

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings Reno NABC, March 2004

It is always a pleasure to report that a tournament is even bigger than the last one held at that site and even better when it sets a new record. Such was the case with Reno establishing a new Spring NABC record and besting its previous record set in 1998 by almost 1,000 tables. Plus, it seemed that everyone attending had a good time. After all, there was everything a bridge player could want — one-site location, casino, several restaurants and shops in the hotel and even a bowling alley. “You never have to leave the hotel” was particularly true here. I arrived on Saturday afternoon and never got close to the outside door until Thursday evening.

As I have previously reported, I am chairman of the Bylaws Committee which began working last year at the Spring NABC and continues to the present completely revising the ACBL bylaws. In Reno we gave a report to the Board of Directors and the Board of Governors on the summary of proposed changes to the bylaws. Some of these are:

1. The membership may initiate and approve amendments to the bylaws. It turns out that this is a requirement by New York State law, where we are incorporated. However, NY law does not state how many members are needed for a quorum at a membership meeting. The current bylaws set this number at 100 and the committee has proposed an increase to 250. Many Board members want to set this number much higher (500 to 1600). The Board of Governors wants the 250 number. Since we have difficulty reaching the 100 number now, and do so only if we hold the membership meeting in the middle of the Board of Governors meeting, reaching even 250 members at two consecutive annual meetings would be very difficult. Any more would be impossible.
2. The method for filling a vacancy in the office of District Director will be dependent upon the length of the unexpired portion of the term. If the vacancy occurs in the first year of the term, the First Alternate will serve until a new District Director can be elected. If the vacancy occurs after the completion of the first year, the First Alternate will fill the position for the remainder of the term. This change was made so that there will be no problem with a lame duck First Alternate (either by choice or by losing an election) taking over for more than two years. The First Alternates are elected during the first year of the District Director’s term. We had both of these instances occur in 2002 when two District Directors resigned in their first year of a new term. One First Alternate had been defeated for a new term and the other had “retired” and chose not to run for office.
3. The recall and removal of a District Director will be in the hands of the Unit Board members instead of the total membership of the District. Current bylaws require signatures of 60% of the members of the District constituting 60% of the members in each of 70% of the Units in the District. Practically speaking this was impossible. The new proposal requires a 75% vote of the Unit Board members of the District. This would be difficult, but not impossible. In addition the Board of Directors may remove a District Director for cause. This procedure also requires a 75% vote, in this case of the Board of Directors.
4. Each nominee for election to District Director, First and Second Alternate and Board of Governors shall maintain residence within the geographical boundaries of the District from which he was elected. Currently there are no such requirements and questions come up like “what if you move across the street which is in another District” and “what about snowbirds?” This will probably be modified to just require membership in a Unit within the District.
5. The Treasurer will be added to the Executive Committee. Almost all organizations include all their officers on their Executive Committee. Currently the Treasurer is the only officer not on the Executive Committee. When we met with the Board, no one said a word. Since that time there has been a flurry of emails on the subject, mostly negative, so this proposal may not be approved.
6. Amendments to the bylaws passed by the Board of Directors and the Board of Governors no longer need to be approved by the membership. The initiating body still has to approve an amendment by a 2/3 vote at two consecutive meetings and then get a majority approval from the other group.

The main unresolved issue is the quorum membership number which must be agreed upon before formal presentation and the vote by the Board of Directors in the summer. Even so, it will take another year before the new bylaws can be enacted. There will be another vote by the Board in the fall, a vote by the Board of Governors in the spring, and then a presentation to the membership in the summer of 2005 (Atlanta).

A big convention is coming to Atlanta just before and during the NABC there next summer. The hotel asked that we move the start of our tournament to Saturday, instead of Thursday, and end on Tuesday. They offered compensation and benefits to make this move. We gave Management approval contingent upon agreement from affected districts. Subsequently, the hotel withdrew its offer and the tournament will be held as originally scheduled.

Since my last report, we approved three new NABCs which are:

1. Houston, March 12-22, 2009 at the Hilton Americas (a new facility downtown which is a one-site location).

2. Toronto, July 21-31, 2011 at the Royal York and the Sheraton Centre. Unfortunately there is no one-site location in Toronto, however, this is the best. We were at these locations in 1978 and 1986 when we had big attendance numbers.

3. Seattle, November 24-December 4, 2011 at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel and the Seattle Convention Center.

We discussed the issue of participating in the World Team Olympiad, which will be held in late October-early November this year in Istanbul. We gave authorization and support for our WBF Representatives to attend the WBF meetings there and all indicated they would attend. Then a few days later the State Department removed Turkey from its warning list. The USBF, which is now officially responsible for our teams and had previously indicated that they would not send teams to Turkey, will revisit this issue in early May. In the meantime, Trials (open, women's and seniors) will be held and the teams will go either to Turkey or be one of the two teams participating in the Bermuda Bowl/Venice Cup next year. I have been chairman of the Women's Trials for many years and now the USBF Board voted me chairman of the Senior Trials. I wasn't even at the meeting. Guess they think I don't have enough to do.

In reviewing the minutes from Reno, it seems like most items were either rejected or deferred to New York. We did take positive action on several motions:

♠ We authorized Management to develop and implement a policy of a discounted sanction fee for online games and online clubs.

♠ The District and Unit charity table fees have been increased an additional \$1.00 per table. This will take effect no later than January 1, 2005. The request to increase the club charity game fees \$1.00 per table was deferred to New York.

♠ An item deferred from New Orleans was a proposal that the stratification of a pair or team could be determined by the average masterpoint holding of each pair or team. We did not approve anything on pair games, but we did pass that at sponsor option, the stratification level of a team in a stratified swiss event may be determined by the average masterpoint holding of all team members.

♠ The New York NABC this summer is being co-hosted by District 24 and District 3. We had previously given them approval as an exception but in Reno we added the following to the NABC Operations: Contiguous districts may co-host an NABC with ACBL Management approval subject to ratification by the Board of Directors. If the NABC is co-hosted, ACBL will provide a one-bedroom suite for the district director from each of the sponsoring districts.

♠ The Unit or District Tournament Chairman and the NABC host committee may now receive lists of names and address of potential tournament attendees from ACBL free of charge.

One of the items we rejected was a request to sanction online club championships and junior fund games awarding the same masterpoints as a face-to-face game. Even though these points are transparent, we did not approve it. When we first sanctioned online games, we basically made a promise to our clubs that we would not approve special games with increased masterpoints.

The following items were deferred to the Summer meetings in New York:

♥ Creating a new category called Emerald Life Master upon reaching 7,500 masterpoints. There was a discussion on whether another requirement should be added to this category, such as placing overall in an NABC+ event.

♥ One of the good things we do, in my opinion, is publish the Appeals Casebook after each NABC. Although appeals committees and director rulings are still not perfect (and probably never will be), they have improved substantially since we began publication. This time it is Management, not the Board, who has proposed changes and I am sure Management would like to eliminate the case book altogether. For starters they are proposing that nothing will be published in hard copy. The casebook will be available only on the web site and it is unclear how long it would be left up. Of course they do not want expert player commentators. They would only allow three or four commentators, two of whom are directors. The Competition and Conventions Committee voted unanimously to maintain the casebook as is.

♥ There is a motion that the maximum age for play in junior competition be changed to those who have not attained the age of 22 on January first of the year in which the competition is held. In my opinion this is a terrible idea because we have hardly have any juniors as it is, and cutting the field in half would make it difficult to run any of our current programs. That is probably the basic idea behind it because there are many of our Board members who are against any junior programs.

Increasing the minimum age for senior events was once again on the agenda. This time the proposal was to follow the WBF change which is to increase the minimum age in one-year increments annually starting January 1, 2005 until the age of 60 on January 1, 2009 and remaining at age 60 thereafter. It did not pass.

A few years ago we approved a simultaneous senior age event. This allowed two separate Regional events based on different minimum ages to be run at the same time. Since no one has ever scheduled this, we took it off the books.

My how times change. When we were publishing the COI newsletter our most controversial columnist was Allan Falk. The Board of Directors would go into orbit almost every time they read his column. At this meeting Bruce presented to the Board for ratification his appointment to the ACBL Laws Commission — Allan Falk. No one batted an eye and he was unanimously approved.