

Denver Delights
District Director Report by Margot Hennings
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After a somewhat cautionary beginning with snow and ice in the forecast and materializing to some extent over the first few days of the tournament, the recent NABC in Denver was well-organized and reasonably well attended, although it did miss its mark of an estimated 10,000 tables. The snow of the first days discouraged some folks from making it there, despite the fact that few cities in North America handle snow as well as Denver does—and that comment was made by many Bostonians and other New Englanders!

The playing site was one of the best in recent memory, with ample space and light, lots of accessible bathrooms, a free shuttle for 20 blocks up and down the main street right outside the Sheraton, lots of hot restaurants, and unfortunately—as one of the only downsides—lots of heat in the playing areas for most events. ACBL Live worked better than ever with rapid updates as soon as scores were sent in by directors, and access to regional KO results and half-time national event Swiss and KO leaderboards, too. Hospitality was plentiful and centrally located, and the registration and prize desks were open frequently to accommodate players in mid-morning and afternoon events as well as at the more traditional 1:00 and 7:30 start times.

The cards were not as kind to the District 6 (D6) players who traveled so far to play as they have been in recent NABC events, but we were not without some notable successes:

Congratulations to.....

Steve Robinson and Sylvia Shi, the only D6 players to snag a win in a national event, came in first in the second weekend's NABC Mixed Swiss. This event also saw placements by Ellen Cherniavsky, Bill Cole, Beth Palmer, Bill Pettis, and Gene Kales, who came in 5th Overall in the Mixed Swiss; and by Mickie Kivel and Helene Bauman, who came in 9th Overall. Other Top Twenty finishes in national events include Beth Palmer, 3rd in the Women's Board-a-Match Teams; Brian Schoenfeld, 4th in the 10K Swiss; Steve Robinson and Peter Boyd, 5th/8th in the Senior KOs; Jay Kelkar, 10th in the 10K IMP Pairs; and Ai-Tai Lo, 19th in the Nail Open Pairs.

Regional wins were scored by: Mark Laken in the first Saturday Daylight Open Pairs; Jim Wakefield, Helene Bauman, and Mickie Kivel in the first Saturday Compact KO Bracket 1; Robert O'Connor in the first Sunday Daylight Gold Rush Pairs, and again with William Lowry in the Mon/Tues KO Bracket 4; Barry and Winnie Fratkin, Nancy Golden, and William Belanich in the Wed/Thurs AM Compact KO Bracket 2; Greg Humphreys, in the Wed/Thurs KO Bracket 2; Marshall Kuschner in the Thurs/Fri Side Game Series; and Monique Smith and Merrill Hirsh in the second Sat/Sun KO Bracket 2.

Elections and Appointments

Congratulations go to Ken Monzingo of District 22 (San Diego), who was elected ACBL President for 2016. In addition to being on the ACBL Board of Directors (BOD), Ken is the editor of the Western Conference district newspapers. On the BOD, Ken has been very involved over the past couple of years helping to re-think the NABC schedules and has chaired the

Conditions of Contest Committee. Paul Janicki and Al Levy were re-elected as two of the five ACBL representatives to the World Bridge Federation (WBF) serving three-year terms.

Three significant appointments were also announced in Denver. I was delighted to hear that Patty Tucker, from our sister district, D7, and creator of the very successful Learn Bridge in a Day (LBIAD) Program (taught by Patty at the recent Reston Regional and another to be held in Williamsburg at the regional there on Sunday, February 28), as well as many junior programs, was appointed the ACBL Honorary Member of the Year. Debbie Rosenberg of D21 (northern CA) was appointed as the Nadine Wood Volunteer of the Year for her ongoing work with juniors, and Flora Pettit of D16 (Texas/Mexico) was appointed the Aileen Osofsky Goodwill Member of the Year.

Looking Forward: Financial and Operational Considerations

Challenges: The Board faces ongoing challenges from outdated technology (particularly infrastructure), retiring directors and the resultant recruitment and training of new directing staff, and the need to continue to address the integrity of our game. As I have stated in previous reports, there is an urgent need to bring our technology infrastructure and our IT performance to an acceptable level after decades of neglect, requiring both equipment and personnel.

Tournament Director University (TDU) is entering its second year of two-tiered training for newer directors to gain the skills and confidence needed to direct small sectionals and more experienced directors to gain advanced skills needed to run regionals. Finally, the ACBL's ability and willingness to deal with the high-profile cheating issues have been shown with the appointment of a blue ribbon Bridge Integrity Task Force to identify the steps needed to create a fair playing environment where ethical violations are not tolerated. In support of this commitment, a dozen new cameras and stands have been purchased for use in videotaping later rounds of NABC+ team games and many are in use throughout the playing areas during NABC pair events. Videos of all taped matches are now available on YouTube.

Finances: A much needed IT backbone, the addition of critical new personnel, director training, and a commitment to aggressively address cheating do not come without significant costs. At the fall meetings, both the next year's operating and capital budgets are presented, with final approval by the BOD at the spring meetings. For 2016, the operating budget currently shows an excess of expenses over revenue of \$61,534, and the capital budget is estimated at \$399,000. Management and the Finance committee together took an original projection of over a \$1M loss and worked very hard to get it down to the \$61+K figure. In order to gain this reduction, a number of fee increases were unavoidable—a short summary follows, all effective April 1, 2016, except as noted: All regional and sectional fees are increased by approximately 2%; STaC fees are increased by approximately 3%; the open sectional surcharge is increased by approximately 9%; and, TD session fees are increased by approximately 9% (varying percentages depending on the TD levels assigned). The \$1.25 club game fee was rescinded and the club per-table fee is increased by approximately by 11%; and the short game (12-17 boards) per-table fee is increased by approximately 6%. STaCs and all unit and special games held at clubs will now be subject to the per-table fee. The NABC team screen table surcharge (passed selectively in Las Vegas in the summer of 2015 for NABC+ events only) was rescinded and NABC+ entry fees will increase by 15%, effective at the Summer 2016 NABC. In addition, at events held at NABCs, entry fees for team events of two sessions or more will be charged on a per person rather than a per-team basis.

Although somewhat controversial, this final motion passed with 4/5 support of the BOD, and makes sense when you consider that registration gifts, prizes, hospitality/food, and masterpoints are all given away on a per person basis. Although this same policy is not mandated for events at sectionals and regionals, most on the BOD felt strongly that a consistent policy of charging for teams on a per-member basis should be encouraged in every district.

Operations: As the 2016 President, Ken has been instructed to form a Board Composition Advisory Committee consisting of members of the BOD, the Board of Governors (BOG), Management, and at-large members to review the current size of the BOD, areas from which they are elected, how they are elected (based on geographical district versus size—the Senate model versus the Congressional model), and whether the current size of the BOD is optimal to retain appropriate representation of the diverse needs of members who reside in cities, in towns, and in very sparsely populated areas. The Committee will present a final report no later than the Spring NABC 2017 Board Meeting.

Other BOD Actions and New Programs of Interest

- The 0-1500 LM Pairs (held in the summer) will now simply be called the 0-1500 Pairs so that all players with fewer than 1500 masterpoints, whether they are LMs or not, may participate in this event. The impetus for this action was to allow Flight C GNT folks who are knocked out of the national event, held prior to the start and during the first days of the Summer NABC, to participate.
- A Ranking Committee surveyed segments of the membership over the past months to find out how they felt about the current Life Master ranks, and based on the analysis of the survey results, the BOD approved two new ranks recommended by this committee—Ruby for those players who achieve 1500 MPs and have at least 300 silver/red/gold platinum points, and Sapphire for those players who achieve 3500 MPs and have at least 350 gold/platinum points and 700 silver/red/gold/platinum points. In addition, Bronze LM masterpoint requirements are raised from 500 to 750 for those who joined ACBL after January 1, 2010.
- In a further move to tighten the noose on players who may be tempted to cheat or to partner with those who do, the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations was amended to provide that partners and teammates of convicted cheaters also lose all masterpoints, titles and status ranks earned while playing with them for the prior four years.
- Since its enactment several years ago, the non-member surcharge at sectionals and regionals has been retained by the sponsor (the unit or district). Passed at the Denver meeting is the requirement that this fee now be remitted to the ACBL since it is at HQ that the costs of processing non-members are borne.
- Beginning in 2016, email marketing tools empowered by Pianola will be available directly to units and districts. This toolset will remove ACBL from being the “middle man” to its members and allow easy access to the ACBL database to customize messages to targeted groups—Non-LMs, lapsed members. The ACBL Marketing Department will be contacting Unit Presidents in January to set up an account—if a Unit needs more than one account, please contact marketing@acbl.org for assistance.