

District 25 Director's Report
Summer NABC 2016 – Washington, DC
Mark Aquino

DC was a Great Tournament: Lots of good restaurants, great museums and national landmarks easily accessible by a good public transportation system make Washington one of the more popular tournaments in the ACBL. The Marriott Wardman Park has been a very popular location for bridge enthusiasts for years, and 2016 was no exception. I received no complaints whatsoever about the hotel, the playing conditions or the venue. The hospitality and entertainment, featuring a performance by the “Capitol Steps” troupe, was outstanding. Attendance at 12,812 tables was down 10% from the 2009 NABC in the same venue, but it did meet expectations, and financial projections.

Really Big News! New Englanders did amazingly well in DC – most notably our Championship Flight Grand National Team! Before I go into detail about this, I want to share some other great news of significance to us all. Thanks in no small measure to the behind-the-scenes efforts of Joe Brouillard, Helen Pawlowski, Bob Bertoni and a few others, Providence has been selected to be the site of the Summer NABC in 2021, when the weather here is fantastic! We’ve got a lot of work ahead of us, but having a summer NABC again in New England, will be great for bridge players across the ACBL.

Kudos to New Englanders! From start to finish, current and former New England bridge players proved once again that we can compete and succeed at the highest levels of the game. This tournament in particular saw daily victories by our players in major events, as well as in Regional and 299er games. Things started off amazingly in the GNTs, at which going in, I felt that all four of our teams had a great chance of winning their respective flights. Our Flight A team of Yiji Starr, Dean Panagopoulos, Ron Mak and Glenn McIntyre was, in my opinion, clearly one of the strongest teams in that field. Unfortunately, they and our Flight B squad, ran into some bad luck and got knocked out early. Meanwhile, our Flight C and Open Squads kept knocking off their opponents, and by the time most of the other bridge players arrived in DC, they were still in contention. Our Flight C Squad, Allen Nitschelm (Acton, MA), James Buss (Harwichport, MA), Ashok Rao (Cambridge, MA) and Ed Roman (Boxborough, MA), finished tied for 3/4, and our Championship Flight team consisting of perennial New England champions Frank Merblum (Bloomfield, CT) and Doug Doub (West Hartford, CT) and emerging superstars Adam and Zachary Grossack (Newton, MA) actually won the whole enchilada—taking first overall in this prestigious event—a fete that has not been accomplished in decades!

For a great report on the exceptional job our District has been doing with our Flight C GNT program, see pp. 70-71 of the August ACBL Bulletin!

One other very interesting thing occurred because our Flight B team was eliminated. Husband and wife Mike and Susan Smith of Newington, CT, were able to play in the 3-day, 0-5,000 Bruce LM Pairs – and they proceeded to win that event! The 75 masterpoints they won for this put Mike over the 2,500 plateau and he has joined the ranks of Gold Life Masters!

The parade of victories by New England players continued on, with Geof Brod (Avon, CT) on the winning squad for the Truscott Senior Swiss and Sheila Gabay (Newton, MA) and Victor King, (Hartford, CT) on the victorious Freeman Mixed Board-A-Match Teams. With his victory, Victor joined the ranks of Grand Life Masters! An all-New England squad finished 4th in that event: Carole Weinstein (Waltham, MA), Neil Montague (Swampsott, MA), Maxim Siline (Hudson, MA), Xiaoquian Liu (Hudson, MA). Paul Hattis (Newton, MA) finished 1st overall in the Bean Red Ribbon Pairs. Michael Wavada (Enfield, CT), our great District webmaster, captained the all-New England squad that finished tied for 3/4 in the 0-1,500 Mini-Spingold (Felix Springer, W. Hartford, CT, Paul Burnham, Wilton, CT, and Charles Curley, Wakefield, MA). Jerrod Ankenman of Avon,CT was on the team that tied Mike's team.

D25 Top 25 – Masterpoint Winners at NABC

D25 Rank	MPS	First	Last	City	ST
1	262.57	Douglas	Doub	West Hartford	CT
2	191.60	Zachary	Grossack	Newton	MA
3	187.39	Adam	Grossack	Newton	MA
4	169.37	Victor	King	Hartford	CT
5	144.30	Sheila	Gabay	Newton	MA
6	121.07	Alex	Dezieck	Wilbraham	MA
7	120.60	Geoffrey	Brod	Avon	CT
8	120.00	Franklin	Merblum	Bloomfield	CT
9	118.03	Lewis	Gamerman	Randolph	MA
10	111.48	Allan	Graves	Saint Johnsbury	VT
11	108.51	Lloyd	Arvedon	Woburn	MA
12	89.55	Robert	McCaw	Brewster	MA
13	78.39	Xiaoqian	Liu	Hudson	MA
14	78.39	Maxim	Siline	Hudson	MA
15	78.11	Cenk	Tuncok	Amesbury	MA
16	76.91	Michael	Smith	Newington	CT
17	76.91	Susan	Smith	Newington	CT
18	73.62	Shome	Mukherjee	Randolph	MA
19	73.25	Neil	Montague	Swampscott	MA
20	66.32	Phyllis	Fireman	Chestnut Hill	MA
21	64.90	Paul	Hattis	Newton	MA
22	64.11	Mark	Aquino	Jamaica Plain	MA
23	63.35	Robert	Lurie	Wayland	MA
24	62.21	Stephen	Gladyszak	Chelsea	MA
25	59.70	Richard	Weiss	Swampscott	MA

Doug Doub topped by far all New Englanders in the total points category in Washington. Doug finished 1st in the GNT, 2nd in the Senior Swiss, and 9th in the Open Swiss.

An amazing ten other D25 players earned in excess of 100 masterpoints, and we boasted a total of seven unrestricted NABC+ winners over the course of this tournament. I'm starting a new feature that I will be calling the "D25 Top 25" – a list of the top 25 masterpoint winners during the tournament.

CEO Report – A detailed CEO report was provided. Membership is steady, STAC attendance is up, but tournament attendance is down slightly. Financial position improved due to some significant belt-tightening changes made by the Board of Directors, and a 4-year deal with Bridge Base Online worth \$500,000 per year to the ACBL. CEO Hartmann introduced Linda Dunne, a graduate of Harvard College and

Harvard Law School as the new in-house Counsel, replacing Peter Rank who retires 8/1/16. I'll be happy to provide a full copy of the CEO report upon request.

Technology Report: Mitch Hodus, head of IT for the ACBL, provided extensive technical details regarding work being done to move the ACBL data to the cloud. ACBL Score is still being repaired and we still have no clear end date as to when the repairs will be concluded. The board has agreed to provide Mitch and his staff a great deal of latitude in his attempts to correct our technical woes, while avoiding major changes over the next two years in our masterpoint procedures so as to minimize the need for code changes. *It's still too early for a "day of reckoning," but I would expect to hear of important and extensive progress being made over the course of the next six months.*

Motions and other Important Business Matters from the ACBL Board of Directors' Meetings – July 25-29, 2016:

Board Composition Committee: The last thing that was discussed on the very last day of the Board of Directors meetings is probably the most important, so I will quickly mention this right away. There has been extensive work done since the first of the year aimed at improving the efficiency of the ACBL Board of Directors and enhancing the importance and role of the Board of Governors. A committee, consisting of three ACBL Board members, three at-large players, Board of Governors reps and management reps, has been formed. Much is still under discussion and nothing has been decided, but the current recommendations of the committee include rolling out, over the next few years, a reduction in the size of the Board from 25 to 9, expanding the scope and size of the Board of Governors to include 55 members. The committee met with the entire board on Thursday, July 29th, then went into meetings without the Board. *I believe much work is needed before I can support this. The major thing I requested, which still has not been provided, is a clear, concise problem statement, and a compelling business need. In my experience in industry working on organizational effectiveness and optimization initiatives, unless and until problems are clearly stated and transparent, it is sheer folly to try to decide upon and implement solutions.*

I'm anxious to hear from you about this. Now, I am going to try to summarize the other highlights of four full days of intensive board meetings in as concise a manner as possible while still giving you a good flavor of what is going on. If you have any specific questions about details not covered here, please contact me directly. I'm not going into details about individuals who may have been suspended or expelled for cause, but suffice it to say that anti-cheating at the highest levels remains a significant issue, cost factor, and area of concern within the ACBL and the WBF.

Gold Rush Pairs--Electronic Participation Experiment: Jay Whipple, D9 (Florida), requested and was granted permission to run a trial that would allow players to bring electronic devices (iPads, etc.) to participating clubs and participate in 2-session Gold Rush Pair competitions electronically. This would be done during evening sessions. ***This is something quite intriguing and we should follow the progress of this carefully. It could prove potentially advantageous to us to help offset the revenue decline we have seen due to low evening session attendance at our Regionals.***

Item 162-18--Election Rules--Ballots: This was a motion for reconsideration that had been unanimously approved by the Board of Governors. The major issue here was whether or not votes by Units in District-wide elections should be kept confidential. In small units, it was felt that knowing the total vote would identify who voted for whom. Currently, only the candidates and the entire Board of Directors gets this breakdown. This motion was defeated by a vote of 8-16 with one absent. I voted against it because I feel that, since board members are voting as representatives of their constituencies, I don't think the vote should be secret. Further, members of a specific District should be afforded at least as much information as is currently being shared with Board members outside of the affected District.

Item 162-19--Two-year term for President: The argument for this was that the current one-year term doesn't afford ACBL Presidents enough time to get onboard and to ensure that their various committees have enough time to effectively implement programs. The motion failed by a 4-20-1 vote. As a former Unit and District President, I could see the benefits of a 2-year term, but I voted against it because this poses intrinsic challenges within the context of our current 3-year terms. I see the rotating presidency as advantageous to the broader membership and there wasn't sufficient justification to suggest a longer term would have any real advantages for the Board or the ACBL.

Item 162-20--Recorder Regulations: A key component of the new Anti-Cheating Commission is a revamping of the Recorder procedures. A lengthy revision to the wording of the ACBL Code of Disciplinary Regulations was approved unanimously.

Volunteer Task Force: Nine Board members (including myself) were asked to join this new initiative chaired by Sharon Anderson from D14. A lot of interesting discussion was generated that may serve as the focus for further future action. One of the biggest takeaways is that our increasing membership age creates an extra burden on our ability to meet our volunteer needs across the ACBL and this is going to result in extra costs. Stay tuned.

YEAH!!! The Summer 2021 NABC, will be held at the Convention Center, Providence, RI on July 15 – 25, 2021.

Carried Nay: 2, 22

Item 162-25--Women's Swiss: The Board is trying hard to keep Women's events viable, but lack of attendance is a very major concern. The Conditions of Contest for the Machlin Women's Swiss have been amended to allow the DiC to choose a movement for the second day appropriate to the number of teams qualified.

Effective January 1, 2017

Carried Absent: 15

Item 162-26--Summer NABC Scheduling:

- 1) The masterpoint limits of the Bruce LM Pairs and the 0-5,000 Spingold KO Teams shall be 6,000 MP. The 0-5,000 Mini-Spingold shall be renamed 0-6,000 Mini-Spingold. The masterpoint limits of the Young Pairs and the 0-1,500 Spingold KO Teams shall be 0-2,500. The 0-1,500 Mini-Spingold shall be renamed the 0-2,500 Mini-Spingold.

Effective August 1, 2016 Carried Nay: 5, 6, 8, 9, 19 Abstain: 12 Absent: 15

- 2) The starts of the LM Pairs, the 0-10,000 Pairs, the 0-6,000 LM Pairs, and the 0-2,500 Pairs shall be staggered.

Motion failed Aye: 20, 21, 25 Abstain: 12 Absent: 15

- 3) The 0-6,000 Mini-Spingold, and the 0-2,500 Mini-Spingold shall start on Tuesday.

Effective August 1, 2016 Carried Nay: 23

I authored and proposed the above three motions in an attempt to increase NABC attendance, to provide uniformity with current Flight A and B GNT masterpoint limits, and to encourage players to "play-up." I was disappointed that the various pairs games weren't staggered, but happy that the mini-Spingolds were pushed back a day.

Item: 162-27--Bidding Boxes and Screens:

Appendix G of the ACBL Conditions of Contest is amended so as to require players using screens to turn in all electronic devices to a monitor. There were other screen rules as well that don't affect most of our players, but the following section regarding bidding box rules is worth copying in full:

(a) BIDDING BOXES (no screens)

1. Players must choose a call before touching any card in the bidding box. A call is considered made when a bidding card is removed from the bidding box and held touching, or nearly touching, the table — or maintained in such a position to indicate that the call has been made.
2. A call may be changed without penalty, under the provisions of Law 25A, only if a player has inadvertently taken out the wrong bidding card and the player corrects or attempts to correct his mistake without pause for thought and the player's partner has not made a call.
3. Using bidding boxes, the Skip-Bid Warning is given by displaying the stop card, making a call and then returning the stop card to the bidding box. Following the Skip Bid Warning, LHO is obligated to wait approximately 10 seconds (while giving the appearance of studying his hand and not in excess time to determine a choice of bids) before making a call.

Effective immediately

Carried Absent: 15

The following three motions were brought before the GNT/NAP/Special Events Committee that I chair.

Item 162-15--ACBL Wide Special Event: This motion was proposed by the Board of Governors.

No ACBL-wide Special Events held at clubs be scheduled on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday except for International Fund Game # 1 which is to be permanently held on the Saturday afternoon of Super Bowl weekend.

Management indicated that since 2014 only the Instant Matchpoint Game has been scheduled on a Friday. This will be changed in 2017 and in the future every attempt will be made to avoid games on Fridays, thus making codification of this unnecessary.

Motion failed Abstain: 14 Absent: 15

Item 162-16--High School Bridge Sectional Championship & Item 162-17--High School Bridge Regional Championship:

Management indicated that there was nothing prohibiting high school Sectional or Regional championships, so while my committee strongly endorsed youth competitions like these, the actual wording of the motions put unnecessary limits and restrictions that would only serve to restrict, not enhance expanded involvement by units and districts in this regard.

Both motions failed with only 1 vote in favor.

Reduced membership fees for Juniors: A \$5 Junior membership will be available to all players under the age of 26. Passed unanimously, effective January 1, 2017

Year-End Committee Reports: At the end of every calendar year, each committee chair shall submit a committee report. This report will contain information on the process of the committee, progress made that year and thoughts of future undertakings.

Effective immediately

Carried Nay: 8, 14, 16, 23 Absent: 15

Item 162-06--Notrump Opener: Proposed by Management on behalf of the Competition and Conventions Committee.

The ACBL General Convention Chart is modified as follows:

DEFINITIONS

2. A notrump opening or overcall is natural if, by agreement, it contains no void, at most one singleton which must be the A, K or Q and no more than two doubletons. If the hand contains a singleton it may have no doubleton. (7-2-2-2, 5-5-2-1, and 6-4-2-1 distributions are prohibited from opening or overcalling 1NT)

Effective immediately Carried Nay: 1, 5, 7 Abstain: 13 Absent 15

Item 162-07--KO Participation: Proposed by Management on behalf of the Competition and Conventions Committee.

The General Conditions of Contests for KO Teams require all members of a team to play at least 50% of each match, with the exception of the 1st match, to be eligible for overall awards. This is applicable for all KOs unless superseded by specific conditions of contests for NABC KO events which is amended as:

PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

1. For any given overall award, a player must play at least 50% of each of a KO (excluding 1st round) and 50% of the total boards played by the team. No player may play any match after it has become mathematically impossible for him to play at least 50% of the boards (excluding play-off boards) played by his team OR failed to play in at least half of each match other than the first.

We had a lot of discussion with NE players about this motion prior to DC, and originally there was some disagreement, but upon further review, there was general agreement for me to vote to support this.

Effective January 1, 2017

Carried Nay: 5, 13, Absent: 8, 15

Item 162-09--Regionals and Sectionals Non-Member Fees:

Except for charity events or events limited to players with fewer than 20 masterpoints, and except for active members of the American Bridge Association: For all Regionals, the sponsoring organization will charge a mandatory additional fee of at least \$4.00 per person per session for non-members and non-service paying LM's until January 1, 2018. Carried

Item 162-10--Collegiate Conditions of Contest: *(I served on the Juniors Committee chaired by Margot Hennings of D6). A great deal of work went into modifying the intercollegiate conditions of contest. Adam Grossack contributed greatly to the changes proposed. An anonymous donor provided \$20,000 for the next two years so as to allow the generous prizes for 2017 and 2018. Biggest changes are that eight teams, not four, will be sent to the National Finals, and prize money will be divided between the first 2 teams (\$12,000 for 1st place, and \$8,000 for 2nd place).*

Effective October 1, 2016 Carried Absent: 8, 15

Item 162-29--General Tournament Information--Tournament Assistants, etc.:

- 1.8 Management is given the authority to include or exclude the head director in considering the staffing guidelines for larger tournaments. Chapter 13, G.2
- 1.9 Each director will be required to be certified in accordance with his rank.

Chapter XIII Section G of the Codification Section 3 - Tournament Assistants (Formerly titled Tournament Computer Operator Technicians in Canada) is amended as follows:

- 3.1 Tournament sponsors may choose to hire a tournament assistant to work at their tournament. He or she must have passed the ACBL tournament assistant accreditation exam and meet the approval of the tournament DiC. All employment

issues such as compensation, payroll taxes, insurance, etc. are the responsibility of the sponsoring organization. A form must be submitted to ACBL acknowledging acceptance of these employment issues.

- 3.2 The Tournament Assistant Exam is offered to those members who have previously been certified as a club or certified director.
- 3.3 There is no geographic restriction on the use of Tournament Assistants.
- 3.4 The Director-in-Charge shall not recruit or initially recommend Tournament Assistants for a sanctioned tournament.

Effective immediately

Carried Abstain: 2 Absent: 8, 15

Item 162-23--Live Streaming of ACBL Board of Director Meetings: This motion was proposed by the Board of Governors.

There are costs in excess of \$20,000 to live-stream the four days of ACBL Board meetings. Frequently, topics are alluded to in open sessions that are inherently guarded in nature. Detailed reports and minutes of the meetings are provided, and there didn't seem to be a lot of advantage to our membership to support this request.

Motion failed Absent: 8, 15

Item 162-24—Day-long Robot Tournaments:

- A. Sanctioned day-long online robot games be held. Up to 24 hours are allowed for play. Each day-long game will play a minimum of 24 boards. Sections of 15 or more allowed. Section awards capped at 25 tables. Play formats to be decided.
- B. Multi-session online robot games will be piloted. This event will have a qualifying stage followed by a final stage.
- C. Masterpoint awards to be established.
- D. Sanction fees to be decided.

Deferred to the Fall 2016 meeting. This may be one of the kind of activity that we may want to pursue, but the board felt there should be more input from the clubs to

determine what kind of impact there might be from this. We also will need clarity regarding masterpoint awards from the Masterpoint committee.

Deferral carried Absent: 8, 15

ACBL Educational Foundation: Barbara Heller spoke to the board and voiced some thoughts about a possible restructuring of the Foundation.

Item 162-33--Indemnification of Anti-Cheating Commissioners:

The newly-appointed Anti-Cheating Commissioners were requesting \$10 million indemnification. All volunteers currently are indemnified for up to \$1million on the Travelers Umbrella Policy, and this has been quite adequate for years. The majority of Board members felt that there was no need to create additional, enhanced indemnification for this new group.

Motion failed Aye: 13, 17, 22

Item 162-21--End of Class Tournament:

Several provisions were amended so as to put some added details, limits and controls around some School Bridge programs.

Carried unanimously

Suspension Pending Hearing:

- 6.1 When charge(s) have been made, a person so charged may play in an ACBL sanctioned event pending hearing unless otherwise directed by the chairperson of the committee which will be hearing the charge(s) or by the Director-in-Charge of a Sectional or higher-rated tournament when a charge is to be heard by a tournament disciplinary committee. When charges have been brought by a National Bridge Organization, the World Bridge Federation, or one of the Zonal organizations of the WBF, a person so charged may play in an ACBL sanctioned event pending hearing, unless otherwise directed by the CEO of the ACBL. Such suspension pending hearings should be rarely issued and only in extreme cases or when a hearing is delayed due to the fault of the person charged. A suspension pending a hearing may not be appealed.

Effective immediately

Carried unanimously

Item: 162-04--Publication of Disciplinary Cases:

Detailed rules were written regarding publication of disciplinary cases.

Effective for charges brought after August 1, 2016

Carried unanimously

Players Appeals: *This was the first NABC at which we had no player-led Appeals Committees. I did not hear of any issues yet. It may still be too early, or there may have been some concerns that were not brought to my attention. I would expect to hear more about the progress of this at our next meetings in November.*

Closing Remarks: The Board expressed its thanks and appreciation to Glenda Calkins, District 3 Director and Peter Rank, League Counsel, for their service and contributions to the Board of Directors during the past years. The Board expressed its thanks to District 6 and its units, District Director and Tournament Chair Margot Hennings and Co-Chair Susan Bowles, and all of the other chairpersons and numerous volunteers. We also thanked the Marriott Wardman Park for its fine cooperation.

Thanks to all for your support and for your advice and involvement with many important board matters under review. Let me know if you have any comments, questions or concerns.

Mark

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