



District 21 Director's Report

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Reno:

Hope you all had a chance to attend the NABC in Reno last month. Every time I drive to Reno it seems there is more and more development. Soon they will have to change their famous sign to "The smallest big city in the world."

The turnout at the Reno NABC was about what was estimated by the staff and directors who run these tournaments. It was of course less than the last NABC in Reno, due to that Covid virus. Just the same, it was encouraging to see Joe Jones, our ACBL Executive Director, and his senior staff checking for vaccination wrist bands as we entered the playing area.

The ACBL Board of Directors (BoD) had our first face-to-face meeting of the year at the host hotel and before most of the bridge events started. With the transition to regional directors in progress, the BoD was at 20 members this year, down from 25. Next year it will be about 15 to 16 members, depending on who wins upcoming elections this fall. Ultimately it will be 13 members.

Of Interest to Players:

In my last report two months ago, I mentioned the new convention card. It is now available and there are articles in the ACBL Bulletin discussing the changes and how to fill out the new card. Rest assured that your old convention cards are still valid and useable.

Of major interest to all players who attend NABCs: all national and regional events will be held at 10am and 3pm. There are some exceptions to the 3pm time, such as for fast pairs and for championship games that require screens, but all NABC+ events will be held during daylight hours for the foreseeable future. Reno will become the last NABC to have the 1 and 7:30pm schedule in effect.

A motion was passed at the BoD meeting in Reno to modify the electronic device policy and it took effect immediately. In recognition that cell phones are ubiquitous and many people now have electronic devices in addition to a cell phone, the old policy of having cell phones off was realized to be outdated. Under the new policy, you may have your phone on as long as you do not use it during a round and as long as it does not 'ring'. You may use it between rounds and before and after a session. In general, the penalties for violating the new policy are less than under the old policy.

Awards:

As D21 District Director I have the honor of nominating district members for both the ACBL Goodwill Committee and the ACBL Charity Committee. These are lifetime appointments. This year we have 3 new Goodwill Committee members:

Sigrd Price, our current D21 President, who, after taking over as district President last year amidst turmoil and dissent, proceeded to make our D21 board meetings pleasant with her light-hearted approach and keeping to a meaningful, tight schedule.

Melanie Haddad, who is our D21 communications person and edits and publishes the D21 newsletter (Diamond in the Ruff) bi-monthly.

Will Watson, who for many years volunteered to support SiVY (Silicon Valley Youth Bridge) by running games and providing help and instruction to the school age players.

Reno was the first time since the San Francisco NABC that the Goodwill Committee met in person. Our Roger Smith is now the ACBL Goodwill Chair and had a short but memorable meeting. Since D21 was the hosting district, we were able to present a special district Goodwill award. The recipient of this award was Ray Yuenger, who was presented with a plaque by Sigrd Price.



I also had the honor of naming two nominees to the ACBL Charity Committee. They are:

Anne Hollingsworth Haley, our current D21 Vice President, a member of the D21 Executive Committee, and a D21 member of the ACBL Advisory Committee.

Cornelia Gould, the current President of the Western Conference and a member of the D21 Executive Committee.

There has always been some confusion about what the Charity Committee nominees have done or should be doing in the future. In fact, this is an honorary position that does not carry any special requirements with it. My view is that this position does not require monetary contributions, but rather a commitment of time and effort supporting bridge in general.

Interestingly, there was a motion presented and passed at the BoD meeting to do away with the ACBL Charity Committee and replace it with a Charitable Recognition Award. This does not mean the Charity Committee past nominees will be forgotten. They will be given the Recognition Award. In addition, the District Director or Regional Director will no longer nominate players; the District President will. This already applies to nominees for the Goodwill Committee who will be nominated this year. Both changes make sense since the Regional Director might not be familiar with players from the other districts he or she represents.

Motions of interest:

Units were required to hold at least one sectional every two years. This was seldom, if ever, enforced. In fact, there are some units in remote areas that do not have enough members to hold a duplicate game with a Mitchell movement, let alone a sectional. The codification chapter defining units and their privileges and responsibilities was being rewritten for clarity. My suggestion was that we drop the sectional requirement, in part because it was not enforced, and also because no board members wanted to penalize or disaffiliate any unit due to their size. The updated chapter was approved unanimously.

As a result of downsizing the BoD, many traditional BoD functions have been moved to outside committees, which are now given more autonomy to make decisions on their own requiring only a 30-day notice to the BoD. A motion passed that granted the Masterpoint (MP) Committee the discretion to make decisions in a similar manner. In the past, any changes to Masterpoints required readings at two separate BoD meetings before it could be passed.

Deferred or Withdrawn Motions:

There were two motions before the BoD that were referred to outside committees:

One motion referred to the Competitions and Conventions (C&C) Committee would assign any player, who had a win in an NABC+ event or world event that would meet the qualification for a Grand Life Master, an eligibility value of 10000 Masterpoints. That means they would have to play in the top bracket of a KO or top flight of a flighted pairs event. The 10000 MPs would not be used to determine their rank, just their ability to play in limited events. The second motion was referred to the MP Committee; it allowed that robots, which are permitted in events, would not count toward the number of tables used in determining MPs.

I submitted a motion to make the Royal StaC experiment a permanent option for districts. The Royal StaC experiment was scheduled to end April 30. Our Western Conference StaC is scheduled for early May and this motion was meant to allow the WC StaC to be a Royal StaC. After my motion was submitted, D21 decided to join the Royal StaC being held by D23 (LA County) in late March. It happened that essentially every District in the ACBL has opted to hold or participate in a Royal StaC and they have been very successful. This is especially helpful for club attendance since STaCs are for face-to-face play only.

The Bridge Committee felt it was too early to make such a decision since only one or two Royal STaCs had been run at the time. Under these circumstances I withdrew my motion, which would let me resubmit it this summer in Providence. If it was voted on and not approved, the motion could not be brought up again at the next BoD meeting.



Governance:

There was a most unfortunate event just prior to our BoD meeting. Mike Kovacich, the Regional 6 Director, passed away unexpectedly in February. There are no longer 1st and 2nd alternates to fill in for a Director who cannot attend a BoD meeting. The bylaws had been changed to say that Regional Directors who can no longer serve are replaced by means of a special election in their Region. No one was prepared for this possibility, so we had a non-agenda item that addressed the details on how this election would be run.

There is a Strategy Committee that is examining the short-term and long-term consequences of Covid problems in relation to Face-to-Face play and online play. The BoD is committed to supporting FtF clubs and helping them return to viable games. At the same time, we realize that online play is here to stay. There are many ideas floated about suggesting ways to balance FtF with online play; it is a complicated situation with no easy solution. Regardless of any such suggestions, it is imperative that we recruit thousands of new players in the next 10 years if bridge is to survive as we know it. I have produced a number of graphs showing where we will be assuming various number of new players in the next 10 years.

Cheating:

Two months ago, I reported that the BoD approved a plan to have all disciplinary actions that could have a penalty of a 6 months or longer suspension heard by an official arbitration panel. At the Reno meeting, we discussed how shorter penalties would be addressed. The plan is to have analytic software look for likely cheating in online play. There are already a couple of sophisticated programs that do this. We have yet to hear how this will be implemented and the manner in which suspects will be notified and/or penalized, but it is a step in the right direction. There is far too much data for each case to be heard and analyzed in person and we consequently have a large backlog of cases.

A General Problem:

Finally, the biggest problem in ACBL operations is the IT department. They have difficulties doing even small changes requested by staff or the BoD. No sooner do new people get hired in IT than someone on their staff resigns. ACBL IT does not seem like a good career path for programmers, especially for those who have no involvement in the game of bridge. They regularly find better offers elsewhere and leave. Then it takes months to get a new hire up to speed.

If you or someone you know has a possible solution or is willing to help, let me know. We have a lot of talent in our District, and it may just take a bridge player, even if only a committed volunteer, to get some productive work accomplished.