

Dayton Stakeholder Meeting 2018

Meeting One: A Discussion of Tournaments

Proctored by: AJ Stephani

Summary

Earlier this year, Vangie Smith (U117) assumed the position of Education Chair for D11. When Vangie assumed this position, she assessed the role that D11 Education played in making D11 better. Vangie determined that D11 Education needed a vision, and that D11 Education had to take a very active role in pursuing this vision. Vangie is currently working on setting up initiatives and programs to help create the best D11 D11 can be.

The first of these initiatives to be enacted is the D11 Stakeholder Meetings. The D11 Stakeholder Meetings will be held, in perpetuity, at each D11 Regional on Friday after the second session. Each D11 Stakeholder meeting will feature a presentation on a topic by a guest speaker followed by a round-table discussion moderated by the speaker.

The D11 Stakeholder Meeting took place in Dayton on Friday; Sept. 7, 2018. The topic of this meeting was *Best Practices in Running Tournaments*. AJ Stephani led the meeting, and did a yeoman's job.

The following is an account of the meeting:

After Vangie started the meeting, and handed the meeting over to AJ, AJ scanned the room and said, "Tournaments are dying." The room gasped and tears were shed. This is probably not what actually happened--and yet, in my mind, this is what I recall. If you thought this 'reenactment' is bleak--the numbers behind that proclamation are downright harrowing.

Regional attendance across the ACBL is down 13% over the last two years. This loss of tables is a little more east of the Mississippi and a little less west of the Mississippi. So, in the geographical area we play in, the decline in table count could be much higher than 13%. AJ continued by saying that D11 table count has been steadily declining each year--over the last 10 years, D11 table count is down approximately 800 tables (a decent regional in its own right.).

Ed: A table of D11 Regional attendance will be placed on the education page shortly.

STACs are not faring much better than Regionals. Over the last two years, STAC table count across the ACBL is down 11%.

The only place the ACBL seems to be trading water is Sectional table count--and even that is fraught with peril. The Sectional table count is down 3% over the last two years.

After giving these numbers, AJ looked at us and said, "We have to face reality. We have to find ways to run a quality tournament while making a profit with a declining table count."

And thus, the floor was opened for the 14 attendees to share ideas and information. These attendees from both inside and outside D11, and I estimate representatives from at least five D11 units were there. Here are some of the ideas shared:

1. Streamline Regionals

This idea focuses on reducing the number of competing events at a regional. One example of this is the Mini-Soloway KO format. When using this KO format, the regional is able to remove single-session Swiss events.

2. An Introduction to Tournament Curriculum for Newer Players

Maribeth (U130) stated that U130 holds a program to help newer players learn about and prepare for tournament play.

Ed.-Shortly, there will be a sample program on the D11 Education page.

3. '8 is Enough'

Across D11, attendance at Sectionals for the Sunday Swiss is declining. The greatest decline is in the attendance of novice players--even when there is a STRAT designed specifically for them. Sondra (U164) said that once a month on a Sunday they have a potluck and then an '8 is enough' contest. Sondra reports that they regularly have 20+ tables. Using this event to familiarize novices with a team format may help increase their attendance in team events.

4. Extend an Invitation

The simplest proposal to mitigate the decline in attendance was made by AJ. AJ said--in the short term--the best way to mitigate the decline in attendance was to invite your members to play one more session in a tournament than they normally do. This would benefit their Unit in the short-term and benefit them in the long-term.

The bottom-line AJ presented to the group is that tournaments need to focus on reducing costs. The attendance issue is not immediately fixable, and we all need to tighten our purse strings. This may mean reducing prizes or hospitality. This may mean reducing Regionals from 7 days to 6 days--or from 6 days to 5 days [thus reducing overhead]. This may mean changing from the traditional Monday to Sunday format [ex. a Tuesday to Saturday format].

I would like to add one more thing that was not discussed at the meeting. The ACBL is built upon and around Clubs. The only way that Bridge and the ACBL is going to continue being the thing that I love and value--is for Clubs to re-emphasize their dedication to all of us. D11 can provide assistance, ideas, and some help--yet it all comes down to you--at the Club--doing two things. The first is to make every client's experience at the Club be as wonderful as it can be. The second is to enact innovative recruitment approaches. I know that with these two tasks, I place a heavy burden upon your shoulders. Yet know--I, and we, are here to help you. In the end, each of us must work to support the burden of making the pastime we love as healthy as it can be.