

Monday, February 18, 2013 7:36:22 PM

Subject: Minutes of yesterday's "B's Needs" Meeting (Improving Regional Attendance)

The "B's Needs" Committee met in Cromwell Plaza's Kent Room from 8:30 until 9:30 AM on Sunday, February 17, 2013.

Attendees: District President Ausra Geaski, District Secretary Carolyn Weiser, RIBA President Lois DeBlois, Tournament Manager Helen Pawlowski

CBA Representatives: Joyce Stiefel & Bill Watson
CMBA Representatives: Jeanne Robillard & Steven Diamond
EMBA Representative: Cecilla Borrás
MBA Representative(s): TBD
NHBA Representatives: Sarah Widhu & Robert Eachus
RIBA Representative: Cathie Sallar
VBA Representative(s): TBD
WMBA Representative: Bob Derrah

Facilitator: Mark Aquino

There's still room for a few more reps - particularly from Maine and Vermont, but considering the sketchy weather, and the early time of the meeting, we were very pleased at the turnout. It speaks volumes as to the level of interest and significance this initiative has across our district. Flight B is by far our largest active membership, and the focus of this team's work, but it was also very nice that we had at least one flight C player and at least one flight A player at this meeting as well, so as to lend some broader feedback.

The group was engaged in discussions around a number of lively and key topics that were raised at our kickoff meeting in Newton. Here's a quick summary of some of the ideas that were generated by the participants and shared in this very productive 1 hour meeting on Sunday morning in Cromwell.

How to Reach Out to Former District Regional Players:

- 1) Club directors announce our upcoming regionals at their clubs.
- 2) Call and remind former players of special bridge events.
- 3) Provide vans to regionals.
- 4) Clubs close down during regionals.
- 5) Provide Carpool sites.

How to Reach Out to Non-Players:

- 1) Advertise in AARP
- 2) Person to person calls
- 3) Presentations at community centers

- 4) Lessons to introduce duplicate style play
- 5) Presentations at non-sanctional games
- 6) Go to local games to urge regional tournament attendance.
- 7) Local games to urge tournament attendance.
- 8) Senior Education Classes
- 9) Share the ACBL's 3-hr presentation
- 10) Drop off ACBL Bulletins with contact info at community centers, libraries, dental offices, etc.

Events/Activities We'd Like to Run:

- 1) More team games in general - starting at the club level. Want to learn more about what we can and cannot have for options.
- 2) Strataflighted events
- 3) Two 299er Team events per regional - 1 on a weekend, and 1 on a weekday
- 4) Board-A-Match Event
- 5) Presentations / Lectures by good players at each Regional

What Kinds of Things Flight A Can Players Do To Help Attract/Retain Flight B Players?

- 1) Have the simple courtesy of acknowledging non-A players that come to the table. Stop talking about the last hand, and say "hello"
- 2) Help participate in a A/B Pro/AM - fun, one session event
- 3) Support a raffle in which the proceeds go to the Educational Fund, and the prize is to get to play with a well known Flight A player
- 4) Provide Intermediate Level Lectures at Regionals
- 5) Support "8 is enough" at clubs to bring A-B-C players together
- 6) Go to senior centers, country clubs, civic centers, condo associations, and give a talk on bridge - introducing bridge and talking about clubs and tourneys.
- 7) Encouraging kibitzing
- 8) Invite top flight team attendance
- 9) Invite the likes of Marty Bergen and/or Mike Lawrence to give a class during one of our regionals.

What Can our Directors and/or Staff do better?

With many of the participants having had extensive experience in directing games or organizing bridge activities, there was widespread respect and appreciation for the job our entire tournament staff and particularly our directors do on a continuous basis. A number of examples from this tournament were specifically noted in which individuals went above and beyond what would be considered normal expectations.

There were four areas in particular where the group felt the directing staff had shown exceptional progress over the past several months, and the group expressed desires for this trend to continue:

- 1) Continue courteous and professional attitude during rulings and in other dealings with all players and continue avoiding intimidating "B" players.
- 2) Keep up the trend of concise announcements - before session or between rounds, and being careful to not make announcements during play.
- 3) Maintain the progress and momentum in enforcing Zero Tolerance - recognizing how challenging this can be at times.
- 4) Extend ongoing efforts at speeding our games along. Great progress noted in the very difficult task of taking the extra step to try to find out who actually is causing delays in our games, and not punishing all pairs, if only one is causing the delay.

So How Do We Make This Work and Keep up the Momentum?

- 1) Establish extensive ongoing communications with our clubs.
- 2) Organize committees to implement the ideas
- 3) Create a "Bridge Awareness Week" - spreading the word at Units and Clubs that we need more players
- 4) Continue to give free plays to first time players
- 5) Select one idea per unit to try then bring back the results to the entire group.

Here's What The 6 Units in Attendance Have Decided to Focus On

RIBA (Unit 145): Lois DeBlois and Cathie Sallar are going to be organizing meetings with all club owners and directors in their unit in an attempt to develop ideas and action plans around how they can help get their regular players to start attending our regionals.

EMBA (Unit 108): Cecilla Borrás is going to develop a proposal for a Bridge Awareness Week.

CMBA (Unit 113): Jeanne Robillard & Steven Diamond are going to work on driving some of the actions cited above where Flight A players can help out.

NHBA (Unit 150): Sarah Widhu & Robert Eachus are going to focus in on Publicizing Bridge.

CBA (Unit 126): Joyce Stiefel & Bill Watson are going to reach out to bridge players that are not currently playing at our regionals.

WMBA (Unit 196): Bob Derrah is going to focus in on our Senior Centers.

All: If you have some ideas, or want to volunteer to help out any of these unit teams - even if you are not a member of that unit - please contact the above listed unit reps directly. I am sure they would welcome your involvement.

Helen has suggested we next meet in Sturbridge. **We will not be meeting at the Senior Regional.** This should give us all a proper amount of time to have made progress on the above listed action items.

Thanks for all your support and involvement!

Mark