

FALL 2018 ACBL Board NEWS

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ACBL Board Member Notes Atlanta NABC Meetings

Hi All! Many apologies for such a long delay from my last newsletter – to be honest, the Atlanta ACBL Board of Directors (BOD) meetings were something of a dud for developments that affect our grass roots members. We had our usual slate of motions, with 3 full days of Committee and full Board meetings, and an additional day-long retreat of sorts with lots of interesting guest speakers (including our own Steve Moese!). However, most of the motions were hardly earth-shattering, and I'm hopeful that the BOD will move away from the administrative minutiae in coming years. I've been waiting for some more juicy tidbits to tell you about, but we've been in something of a holding pattern since last spring. 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?).

Atlanta was hot! Quite literally, as the temperature nudged 100 degrees most days. Fortunately, the host hotel was connected with 2 large food courts and other area hotels with skywalks, and ample food choices were conveniently accessible. The playing areas were spacious and easy to navigate. Attendance was a tad over 11,000 tables, more or less in line with estimates.

I've often faced questions about why the ACBL schedules summer NABCs in cities where the heat is often dialed up a notch. The reason, quite simply, is cost. Hotels and convention center space in cities like Las Vegas, New Orleans, and Atlanta are MUCH cheaper in the summer months. It turns out that non-bridge players prefer these cities in the fall and spring seasons as well. If we contracted with our NABC host cities in the most comfortable weather seasons, room costs would soar. We spend most of our time inside anyway, so think of it as the cost of being addicted to the greatest game ever created.

NEW DISTRICT 11 LIFE MASTERS IN 2018

Typically, I list the top MP winners at the most recent NABC in this box. However, I thought I would change things up a little and give a shout out to the new 2018 Life Masters in our District (through Sept. 31). Congratulations!

Paul Humbles, Franklin IN
Mary Hungerford, Groveport OH
Joseph Kammer, Cincinnati OH
Bertram Klein, Louisville KY
Nancy Medley Shelby, OH
James Morguelan, Louisville KY
Carol Parker, Huntsville OH
Charles Parks, Terre Haute IN
Douglas Smith, Terre Haute IN
Janet Wintermute, Indianapolis IN
Tom Bishel, Columbus OH
William Davis, Lexington KY
Gail Holman, Indianapolis IN
John Kilgard, Carmel IN
Peggy Kramer, Indianapolis IN
David Melvin, Lexington KY
Pamela Paschke, Carmel IN
Lewis Rakocy, Columbus OH
Pearl Regenstrief, Zionsville IN
Ron Scott Powell, OH
David Stern, Charleston WV
Casey Szulc, Indianapolis IN
Dave Tollison, Villa Hills KY
Terri Chandler, Campbellsville KY
John Jordan, Fishers IN
John Medley, Shelby OH

Beth Morton, Indianapolis IN
Barry Wauligman, Hamilton OH
Michelle Barker, Cincinnati OH
John Williams, Cincinnati OH
Harry Gerla, Dayton OH
Jane Kempin, Evansville IN
Doug Reams, Trenton OH
Karen Scott, Powell OH
Ellen Thomas, Louisville KY
Ann Brown, Louisville KY
Polly James, Galena OH
Kay Penson, Dublin OH
Harry Preston, Indianapolis IN
Stephen Vogel, Cincinnati OH
Joe Wernet, Bexley OH
Sue Baum, Cincinnati OH
Martin Gibling, West Chester OH
Siva Gopal, Dublin OH
Jim Laubie, Englewood OH
Stephen Lonski, Englewood OH
Margie Wysong, Indianapolis IN
Carol Armstrong, Louisville KY
David Wolfgang, Bowling Green KY
Jonathan Crosmer, Lexington KY
Kathleen Crosmer, Lexington KY



Lexington Players Shine Again in WorldWide Bridge Game

For the second year in a row, the ACBL will be represented in the Finals of the Worldwide Bridge Contest in China by players from the Bridge Club of Lexington! This year, long-time partners Harry Gordon and Susan Bullard scratched out a 71.09% game to place 3rd worldwide and 2nd in the ACBL. They will participate in China later this month along with 23 other pairs for a \$20,000 prize. Last year, Blaine Mullins and Morgan Schreffler made the trip. Way to represent Lexington, folks!

Executive Director Search Update

Some of you may be aware that the BOD dismissed CEO Bahar Gidwani in April. Bahar was hired as ACBL CEO less than a year before, so the news comes as a surprise to many. The Board of Directors certainly didn't act without due consideration and deliberation, and we're all quite saddened that this chapter ended as quickly as it did. I hope you understand that I am unable to comment further on the matter, as the dismissal is now in arbitration and our lawyers have asked not to comment. I hope to be able to be more forthcoming once the litigation is behind us.

Almost immediately after Bahar's dismissal, the Board assembled a Search Committee for a new Executive Director, and we are hard at work going through the interview process. Meanwhile, we are in excellent hands as CFO Joe Jones has been appointed interim Executive Director. Joe is as solid an administrator as you will find, and his leadership has reduced the urgency behind our efforts to find a permanent Executive Director. We want to make sure we get this right.

ACBL Board Actions

One of the more interesting wrinkles of our Atlanta meetings was the attendance of 2 Alternates from Districts whose BOD representative could not attend. The ACBL Board of Directors has a culture and history like any other governing body, and some of us were anxious how these stopgap newcomers would fit into the mix. Well, I couldn't have been more thrilled with the results – both Alternates were treated with the collegiality and respect I would want for myself if I were in their shoes. Further, they both integrated more or less seamlessly into the Board's practices, and one of them even noted that, "this was the best 3 days of meetings" he had ever attended. The Board of Directors is an easy target for criticism, and sometimes for good reason, as we certainly need to take a longer-term view on bridge and the core purposes of the ACBL. But I've been impressed with the way the BOD conducts itself and its meetings, and I'm glad others think so too.

Here's a truncated summary of the action taken on some of our motions from Atlanta, with my vote indicated.

- **2022 Reno Spring NABC.** Reno is one of our more popular destinations for NABCs, and the Board accepted (25-0-0)* a recommendation from management to return for the 2022 Spring NABC. The location is in the same tri-hotel location as the 2016 Spring NABC. Million-dollar upgrades to common areas and the ventilation systems have been implemented – welcome news to those who are sensitive to the smoke from the casino floors.

* 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).

Aside from the sweltering temps, **Atlanta** was largely a success. It became my temporary home, as I stayed the full 2 weeks, and played my fill of bridge. I was thrilled to see a lot of you made the trip there! About the only complaint I had was the Bladerunner-themed design of the hotel, with 53 floors of open air railings and glass elevators.



Not a problem for the downward-peering, but I'm a notorious scaredy-cat when it comes to heights. My first room was on the 43rd floor, and after 2 days of near-nausea every time I went back to my room, the hotel staff took pity and accommodated me with a cozy 3rd floor room. Bonus: it was just a 30-second walk down to the playing area, so no need to battle the elevator traffic come playing time!

I played with a team of juniors most of the second week, and we narrowly (2 IMPs) missed qualifying for the Spingold against what was essentially the Brazilian National Team. We then entered the Mini-Spingold, and our relative inexperience meant that we were the bottom seed. No matter – we won our opening match and continued our winning ways until Thursday, when we ultimately fell in the quarterfinals. I couldn't be prouder of my entire team, though – they acted with maturity and poise far exceeding their average 25 years of age.

Next up on the NABC schedule is **Honolulu**, which takes place November 22-December 2. It's a longer trek than any of us will take for an NABC, but it's a chance to make this a true destination tournament!

• **BOD Term Limits.** The second vote on the term limits amendment discussed in previous newsletters passed (20-5-0) by a wider margin than in its first reading last fall. A second package of miscellaneous bylaws amendments also passed (25-0-0) in a second reading. Both sets of amendments were ratified by the Board of Governors at their Atlanta meeting, so they are now official.

• **MP Awards for NAP/GNT District Finals.** This motion increased District stage awards for NAP and GNT Finals and increases the percentage of MP awards in Flight C events that are paid in gold (23-2-0). I voted in favor of this motion.

• **Zero Tolerance.** Management suggested that we expand the Zero Tolerance policy to all ACBL tournaments where an ACBL Director is assigned. (I bet some of you were unaware that this currently isn't the case!) I have problems with the way the ZT policy is worded, and I think we need to re-visit it at some point. But there seemed little reason to object to a uniform application of the policy across all ACBL tournaments, at least on paper. The motion passed unanimously.

• **"Mini-Soloway" Style KO Experiment.** Knockouts at Cincinnati's Flying Pig Regional in June and Louisville-Lexington's Fall Regional in November are run "Mini-Soloway" style, essentially meaning that the first 2 rounds of all brackets are run as a round robin or mini-Swiss to qualify 4 teams for the semifinals the next day. This has proved largely successful in other locations where Regionals are using the format, and Cincinnati seemed to stem the tide of decreasing KO teams, at least for this year. The BOD voted (25-0-0) to extend the experiment until the end of 2018, and I would be shocked if we didn't make it permanent eventually. It's a great innovation to our KOs.

• **ACBL-Wide Fragrancy Policy.** The Board of Governors had asked us to implement a fragrance policy at all ACBL tournaments. This affects more of our players than we perhaps know, and it can be a serious problem for those with allergies. However, the Board felt that this should be an action item for management, so they will study the issue and take appropriate measures.

• **Bonus Teams in GNTs.** In an effort to encourage greater participation in GNT District Finals, one of our members advocated awarding a second qualifying team to the National Finals if 8 or more teams participated in the District Finals. The bonus team would have applied to Flights B and C only. The motion failed by the narrowest of margins (12-13-0), which reflected my own assessment. I voted against the measure, but I didn't feel strongly one way or another. In the end, I thought the GNT's tradition of "1 team per District" meant that we smaller Districts have a fighting chance to win. If the larger Districts send more than one team, they will have a greater chance at dominating the event. I was impressed with the argument that the GNTs act as a gateway to NABCs for many C Flight players, and if the motion was limited to Flight C only, I probably would have voted the other way. In fact, the motion is likely to come back in Honolulu modified exactly this way. Stay tuned.



• **STaC Event Adjustments.** STaC Conditions of Contest were changed in ways I'm still not sure I understand. This motion has a tortured history, with a poorly-drafted motion split into two last fall, then deferred until spring, then re-written and introduced as a non-agenda motion in Atlanta. It passed (21-1-3). I abstained, largely as a symbolic measure, because of problems endemic to STaCs, the sloppy wording of the Conditions of Contest and the motion, and the uncertainty surrounding the implementation of the motion. In short, STaCs now require common hands to be played by all participating clubs (unless they don't) and will theoretically require matchpointing across the entire field. Clubs who do not use pre-duplicated hands will receive a reduced 65% STaC award. As I've stated before, I believe that the pre-duplicated hand requirement gives STaC events a false veneer of fairness. The variance produced by the uneven field strength of STaC events FAR outweighs the variance produced by playing different hands.

• **Women's BAM and Senior Swiss NABC Events.** The Marsha May Sternberg Women's BAM Teams (23-2-0) and Baze Senior KO (20-5-0) were removed from the NABC calendar. We review any NABC event that falls below 30 tables for continued viability, and these events had dwindled to the point where we felt had to take action. The Women's BAM fell short of the 30-table benchmark for 5 consecutive years, reaching a low of 19 teams in 2016. I voted with the majority to end the event. The Senior KO fell only a few tables short of the benchmark for a shorter period of time, and supporters of the event argued that the event might be rejuvenated by the inaugural Soloway KO (the big one starting at the 2019 Fall NABC) and re-jiggering of the NABC schedule. I voted to keep it around for a few more years, but it was canceled as well.

- **BOD Cost Savings Measure.** A motion designed to reduce BOD expenses by eliminating paid hotel room nights in between the end of the BOD meetings and the BOG meeting failed narrowly (11-14-0). I voted in favor of the motion, and was sad, but not surprised, to see it defeated. I'll keep fighting that fight . . .

- **NABC Budgeting and Expense Accounting.** We voted unanimously to change the way NABC budgeting is done and the list of allowable NABC expenses. This should provide more transparency for NABC Chairs going forward and provide the host Unit with more bargaining power over hospitality costs.

- **Conflict of Interest Issues.** Finally, the most emotional part of our Atlanta meetings concerned our policies and practices surrounding conflicts of interest (COI). First, we updated our COI Policy, which was not controversial (25-0-0). However, we ran into a situation on Wednesday that no one expected, but everyone welcomed: an opportunity to formally support Jay Whipple and ratify the terrific services that he provides. You may not know Jay personally, but you do through his products: The Common Game, Fast Results, the Rank Change letters you all receive under my name, electronic tournament bulletin services, and so many more. I was astounded to see a listing of everything Jay does in the spreadsheet he sent to us.

These are not services provided by the ACBL; Jay developed these tools and services over the years because he recognized a need and simply built the platforms himself. He does so through a private company, but at great personal expense. Jay provides all these services at no or little cost to us (and most nominal charges he requests be donated to the ACBL Educational Foundation). I think of everything that Jay does as ACBL "add-on" services; he doesn't sanction our tournaments, but he makes them better. He doesn't run our clubs, but he makes them better. Jay's contributions to the ACBL universe over the last 6 years are inestimable, and we all owe him our great thanks.

Not everyone feels this way, however, as Jay has been attacked on several popular websites throughout the year. He has been accused of self-dealing, profiting from his position as ACBL President, and a variety of conflicts of interest. These accusations are completely unfounded, but as the ACBL Board, we never had a mechanism for saying so. A discussion during our Wednesday full Board meeting morphed into such an opportunity, and we overwhelmingly (23-0-2) supported Jay in finding that all of his current business ventures are "fair, reasonable, and in the ACBL's best interest" (the language of our policy that conforms with applicable law). I sincerely hope that puts an end to attacks on Jay.

New Convention Charts

As I've discussed in previous newsletters, we will have 4 new convention card charts come November, replacing our current General Chart, Midchart, and Superchart. These aren't our convention cards, which are designed and printed by private companies, but the charts that govern which conventions are legal in different events, including tournaments and games at your local club. In its place will be 2 streamlined charts for MP-limited games and newer players (the **Basic Chart** and **Basic+ Chart**) and 2 charts for all other games (the **Open Chart**, and **Open+ Chart**).

The ACBL's Bridge Bulletin has had a series of articles discussing these changes, with Part 3 appearing on page 34 of the October issue. As a club director myself, I will have to familiarize myself with these charts, as the **Open Chart** (which most club games will adopt) allows more conventions than before. I encourage other club directors to do the same, and I hope we consider inviting some of our more experienced ACBL Directors to provide some training at area Regionals on the new charts.

Looking Ahead

Speaking of Regionals, I hope to see you at the Louisville/Lexington Regional (November 5-11). The NAP District Finals for Flight C is in the books, and congrats to all the winners!



Penni Brodey & Judy Sosin

JD Kurtzman & Kevin Henry

Charles Thompson & Joe Hammann

Mike Burns & Judy Barron

They won a trip to Memphis next spring to compete in the National NAP Finals! The District Finals for Flights A and B are coming up on October 28 in Cincinnati (11:00AM start), so don't forget to put that date on your bridge calendar. Until then, I am always available by phone (513-313-0488) or e-mail (AJStephani@gmail.com) with questions or concerns.

May At Least Half Your Finesses Work,

A.J.