

District Director's Report – August 2015

Chicago NABC

The Summer NABC was held at the Chicago Hilton. Attendance was 13,685 tables, 5% above the pre-tournament estimate. There were numerous good restaurants near the hotel and on three separate days busses were provided to take players to various ethnic restaurants, a very nice service for the players. The local committees did a good job on registration, tours and evening hospitality (though those who didn't finish playing early enough often found that the food was all gone).

There were, however, several big problems. Most significantly, in many cases the bathrooms were located a long distance from the playing areas which resulted in numerous complaints from our aging population. The playing areas, especially where the regional events were held, were difficult to find and in some cases not well lit. Rooms were advertised at \$170 but the hotel ran out of those rooms fairly quickly and many were only able to get rooms at a rate of \$195.

The big news at the tournament is that District 25 has three new Grand Life Masters, increasing our total from 14 to 17 GLMs. Frank Merblum made it by passing 10,000 masterpoints in the Life Master Pairs while Mel Marcus and Bill Irvine won their first NABC title by winning the Senior Swiss Teams with Haven Sharaf, Robert Lurie, John Hrones Jr, and Rena Lieberman. Just to add to the District's great performance, Paul Fireman (Roth Open Swiss), Karen McCallum (Wagar Women's KO) and Paul Hattis (Red Ribbon Pairs) added first place finishes to the total. Hearty congratulations to all.

TOP 10 FINISHERS IN NABC EVENTS – DISTRICT 25

0 – 10,000 PAIRS

Adam Parrish, Sandwich MA 9

MINI SPINGOLD I KO TEAMS

Randolph Johnson, Suffield CT 5/8

SENIOR SWISS TEAMS

Haven Sharaf, Danvers MA
Bill Irvine, Quincy MA
Robert Lurie, Wayland, MA
John Hrones Jr, Needham. MA
Melvin Marcus, Waltham, MA
Rena Lieberman, North Easton, MA 1

MIXED BOARD-A-MATCH

Paul Fireman, Chestnut Hill MA 1
Phyllis Fireman, Chestnut Hill MA 9

WAGAR WOMEN'S KO

Karen McCallum, Exeter NH 1

WERNHER OPEN PAIRS

Andrew Chesterton, Winchester MA
Mark Aquino, Jamica Plain MA 4

Rich DeMartino, Riverside, CT
Pat McDevitt, Brookline MA 6

RED RIBBON PAIRS

Paul Hattis, Newton, MA 1

Robert Lurie, Wayland, MA 7

0 – 10,000 MIXED SWISS

Carole Weinstein, Waltham, MA
Kamla Chawla, Longmeadow MA 9

OPEN SWISS

Paul Fireman, Chestnut Hill MA 5

Highlights of ACBL Board Meeting

CEO Report

CEO Robert Hartman reported that membership through the end of July is 168,200, the highest level since 1997. Average Regional table count is down slightly (1,422 vs 1,412); average sectional table count is also down slightly (165 vs 162); and STAC table count is down 19%, a considerable decrease.

The CEO reported that USI Insurance Services took over as the insurance advisor/broker for the ACBL and handled the general liability and D&O renewals, effective May 1. Coverage enhancements were made and the good news is USI is helping the ACBL save \$90,000 in annual insurance costs. The savings breakdown is as follows: general liability \$40,000; D&O insurance \$20,000; and reductions in employee health insurance commissions of \$30,000.

The Club Department is taking the initiative of contacting lapsed members via a phone and email campaign to encourage them to restart their membership and also to identify the specific reasons they did not renew.

This year The Longest Day produced a whopping \$700,000 for the Alzheimers Association, with 206 clubs participating.

Entry Fees for NABC + Events With Screens

In July 2014, the Board passed the following motion: “Entry fees for NABC+ events that use screens shall incur a surcharge of \$40 per team or \$20 per pair for each session that screens are in use.” In March, the Board of Governors passed a motion requesting that at the Board reconsider the action. I supported the motion to rescind the November action but the BOG motion still failed 14 to 9 with 2 abstentions.

Financial Results

The Finance Committee reported the following results based on actuals through June 30:

	<u>Through June 30</u>			<u>2015 Calendar Year</u>	
	<u>Budget</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Variance</u>	<u>Current Forecast</u>	<u>Variance One</u>
Net Income	- \$ 2,000	- \$159, 000	- \$157,000	- \$12,500	- \$10,500

One item of concern to me is that as of June 30, we are over budget in Technology by \$68,000 because of TourneyTRAX upgrades and are also over budget in Professional Services by \$33,000 due to technology consulting.

Masterpoint Awards for 5-6 Person Teams at Sectionals and Regionals

Historically, all players participating in team games of 4 or more sessions receive 100% of the awards provided they play 50% of the boards, including the semi-finals and finals. A motion was presented in March and passed in a first reading (two approvals are required for masterpoint changes). I'm pleased to report that the motion failed in the second reading 13 -12. I lobbied against the motion and voted against it because I strongly believe we should not change the long-standing practice at a time when KO participation is already way down for other reasons.

STAC Fees for Non-Members

There was a motion to charge a mandatory additional fee of \$3 per person per session for non-members of the ACBL. These charges are made at Sectionals and Regionals but have not been mandatory in clubs. I actually favor the motion because I believe it is reasonable that all players who play in sanctioned games should be ACBL members. Despite my personal view, I voted against the motion based on input from club owners who observed they would lose these players and the associated income for STACs. The motion failed 11- 10 with 4 abstentions.

Meeting with Bob Hamman and Paul Street

One of the highlights of the board meeting for me was an excellent presentation by Bob Hamman and Paul Street who, along with about 25 other players/administrators, submitted a document to the Board recommending we change the way we operate. They reported the following: total membership is stagnant; attendance at NABCs is declining; and, the ACBL is facing a demographic time bomb. They observed that even though total membership is down only slightly from 1996, the percentage of players over age 65 has increased from 46% in 1996 to 75% in 2015. There are now over 30,000 members (22%) who are over 80 years old and the number of players over 90 is 2.3 times the number of players under 35. This is clearly not good.

One of their observations is that local bridge clubs have accounted for almost all new members and yet they believe the ACBL places no requirements or standards for accreditation of new clubs and allows the units and districts to compete with clubs for players, particularly on weekends.

They recommend the following actions: 1. Identify the population segments to target; 2. Develop strategies to reach these target markets; 3. Provide more support to the clubs by providing the tools, making investments in clubs worthwhile; and 4. Develop follow up programs to increase member retention.

I believe both Bob and Paul could not have made it clearer that we must act now to reverse this trend or bridge as we know it today will cease to exist. The presentation was made the last day of the meetings so we did not have sufficient time to discuss the proposals in any detail. Hopefully, our President will set aside sufficient time in Denver to review and discuss these proposals as well as other options presented regarding authority.

For complete details on Board actions, please refer to the minutes of the Board meeting on the ACBL website (ACBL.org). These will be posted within the next two weeks.

Top 25 Masterpoint Winners – Chicago NABC

<u>Name</u>	<u>Total Points</u>	<u>Points Won In NABC+ Events</u>
1 Paul Fireman, Chestnut Hill MA	183.27	181.07
2 Allan Graves, Saint Johnsbury VT	132.56	80.00
3 Mark Aquino, Jamaica Plain MA	124.41	121.42
4 Robert Lurie, Wayland MA	124.12	104.12
5 John Hrones Jr, Needham MA	110.44	104.12
6 Bill Irvine, Quincy MA	107.54	106.22
Haven Sharaf, Danvers MA	107.54	106.22
8 Rena Lieberman, North Easton MA	102.59	100.00
9 Melvin Marcus, Waltham MA	101.98	100.00
10 Rich DeMartino, Riverside CT	99.02	87.04
11 Victor King, Hartford CT	92.80	67.12
12 Douglas Doub, West Hartford CT	84.76	84.76
Franklin Merblum, Bloomfield CT	84.76	84.76
14 Karen McCallum, Exeter NH	78.84	50.53
15 Shome Mukherjee, Randolph MA	73.53	70.54
16 Lloyd Arvedon, Woburn MA	70.21	48.08
17 Zachary Grossack, Newton MA	65.02	41.28
18 Pat McDevitt, Brookline MA	64.16	62.84
19 Paul Hattis, Newton MA	62.75	
20 Andrew Chesterton, Winchester MA	62.35	55.56
21 Stephen Gladyszak, Chelsea MA	59.66	36.36
22 Adam Grossack, Newton MA	59.05	41.28
23 Randolph Johnson, Suffield CT	57.60	
24 Doug Anderson, Quincy MA	57.01	
25 Phyllis Fireman, Chestnut Hill MA	53.53	35.96

The Fall NABC will be held from November 26 through December 6 at the Sheraton Denver Downtown Hotel in Denver, Colorado. Room rates at the Sheraton are \$132 per night. I look forward to seeing many of you there.

Rich DeMartino
District Director