

Fact Sheet for Round Robin/Swiss Knockouts (RRKO)

Background: A typical regional KO is a four-session event where teams compete head-to-head (or in 3-way matches) playing a total of 24 boards per session, and the winners advance to the next session. There must be between 9 and 16 teams per bracket; a bracket will generally progress to 8 (quarter final) then 4 (semifinal) then 2 (final) over the four sessions. These KOs have been very popular at regionals for many years.

With 8 (or fewer) teams, there are not enough teams to play for four sessions, since 8 would be cut to 4 then 2 in just two sessions and the final would constitute the third session. An event planned and advertised as four sessions would be cut to three leaving teams disappointed and with limited event choices.

What is a Round Robin/Swiss KO?

The RRKO is a format approved by ACBL on an experimental basis, in which there can be fewer than 9 teams, specifically 5 to 8 teams. All teams play two full sessions in Round Robin/Swiss format, so no teams get knocked out after just one session, and there are sufficient teams (four) advancing from the round robin to play sessions #3 and #4 in standard head to head KO style.

What purposes are served by the RRKO format?

- Tournament attendance has decreased to the point that many regionals no longer have enough teams to form a comfortably competitive top bracket. Since typical KO brackets require a minimum of 9 teams, there is an increasing gap between the masterpoints of the top and bottom teams in the bracket.
- Teams with 6,000 total MPs may not mind on occasion playing against teams with 133,000 MPs, but probably do not want to do so for an entire week. Similarly, top level teams get more satisfaction competing against their peers.
- Under the RRKO format, if there are six teams that truly belong in bracket one and three that do not, the six can form their own bracket. When bracket sizes are more flexible, players are more likely to end up in the bracket where they prefer to play.

Why are the third and fourth teams required to play off for third place?

Both the 3rd and 4th place teams benefit by playing, because the MP awards are significantly higher for each team when they play that fourth session. Playing only 3 sessions limits the MP award to just 20% of first place, while playing guarantees significantly more MPs for both 3rd and 4th place.

What other benefits do RRKOs provide?

RRKO's provide more MPs for the 5 to 8-team brackets who play four sessions instead of only three.

If there are 9 + teams in a bracket, do you still play RR/Swiss or a regular KO?

-Once the event is advertised as guaranteeing two sessions on Day 1, it must be run that way. If a bracket (usually the first or the last) has more than ten teams, it can be run as Swiss rather than a round robin, qualifying the top four finishers to the next day, but it must still be run over two sessions.

-Many players like being guaranteed two sessions, preferring 48 boards to "one and done." They feel like they have a greater chance to qualify.

-Because teams are playing two sessions, there is no need to hold single session Swiss Teams, which would draw very few tables. Players are not satisfied with such small events, regardless of how well they do.

May teams choose to play up into the top bracket?

Teams whose MPs would not place them in the top bracket are allowed to play up for the challenge. This may create a problem by pushing higher MP teams down a bracket if those teams don't realize they can and should ask to remain in the top bracket.

Teams wanting to play up MUST buy their entry 15 minutes ahead and MUST ask the director to place them in the top bracket.

Are there complications created by the RRKO format?

The main complication is that the directors do not know in advance how many teams will fall into each bracket. You could end up with six brackets and natural break lines would assign 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 teams to the various brackets. The number of boards per round varies with the number of teams. This means that until all entries are in and break lines drawn, boards cannot be placed on the tables in advance, delaying play.

How can the event get started faster?

-All teams are encouraged, and will eventually be required, to buy entries no later than 15 minutes prior to the posted game time. Teams wanting to play up MUST buy their entry 15 minutes ahead and MUST tell the director to place them in the top bracket. Failure to do so will prevent such teams from playing up.

-Players must write captain's name and team MPs legibly. Team MP totals must be correct – please double check. Unreadable numbers and math errors slow the start and create serious problems when a team is placed in the wrong bracket.