colleague of almost 30 years won't be "making improvements" to my awkward sentences. If the term "unique" or "one-of-a-kind" ever applied to anyone, it certainly applied to Jim.

Long Beach is a great place to have a tournament -- wonderful weather, plentiful restaurants, good shopping and interesting attractions close by including the Queen Mary. If we must use a convention center to hold the tournament, the set up in Long Beach was ideal: very good playing conditions, one hotel just a few steps away, and two additional hotels at the other end of the convention center just across the street from that entrance. As usual the local hosts were great. Even though the late-night hospitality program stated, "when the food runs out, it runs out, so get there early," there always seemed to be plenty.

For the first time our District was prominently represented at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Steve Robinson was one of three living recipients and Eddie Manfield was the only one in the deceased category. I have been to every one of these banquets and it is one of the nicest, and certainly most prestigious, ACBL event.

When our current President took office, he decided that this year we would have three day Board meetings instead of the usual four days. In Philadelphia it was probably one day too long as evidenced by our shortest-ever minutes. However, everyone saved up for Long Beach and we needed the fourth day instead of late nights. Meeting from 8:30 a.m. until midnight with only a short break for dinner is too much to ask of anyone. My bylaws committee did meet the day before the main meeting from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at which point we needed to stop because we were beyond being productive.

The first order of business was electing Bruce Reeve President for next year. It will be nice having a President from the Mid-Atlantic and I am looking forward to what I feel confident will be a positive, productive year.

We now have another Regional in the Mid-Atlantic. It started with Florida requesting another Regional because they had two new attractive areas that wanted to hold a Regional, but no area currently holding a Regional wanted to "give up its spot." Then after the success of the New Years Regional in Charleston, District 7 and Mid-Atlantic officials thought it would be a good idea to have a New Years tournament as an annual event. So they joined Florida in asking for a change and, *voila*, the Regional Tournament Allocation numbers were changed and everybody got what they wanted. The Mid-Atlantic will now have ten regionals per year (up from nine). This extra allocation is based on the total membership of a district with one additional regional given to a district with 9,000 to 12,000 members, two additional regionals with 12,001 to 15,000 members and three additional regionals to a district with over 15,001 members. There are no other districts with over 9,000 members.

Then we added Canada to the list of permanent site regionals, that are not included in a district's allocation. The purpose of this Regional is to support the Canadian Bridge Federation International Fund and it can be held in any of the four Canadian districts annually.

And speaking of tournaments, we approved two future NABCs. The Marriott Renaissance Center in Detroit will be the site of the 2008 Spring NABC from March 6 to 16 and the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego was approved for the Fall 2009 tournament from November 26 to December 6. Both of these places are one-site locations.

In my last report I mentioned that District 20 was gathering petitions to recall Jade Barrett who took over the District Director position when Bob Lix resigned. Their effort failed and Jade will continue to serve for the rest of the term. The recall of a District Director is one of the things the bylaws committee is looking at. Currently, District Directors are elected by the unit boards but can only be recalled by a large percentage of the members of each Unit. It seems to me that it should be harder to recall than elect, but not be impossible from a practical standpoint. Perhaps the recall could be a function of the unit boards as well. The bylaws committee will be meeting again the day before the Board meetings in New Orleans and I would be glad to hear opinions on this or any other areas of the ACBL bylaws.

Tournaments and Conditions of Contest were probably the busiest committees. Had we not had several telephone conferences prior to going to Long Beach, we would not have been ready to pass any motions. The following changes were approved:

Winners of continuous pairs/side game series no longer earn a Blue Ribbon qualification.

Exceptions to the rule that a player must play at least 50% of the matches in order to be eligible for overall awards in Swiss teams were passed. In a seven match Swiss, a player can play any four matches or the last three matches. If a Swiss consists of 8 matches and is divided into 5 and 3, playing the three-match session only is acceptable as long as it is the final session.

The Reisinger may use barometer scoring with publication of previous rounds' results and standings throughout the day with a one round lag.

Transfer responses/advances to overcalls where the call shows length or values in the suit of the transfer is now permitted on the General Convention Chart.

The senior knockout teams will be ordered by their average seeding points with ties broken by lot. The defenders will be seeded number one as long as four members are playing together, and remaining teams will be seeded in order (no grouping).

Imp quotient has been eliminated from determining any advancement in knockout matches. Basically in round robins where each team has won a match, the first criterion is netimps; next is the result of head-to-head matches and, finally, if two teams are tied in negative netimps and it is still unresolved there is a two board playoff. In compact knockouts that end in a tie and there is another match to play in the current session, the tie is broken in order as follows: total points scoring, board-a-match scoring, coin-flip.

Changes were made to Flights B and C of the Grand National Teams. The finals will be a seeded knockout and seeding will be by average masterpoints with ties broken by lot.

Two items before this committee did not pass. We tried once more to get approval for any defenses to a 1NT opening bid and had the same failure. Also another attempt was made to change the eligibility age for senior events. It was defeated.

Management would like to experiment with 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. starting times at an NABC. We approved this on the condition that they get the approval and cooperation of the local sponsoring organization. The 2004 hosts have declined to try this experiment. I will let you know if Management gets any takers in 2005. In the meantime, a poll of the 2003 Spingold entrants was taken to see if they had a preference for 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. starting times for the Spingold and Vanderbilt. So far I have not seen the results.

For those who arrive at a Nationals site early on Thursday (or whatever the first day is), there will now be a game for them to play in. It will be a one-session regionally rated red-point event for the benefit of the International Fund. In addition, units will be permitted to run a maximum of two International Fund sessions at each Section, except StaC's. The points will be regionally rated silver points and sponsors will be charged an additional \$1.00 per player which will go to the International Fund.

One reason we need to get more money into the International Fund is that we are now sending Senior teams along with Open and Women's teams. In addition we passed a motion that each type designated as USA One must receive equal funding. USA Two may receive less than USA One but, again, it must be equally distributed among the Open, Women's and Senior's.

Budget approval is at the Fall meetings, but in the summer Management presents the preliminary budget assumptions. I note that they plan to increase prices for sanction fees, tournament director session fees and NABC entry fees.

There were several changes made in the Hall of Fame Charter. Two significant changes that were proposed by the Hall of Fame Committee were adding a Women's category and removing the current Board of Directors and Board of Governors from the list of eligible electors. Fortunately the Board did not approve of these changes. What we did approve was combining the von Zedtwitz and deceased category with the initial selection of candidates made by a Veterans' sub-committee. Final selection will continue to be made by the whole Hall of Fame Committee. The Living category has been designated as an Open category. Votes will now be weighted. There will not be any predetermined number of inductees to the Hall of Fame from the Open category.

The requirement that one must be an ACBL member, whose service fee or dues is current, in order to play in an NABC+ event has been extended to any Nationally-rated event at an NABC.

We changed the policy on inmates of penal institutions so that anyone incarcerated may apply and become a member of ACBL. In addition if inmates are allowed to leave such an institution for a limited period of time, they may compete in sanctioned ACBL activities. It did seem silly to have a program to teach bridge and run games in prisons and not let the participants be members.

Finally, after many years of discussing having a binding arbitration policy, we actually passed one. It follows:

Any dispute which is in any way related to membership in the American Contract Bridge League ("ACBL"), or any action for damages or injunctive relief against the ACBL, or any action to reverse, amend, modify or delay enforcement of a disciplinary action by the ACBL, regardless of the facts or the legal theories which may be involved, shall be resolved by binding arbitration before the American Arbitration Association ("AAA") by a single arbitrator in accordance with the Commercial rules of AAA in effect at the time the arbitration proceeding is initiated. The arbitration hearing shall be held in the AAA's Southeast Case Management Center (located at 2200 Century Parkway, Suite 300, Atlanta, Georgia 30345) or at such other location as the parties may agree in writing. The arbitrator shall prepare in writing an award which includes the legal and factual reasons for the decision. The parties shall divide equally the costs of the arbitration and shall pay their respective attorney fees and expenses, but the arbitrator may assess all such costs and the prevailing party's attorney fees and expenses to the non-prevailing party in the arbitration award. The provisions of the Federal Arbitration Act shall apply to arbitration between the ACBL and its members.