

Report of ACBL Board of Directors Meetings

Atlanta NABC, July 2005

Atlanta is on our permanent site list for NABCs and it should be. Facilities are first rate, there is a large bridge community containing great workers as well as attendees, restaurants are plentiful and outstanding, shopping is available, and there are a number of attractions worth seeing such as World of Coca Cola, CNN Studios, Centennial Olympic Park, Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site, Carter Library, and Stone Mountain. Unfortunately the bridge time schedule required you to take a day off from playing bridge to see anything. Baseball fans, though, did get to see Turner Field and attend a Braves game without giving up a bridge event since the games started after 7:00 p.m.

By far the most prevalent topic of conversation throughout the tournament (and still continuing) was the schedule, more specifically the starting times. I have never had so many complaints about anything in all my years as a District Director or Tournament Chairman. This was the great experiment and I hope it will never be repeated, certainly not under the same conditions. Having starting times around 10:00 am and 3:00 pm are right for sectionals and some regionals. However, it is not right for a Nationals.

The sheer volume of players makes for a logistical nightmare when everyone is vying for lunch or an elevator at the same time. Thank goodness there was a huge food court nearby (across a short overpass) or it would have been impossible. There was just time enough to grab a bite. If you didn't want to eat, just go rest in your hotel room, trying to get an elevator was much more of a challenge. In general at tournaments I don't eat lunch, but in this situation going from breakfast at 8:00 am to actually eating dinner at 7:30 pm was too long.

Another thing that was totally scrambled were meetings, receptions and classes. Normally, there are three times a day around the two prime bridge sessions when these meetings can be held — morning before the 1:00 pm session, between sessions at dinner time, and after the evening session about 11:00 pm. In Atlanta before the first session at 10:00 am was too early although I did notice some classes were held at 8:30 am, the lunch break from 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm was much too short, except for a couple of receptions that served food, and after the session at 6:30 pm (unless you were playing in the national knockout events which did not finish until at least 8:00 pm) interfered with having a reasonable dinner. Most opted for after the second session that meant there were a lot of overlapping committees. The Goodwill Committee was Monday at 7:00 pm and honored the current and past presidents of the Mid-Atlantic. A group picture was in the next days *Daily Bulletin* but I am not in it because I had to play bridge until 8:00 pm and I had two other committee meetings, beginning at 7:30 pm, I needed to be at and they were being held on the other side of the hotel.

There are surveys and votes being taken about the experiment. However, the most significant one is where people vote with their feet. A lot is being said about the table count being right on or slightly above estimates. If you examine the numbers, there are two pertinent facts. The number of tables in the National events was way under estimate and the number of tables in the 8:00 pm events were way above estimate thus arriving at the "right on" number. The one constant about NABCs, whether they are in Birmingham or Las Vegas, is that the national event numbers are relatively all the same. This is the core group that always attends no matter where the NABC is held. Obviously many stayed home. There will be many more if this schedule is repeated any time in the near future. The complaints were not about having to get up early. They were about not having time to relax, eat a normal meal, see the city and its attractions, or even exercise. Then at night there was nothing to do but play bridge which was the reason for the large 8:00 pm attendance.

Coincidentally the Board passed a motion at this meeting that NABCs in certain popular cities greatly enhance attendance, publicity, profits and add to the enjoyment of our players. The criteria for choosing NABC sites are changed to include, as a high priority, the popularity of the city. If there is no time to tour the city or enjoy what it has to offer, then why bother. The primary reason for the early times is for the commuters. While we do want to go out of our way to encourage the local area players to attend the NABC, it should not be at the expense of others.

The Grand National committee will be proposing a major change at the Fall NABC in Denver. What District or Unit a player is a member of will no longer be a criterion used to determine where they play in these events. Where they live the majority of the time replaces the old criterion. Those who have two residences and spend an equal amount of time in each must declare which will be their residence for Grand National purposes and in general cannot change their declaration unless their residence is changed. Along with this will be a process of enforcement. There will be a Board of Directors Credentials Committee to review residency challenges and approve requests for residency verification. In addition there will be mandatory penalties for violation of the residency requirements.

We did change one item in both the GNT and NAP events that is effective immediately. Any player participating must be a dues-paying or service fee paid up ACBL member prior to playing in any level of these events except club qualifying. On a positive note, the NAP funding to the national finals has been changed so that each District winner will receive a lodging subsidy equal to three nights lodging at the ACBL host hotel. They will not be required to stay at the host hotel or provide bills from hotels where they stayed.

Changes proposed by the Hall of Fame committee were accepted and will be implemented immediately. They are:

- ♥ The requirement for a “major” win in order to vote is eliminated.
- ♥ Second place finishes in the Vanderbilt, Spingold, Reisinger, Wagar, Bermuda Bowl, Venice Cup, Rosenblum, McConnell, and World Team Olympiads count as “wins” in the determination of whether a person has five wins.
- ♥ Electors will also include WBF and ACBL Grand Life Masters.
- ♥ A 50% minimum percentage of ballots cast will be required for a candidate to be elected.

We are still working on the scheduling procedure for regional and sectional tournaments. The committee is in agreement that the Districts will determine whether or not there is a conflict — not Management. If the conflict cannot be resolved by the Districts, it will go to an arbitration board. We also agreed that if a Regional has been scheduled for a specific date then moves its location more than 50 miles within one year from this date, the tournament will be subject to the New Tournament Rules.

The insurance committee gave an extensive report. They believe that ACBL should provide District and Officers liability insurance coverage to all units and districts and are asking for premium quotations. The committee also intends to investigate liability insurance options for clubs. The importance of units and districts obtaining a general liability policy covering libel, slander, defamation besides bodily and personal injury as well as property damage for activities not covered by ACBL insurance is stressed by the committee. ACBL covers NABCs, sectionals, regionals, STACs, and district level GNT & NAP.

The requirements for the Ace of Clubs and Mini-McKinney masterpoint races will now be determined by a player’s total masterpoint holding at the start of the year instead of their rank.

The definition of “member in good standing” now reads that an ACBL member is in “good standing” when such member’s dues, if dues are required, are current and such member is not currently expelled, serving a term of suspension, serving indefinite probation, serving a probation the initial term of which was 24 or more months or serving a term of probation following a suspension, the initial term of which was in excess of 90 days. A member who is not in good standing will not be entitled to serve in any elected or appointed position in ACBL.

Penalties for fouling a board during duplication have been modified. In sectional and regional rated events, a quarter board penalty for a foul during duplication will apply to all players at the table at which the board was “made” unless the director determines that there are mitigating circumstances. The full board penalty will remain for misduplication in NABC+ events and for fouling a board during play.

The Goodwill Committee reception held at every NABC has been restricted to a specific annual dollar amount. Recognizing that there are great differences in hotel catering prices, we lifted the specific dollar restriction on these receptions.

Good news. The revision of the ACBL bylaws that my committee and I have been working on for 2 ½ years are now in effect. The final approval was obtained in Atlanta at the membership meeting. Several regulations and procedures were amended or added to take effect immediately upon approval of the revised bylaws. Most of them are things that were included in the old bylaws, but do not need to be. The committee decided that having them as regulations would be better, especially if any changes were ever needed. They are:

- ♠ The ACBL seal and emblem.
- ♠ The *ACBL Bridge Bulletin*.
- ♠ Composition of the Executive Committee. The Treasurer was added as a non-voting member.
- ♠ Classes of ACBL membership. These are General Member, Life Member, Honorary Member and Junior Member.
- ♠ Application for membership.
- ♠ Notification to the State of New York of changes in our Certificate of Incorporation.
- ♠ Criteria for maintaining Unit status. A section on voluntary dissolution of a Unit has been added.

Players who joined or rejoined ACBL after January 1, 1996 and attain Life Master status after July 2005 will continue to pay the established dues rate with no service fee differential.

A big push is being made to get clubs to use ACBLscore. They do not need to score the game, just submit their monthly financial and masterpoint reports on ACBLscore. Clubs have until January 1, 2007 to do this; otherwise they must pay an additional \$2.00 per game sanction fee. In addition, clubs must use a current version of ACBLscore (updates are free). Those who do not will be charged the additional \$2.00 per game sanction fee beginning January 1, 2006. I have asked our District Board members (and they agreed) to contact these club managers in order to help them gain compliance so that no one has to pay any extra fees.