

## **Region 2 Director Report for the D25 Executive Committee Meeting – 9/2/22**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**If anyone believed that in my newly created position as your Regional Director that I would be able to walk in, smile, spread some charm, and provide a few of my “Shark’s Pointers” and this would automatically result in a complete turnaround in the ACBL, I am sorry to report that this simply is not the case.**

**Some of you may not be happy with what I am going to report, but it is important that you get a realistic and honest appraisal of the current situation.**

**I truly think that what our folks did in Providence truly was a game changer and has helped us turn the corner on what was truly a disastrous trajectory for the ACBL – but I must tell you that the news is not all good – and we still have a lot of work ahead before we can say “mission accomplished”.**

**Overall, there have been some modest achievements and some positive forward progress, but I want to be clear. Despite low overhead costs during the pandemic, post pandemic tournament losses, huge I/T cost overruns, heavy overhead costs, excessive legal costs due to past and pending litigations, and a 15% decline in ACBL membership, the financial future of the ACBL is not nearly as rosy as some may have been led to think.**

**There is a lot of work being done to attempt to improve the ACBL’s Information Technology functionality, to increase ACBL membership through new teaching initiatives, improve bridge operations, improve attendance at face to face club games, sectionals, and regionals, alleviate online cheating, address the huge challenges we face with online bridge versus face to face bridge – and to cope with all the various forms of costly internal competition that exists within our organization today.**

### **Providence 2022 Summer NABC**

**On a positive note, I can’t say enough about the enormous job that NABC Co-Chairs Joe Brouillard, , and Lois DeBlois - their passionate team of volunteers, and all of you who attended the Providence 2022 Summer NABC - have made.**

**The attendance of 7463.25 tables exceeded the ACBL's most optimistic prediction of 7282 tables and is the best post-pandemic NABC attendance yet.**

### **Daytime Schedule**

**The first-ever daytime schedule for NABC+ events met with a lot of complaints from many of our D25 regular NABC attendees. I personally drove this change and I am not apologizing for doing so, because under the circumstances I firmly believe this was the right decision. I am never happy when some of our players are upset, however, so I think I should provide a detailed explanation as to why I pushed for this. First and foremost, this was my attempt to support your hard-working local NABC Committee which was running into a lot of opposition from the ACBL Marketing Services Group regarding hospitality spending. The ACBL wanted to provide only a \$2 chit for morning hospitality with the majority of budgeted spending in support of evening entertainment – something that the committee felt would disproportionately benefit NABC+ players at the expense of the local regional players. In truth, there were some glitches as a result of the new schedule. The Goodwill Reception, for example, at which it was my special honor and privilege to recognize the amazing accomplishments for so many years of Sue Miguel, had a timing conflict due to a delay in the start of some NABC events. Many Goodwill members missed the great reception and the award ceremony for Sue as a result. I was only able to be on time to make the presentation because I was lucky enough to be able to forfeit my last match of the Senior Swiss because my team was mathematically unable to qualify for the finals!**

**The wisdom of the morning schedule was demonstrated to me by the fact that all across the ACBL I was flooded with kudos for the over-the-top daily morning hospitality that was organized by Hospitality Co-Chairs Sally Kirtley and Helen Pawlowski! Future NABC's will be scheduled per the guidance of the local committees. Phoenix is now scheduled for a morning schedule. The schedules for New Orleans and Chicago have not been finalized yet. Please contact me directly if you have any comments or concerns about the daytime schedule. This topic will re-emerge, and there definitely are pros and cons.**

## **Prognosis for a Future Providence NABC**

The overall financials for the Providence NABC have not yet been finalized, and preliminary reports have not been great. The ACBL has adopted a position to avoid convention center locales for future NABCs because of cost factors. My position – which is not yet the majority view - is that we need to dramatically cut overhead, properly re-apportion profits from online games and to absorb short term losses to help revitalize long-term growth. In my opinion, the dedication of this district's local volunteers coupled with the incredible support of the Providence Convention Center staff should weigh heavily in future policy decisions as we continue to move out of the COVID lockdown era.

I welcome your feedback on this.

## **New Potential COVID Policy**

I had hoped that with all our vaccines, boosters, masking etc. that COVID would have been a non-issue at Providence – but I was sadly disappointed. The total number of players, directors, and staff that contracted COVID in Providence is unknown because so many who contracted COVID have not reported it. My wife Sue and I got COVID, as did our co-chairs and several of our volunteer leaders and many of our players. Our attendance would have been much higher if COVID was not an issue.

Nevertheless, the ACBL is considering a totally different approach moving forward. Joe Jones, ACBL's Executive Director, is considering recommending removing the vaccine requirements, and moving to a more personal responsibility model. He believes everyone understands the risks of attending in-person events. The ACBL has incurred considerable costs in enforcing vaccine requirements at NABCs with unclear results. Also, one can argue that removing restrictions supports a robust return to face to face.

Since the CDC updated COVID-19 guidelines on August 11<sup>th</sup> ( <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2022/p0811-covid-guidance.html> ), there has been a large volume of member emails requesting that the ACBL remove vaccine requirements from sanctioned tournaments. The major points

they assert is that there are very few activities now requiring vaccines and the vaccine does not protect against spread (as evidenced by our NABCs). The thought is that the general population has either been vaccinated, been infected, or both and there is no longer be a reason to treat vaccinated and unvaccinated differently.

Here is an article giving some context:<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/08/11/1116991600/with-new-guidance-cdc-ends-test-to-stay-for-schools-and-relaxes-covid-rules> .

My own initial feeling is that a complete reversal in policy may be premature, but I definitely see the positives of this and would appreciate your feedback.

### Upcoming Regionals

#### Southbridge Fall Regional

I just want to let you know that Curtis Barton, Peter Marcus and others put a lot of time and effort in requesting an exception to policy along the lines of the one provided for your Marlborough Regional. You'll be hearing more from Mark Oettinger's Tournament Scheduling Committee. I do want to remind all that the ACBL Board did approve a 20% increase in masterpoints for all face to face sectionals and regionals thru the end of 2022.

#### 2022 ACBL Online Regionals

The sad truth is that every district doesn't have the same level of committed volunteers as you who have worked so hard to support face to face regionals. Although I didn't vote in favor of this, I can understand why unanticipated financial cost overruns convinced those on the ACBL Board voted to approve the following two online regionals.

The first one, "Fall Into Bridge" will be conducted on BBO September 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>, and the second one "Winter Wonderland" will be held December 20<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Regional at Sea – October 2023

**Alice Travel and the ACBL are requesting your approval to go ahead with a scheduled Regional at Sea October 9-23, 2023. The plan is for a cruise to leave NYC and travel round trip to Montreal along the New England coast and down the St. Lawrence Seaway.**

**THANK YOU!**

**Obviously, I glossed over a lot of “stuff”, or this report would be never-ending. I think you all appreciate the fact that a lot of work is in progress, and it is going to take a while to convert hard work and good intentions into proven accomplishments.**

**With your continued support, I remain cautiously optimistic that we can turn the tide of the damage that has been generated over the past 2-3 years. I cannot overstate how much I appreciate the work that all of you have done for so long to help make things better for bridge in New England – and across the ACBL.**

**Thank you very much!**

**Mark**