

Greetings, District 12 Unit Board Members!

The ACBL summer nationals were held in Chicago at the Chicago Hilton Hotel on Michigan Avenue from August 6th through the 16th. The weather cooperated with lower than average temperatures that made it comfortable for Susan and me to walk to dinner (many dining choices) all but one night when we took a cab to a diner featured on “Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives”. I had the Blue Plate Special ala Robert Redford in “The Sting”.

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District 12 (Michigan’s lower peninsula and northwest Ohio) was well represented by players in Chicago. Frank Treiber III of Toledo and Diane Travis of Cincinnati won the 0 – 10,000 NABC Pairs event. CONGRATULATIONS!

Board Meetings Highlights

The Board of Directors had four long days of meetings before the start of bridge play. We amended the ACBL Handbook for Appeals Committees, and our action was announced in the Daily Bulletins during the Chicago NABC:

New approach by Appeals Committees

In meetings prior to the start of the Chicago NABC, the Board of Directors amended the ACBL Handbook for Appeals Committees.

Effective immediately, Appeals Committees will use the Tournament Director’s ruling as their foundation rather than starting their ruling from scratch. In this scenario, appellants will be asked to explain the grounds on which they believe the TD’s ruling ought to be overturned.

Most often, this will have little or no effect on the outcome of the case. When the Appeals Committee decides that the TD’s ruling was misjudged or simply incorrect, the ruling will be overturned. In close cases, however, where the TD ruling is reasonable and the decision could go either way, the committee will be more likely to rule with the TD than in the past.

The grounds for bringing an appeal have not changed. If you believe the TD was mistaken as to the facts of the case, or the TD has applied the law incorrectly or was mistaken on a matter of bridge judgment, you can and should appeal.

TDs usually poll players when a ruling depends on bridge judgment. So before bringing forward an appeal that hinges on bridge judgment, you should be sure to understand the reason for the poll, the questions asked and which Law or Laws the TD applied when using the poll results.

Paul Janicki, Director of Appeals

Adam Wildavsky, Chairman of Appeals

A motion to add limits to Board Member terms failed. The motion was to limit terms to four (4), three-year terms (12 years total). There were 11 votes in favor from the 25 member Board. The proposal also would have allowed existing Board Members four (4) more terms before being subject to the proposed change. If it had passed, this proposal would have allowed a previous Board Member to return to the Board after a three year absence. I voted in favor of the term limit motion, as I feel plenty can be accomplished in 12 years.

The Board, in an unusual turnaround, rescinded their change in Sectional & Regional KO event master point pay outs. In New Orleans this year, the Board voted to reduce players' master points by 5% per segment, if a team member sat out half of each segment. Based upon conversations with a dozen District 12 members, all but one were opposed to this change. I voted to rescind. This vote was 15 to rescind; 10 votes not to rescind.

A motion to not pay World Bridge Federation dues, as less than 1% of our members have ever represented our zone in WBF events, was deferred until the Denver NABC this coming November. Currently, a dollar per ABCL member is paid to the WBF. The savings would be approximately \$168,000 this year.

The Master Point Ranking Committee will be proposing new categories in Denver with likely new rankings at 1,500 and 3,500 master points. The Bronze Life Master designation for newer players will be at 750 master points, because the Life Master requirements were raised to 500 points five years ago.

The League had 168,000 members at the end of July, 2015. This is our highest level of membership since 1997. Tournament play is down across the board with sectionals down 4%, regionals down 1%, and STACS down 6%.

Mitch Hodus is the new ACBL Chief Information Officer (CIO). His first job was to assess the ACBL's technology infrastructure and resources. He is currently working on bringing our infrastructure, which was determined to be outdated, up to speed. Mitch will serve as leader of the Management Technology Committee, and will determine when the ACBL Score + improvements will be completed.

Other Highlights

May is now the ACBL's Grass Roots Fund Month, and 25 of our District's clubs ran the extra point games. This brought \$1,874.00 to our District, which is used to help defray the District's commitment to our Grand National Teams and North American Pairs qualifiers in the Spring and Summer nationals each year. The District awards \$11,000 annually to our players to help with their expenses. The SOMBA, MBA, and Western Michigan regionals will also contribute approximately \$1,000 this year.

The Longest Day fundraiser held in conjunction with the Summer Solstice raised over \$700,000 to help fight Alzheimer's. I congratulate the people of our District who ran this fundraiser: Vickie Vallone & Dolores Bright in Bloomfield Hills, MI who ran two sessions; and Neil Taylor in Holland, MI who ran two sessions.

Closing Notes

As a Trustee of the ACBL's Educational Foundation, I participate in approving grant requests.

The Educational Foundation awarded grants of \$183,715 between 2012 - 2014. Four Districts have received 59% of these awards. Seven Districts, including ours, have not received any funds. (District 12 has never applied.)

The Board approved five grant requests in Chicago. Most of the funds are for teacher reimbursement. Fifth through twelfth graders were involved in these programs. Most programs have matching funding from sponsoring units or private individuals.

Here is the text from an article in the Daily Bulletin during the Chicago NABC:

Support the ACBL Educational Foundation

The ACBL Educational Foundation supports activities for the purpose of instructing bridge, to increase the enjoyment of playing and the number of players. The Foundation has nine members: three from the Board of Directors and six from the general bridge membership. Members are elected for three year terms, with a two-term limit. The Foundation meets three times a year at each NABC to consider all grant applications.

The Educational Foundation is funded by voluntary contributions made when members join or renew their ACBL membership, through special games and events, and from individual donations. Donations are tax deductible.

During the past few years, the Educational Foundation has approved applications for a variety of bridge programs across the U.S. and Canada, including:

- After-school bridge clubs
- In-school bridge programs
- Summer Youth bridge camps
- American Bridge Teacher Association Conference
- Online Course Module for teaching bridge to school teachers
- Bridge Lesson programs to develop new players
- North American Collegiate Bridge Team Championships

The Educational Foundation encourages ACBL members who want to start a bridge program to consider applying for a grant for financial support. The application form is on the ACBL web site at www.acbl.org (select the "Foundations and Commissions" link under the "Administration" heading). For more information, contact Foundation President Flo Belford at fbelford@sympatico.ca.

Finally....

What I cannot discuss is information on the four current pairs accused of unethical behavior. This needs to wend its way through the ACBL, WBF, etc. legal systems. None of the four pairs are American players, but they all play in our tournaments. Today, I received notification from

our CEO that he has invited nine respected ACBL members to be on a “blue ribbon task force”. His invitation says, in part:

“As you are well aware, widespread allegations of cheating are rocking the tournament bridge world. The ACBL aggressively investigates and prosecutes cases that are brought to our attention when we believe unethical behavior has taken place.

But we rely heavily on the player community to take the initiative; ours is a reactive rather than proactive posture.

I’m calling upon a group of experienced players to help us turn that around and identify the steps necessary to eradicate unethical behavior. Let’s rethink the whole process, from player memos and equipment through to hearing and post-hearing procedures. Our work together will benefit not only the League, but the bridge community as a whole.”

Hope to see many of you in Denver.

Dennis Carman
District 12 Director