

SPRING 2017 ACBL Board NEWS

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ACBL Board Member Notes

Kansas City NABC

Hi All! The ACBL has had an eventful year so far, and I'm honored to be your voice on the ACBL Board. It's customary at this point to thank outgoing Board members for their service, but Beth Reid makes it easy. Beth, you certainly leave the ACBL in a far better place than when you began your first term, and though you cannot be replaced, I'm humbled by the prospect of succeeding you. On behalf of the entire District membership, we owe you our deepest thanks.

This is my first report as "District Director," a terribly unfortunate label. I've already been asked a variety of questions about penalty cards and leads out of turn. We've got Unit Board "Directors", District Board "Directors", ACBL Board "Directors", and, of course, the spectrum of game directors (National Tournament Directors, Associate Tournament Directors, Club Directors, etc.). I'm going to try to use the term "ACBL Board Member" in my communication to you, but let me know if you think the "District Director" label works better.

For that matter, I'd love to hear from you about what kind of news from the ACBL Board you'd like to hear about. The Board takes on a LOT of responsibility (too much, in my opinion), so there's much to report. I want to keep these newsletters focused on decisions that matter most to our players while maintaining a reasonable length. I also want to balance the informational content (what did the Board decide?) with opinion (why did I vote a certain way?). If there are topics of particular interest to you, let me know. I'll try to work something in. Of course, I will continue to give shout outs to wins and high level finishes at NABCs by players from our District.

Help Wanted

As you may be aware, the big news of the year has been the resignation of ACBL CEO, Robert Hartman, effective July 31, 2017. I never had a chance to work closely with Robert, but the Board of Directors appeared to regard him quite highly. A CEO search committee has made significant progress, and interviews are underway. We hope to have a decision in the near future, and almost certainly by the time of the Toronto NABC.

In related news, the ACBL has hired Dan Storch, formerly of Lexington, KY, to be our Chief Marketing Officer. Other important positions, such as National Recorder and several Field Supervisor positions, remain unfilled.

"Stop" No More?

At the recommendation of the Competitions & Conventions Committee, the Board was prepared to get rid of the dreaded "Stop" card. Most people felt that the card was used inconsistently, and quite often for inappropriate purposes (*i.e.*, to alert one's partner that they are making a skip bid). Note that this would NOT change the requirement to wait 10 seconds after

TOP DISTRICT 11 MP WINNERS AT KANSAS CITY NABC

1. Douglas Simson, Columbus OH	96.79
2. Jerry Clerkin, Bloomington IN	92.66
3. Pamela Granovetter, Cinti OH	92.09
4. Dennis Clerkin, Bloomington IN	86.26
5. Ralph Letizia Jr, Louisville KY	52.50
6. Cheryl Schneider, Westerville OH	45.76
7. Russell Shoup, Dayton OH	44.26
8. Anita Torrence, Bexley OH	38.30
9. Dennis Schultz, Harrison OH	36.83
10. Carolyn Lewis, Louisville KY	36.80
11. A.J. Stephani, Cincinnati OH	35.22
12. Mike Ma, Cincinnati OH	33.43
13. Stephen Moese, W Chester OH	33.43
14. Marshall Lewis, Bloomington IN	32.17
15. Gary Kohler, Louisville KY	29.24
16. Jack Ambach Jr, Glasgow KY	27.19
17. Matt Granovetter, Cincinnati OH	25.41
18. Larry Newman, Cincinnati OH	22.46
19. Don Byrnett, Oxford OH	21.83
20. Paula Byrnett, Oxford OH	21.83
21. Douglas Millsap, Columbus OH	21.42
22. Alex Khrakovsky, Columbus OH	20.83
23. Scott Gates, Miamisburg OH	20.63
24. Suman Agarwal, Columbus OH	20.40
25. Thomas McDow V, Bexley OH	20.31
26. Terry James, Upper Arlington OH	20.14
27. Ryan Schultz, Dayton OH	19.13
28. Peter Whipple, Mason OH	19.13
29. Vijay Vasudevan, Cincinnati OH	18.41
30. Isaac Stephani, Cincinnati OH	18.05
31. Mary J Gladfelter, Columbus OH	14.79
32. Michael Gladfelter, Columbus OH	14.79
33. Bob Fisk, Cincinnati OH	14.44
34. Reeta Brendamour, Cincinnati OH	13.05
35. Julian Kurtzman, Cincinnati OH	13.05
36. James Olson, Charleston WV	11.35
37. Tim Kington, Dublin OH	10.47
38. Corey Sanders, Hilliard OH	10.47
39. Cliff Pleatman, Cincinnati OH	10.40
40. Connie Noel, Louisville KY	10.13
41. Stuart Ray, Louisville KY	10.13
42. Daniel Storch, Lexington KY	9.97
43. Tim Perry, Corbin KY	8.62
44. Kimberly Music, Lewis Center OH	8.46
45. Pam Campbell, Fairfield OH	8.44
46. Larry Jones, Pickerington OH	8.29
47. Suanne Blair, Morehead KY	8.20
48. John Jensen, Maysville KY	8.20
49. Michael Lipp, Trenton OH	8.19
50. Bill Cook, Louisville KY	6.87

Kansas City proved to be an outstanding site for the 2017 Spring NABC, which made it all the more disappointing that attendance was lighter than expected. The host hotels were a bit of a walk apart, but connected by a convenient sky bridge.



As you might expect, the barbecue was outstanding, and the weather was forgiving for those of us who preferred to walk rather than use Kansas City's excellent public transportation. The playing areas were spacious, lighting was good, and bathrooms were convenient.

Next up on the NABC schedule is the **Toronto**, which takes place July 20-30. People have complained about the lack of hotel rooms, and their prices, but there are options (AirBnB, local area hotels) if you look. With the US dollar valued so highly against the Canadian dollar right now, you're getting about a 30% discount. Hope to see you there!

an opposing player's skip bid (which is in effect whether the Stop card is used or not). However, the C&C Committee wanted to give opposing voices one last chance to be heard, so the motion was deferred until Toronto (17-7-1)*. Go ahead and use the "Stop" card for now, but be prepared for a change later this year.

* Where votes of the Board are noted, the tally will be given with the Ayes first, then the Nays, then the Abstentions (e.g., 15-9-1 would be 15 in favor, 9 opposed, with 1 person abstaining).

Notable D11 Finishes in KC

Congrats to Pamela Granovetter, who (with Sylvia Shi) won the Smith Life Master Women's Pairs! This is her second win in the event (2015) and her 8th National Championship title, by my count.



Also, kudos go to Ellen Kozlove and Ralph Letizia, who (with Lee Bukstel and Michael Wolf) took second place in the 10K Swiss Teams, an event they won

back in 2013. They placed just behind a team captained by some random former software developer from Seattle (Google "ACBL 2017 Kansas City 10K Swiss" if you're curious).

Our North American Pairs (NAP) representatives struggled in Kansas City. Our top finish was Reeta Brendamour and J.D. Kurtzman, who finished 10th in Flight C. Last year's Flight B runner up, Mike Ma and Steve Moese, placed 11th in Flight B, with Don and Paula Byrket just behind them in 12th place.

ACBL Board Meeting Expenses

Although this was my first formal meeting, I was impressed by the efforts taken by the ACBL Board to reduce their expenses over the past few years. They have obviously felt the grass roots backlash against the ACBLScore debacle, and they have reduced meeting costs in a number of areas. However, challenges still remain, and I am disappointed that a second motion to move the Fall meetings of the Board to ACBL Headquarters in Horn Lake failed (7-18-0). Beth Reid worked to rally support for this motion very hard in her final meeting in Orlando last fall, but old habits die hard, and the Board decided to continue meeting at the location of the Fall NABC. As you might guess, I voted in favor of the motion. A companion motion to move the ACBL Board's Fall meeting in 2018 away from the Honolulu NABC location also failed (8-17-0). I voted in favor of this motion as well.

Although I believe it reflects poorly on the Board to have made these decisions, I do understand the position of those Board members who feel it is important to have our meetings at the NABCs. Other high level committee meetings are held at the NABCs, which many of our Board must attend in any event. Our NABCs are terrific opportunities to get personal feedback from our players. And yes, we also like to play bridge when we have a chance, so combining our meetings with NABCs makes some logistical sense.

Our current President, Bob Heller, has changed our meeting schedule at the Summer NABC so that we overlap with the first Friday-Saturday game schedule. This saves quite a bit of money, but it means that we cannot enter most events the first weekend. The ACBL no longer pays for early-week excursions of Board member spouses. And the total percentage of the

ACBL budget allocated to the Board of Directors is approximately 2.3%, which doesn't seem unreasonable given the investment of time and energy by our Board.

Entry Pricing for KO Teams

Last year, the pricing for KO events at NABCs was changed for teams of more than 4 players, and now the ACBL charges per player, not per team, in these events. This change had strong advocates on either side, and a motion to reconsider the change failed (3-22-0). I voted against reconsideration, for several reasons. First, so long as each player on the team receives the full masterpoint award, it seems reasonable to charge a full entry fee. Second, entry fees are used to cover a wide variety of costs, and many of these costs should be calculated per player. Late night hospitality snacks are not consumed per team, but per player. All players on a team use supplies, read the Daily Bulletin, receive a registration packet and win prizes. Finally, I have a strong preference for deciding issues and then moving on to other questions, instead of re-litigating the same old thing meeting after meeting. Even when I find myself on the losing side of a vote, I will rarely, if ever, vote to reconsider an item unless I believe it necessary to correct a grave injustice.

Two final notes on this question: first, this pricing structure applies only to KO team events at NABCs; the pricing of Regional and Sectional events is at the discretion of the Sponsoring Organization. Second, many of you know how I feel about a District-wide policy on this question: I believe in local control of our tournaments to the greatest extent possible and thus have advocated against a District-wide policy.

NAP Subsidies

A motion to subsidize the 3rd and 4th place finishers (\$200 and \$100, respectively) in each District for the North American Pairs failed (11-13-1). I voted in favor of this motion, as the ACBL makes a lot of money from the NAP (mostly from the NAP club qualifying games), and I think the ACBL should use the opportunity to give a little something to everyone in this event.

Regional-Plus Events

A motion to increase the masterpoint payouts by approximately 15% for Regional events held at NABCs passed (14-9-2). I believe these will be branded "Regional-Plus" events in the future to reflect the higher payout. I voted in favor of this motion, as it provides a small incentive for players to attend NABCs in lieu of other nearby Regionals. Some Regional events held at NABCs also have a significantly stronger field. The two-session Sunday Swiss held before the Vanderbilt and Spingold starts, for example, has been nicknamed the "Rockcrusher" or "Vice Grip" Swiss. In Kansas City, the only National events held on Sunday were the finals of the Platinum Pairs (20 pairs), and the Senior Pairs. Everyone else, including most of the Vanderbilt teams, played in the Regional Sunday Swiss. I played in that event in Kansas City, and it felt like being in a pinball machine with professional team bumpers. Just brutal.

Personal Thoughts

Much of the work of the ACBL Board is done through Committees. Unquestionably, our individual perspectives are framed by our work and our experience on these Committees. Beth was a critical member of the Finance Committee for much of her service on the Board, and you therefore heard a lot about the ACBL's finances. I will provide considerably less detail on the ACBL budget, as I have been assigned to other Committees that fit my skill set better. I have been assigned to the Appeals and Charges Committee, which functions as the "Supreme Court" of sorts for all manner of different disciplinary cases. By rule, these proceedings are confidential, so I can't share details of these cases with you. Trust me, based on my experience so far, you wouldn't be interested.

I have also been assigned to the Board Strategy, or "Strategic" Committee, for which I have high hopes as a mechanism for change. So far, my experience has been lukewarm, but I am not giving up. Through this Committee, I hope to advocate for the changes I feel strongly about.

I believe you elected me based, in part, on the issues I campaigned on and believed were important: (1) a closer attention to the needs of our clubs, teachers, and other grass roots constituents; (2) a more closely defined relationship between management and the Board; and (3) an urgent need to address the aging demographics of our membership. I'm quite surprised at how much resistance I've encountered inside the Board of Directors to the idea of expanding the ACBL's Youth Bridge outreach. Much of the Board seems content to focus on recent retirees and serving the needs of our current membership. As you know, I am convinced the ACBL needs to reverse course and begin reducing the average age of our membership (currently 71 and climbing). It seems so clear to me that the long-term health of bridge in North America is tied to our youth, and I'm going to keep banging that drum. I'm cautiously optimistic that the newly-freed ACBL Education Foundation will become put its energy into youth-centered efforts.

I will continue to serve as the District's Tournament Coordinator for the time being, and I still direct games at the Cincinnati Bridge Center and teach 6-7 bridge classes each week. You'll also see me at our local Regionals when my schedule allows me time to play, and I am always available by phone (513-313-0488) or e-mail (AJStephani@gmail.com) with questions or concerns.

Hope to see you in Toronto!

A.J.