

Discussion Topic – Help In-Person Bridge Return

The Advisory Council Clubs and Teachers Committee would like to join this discussion with several suggestions aimed at:

- 1) Helping in-person clubs reopen and remain open, and
- 2) Crafting policies that support both in-person and online clubs simultaneously, and grow players who play both venues.

When we approach change, we can identify 3 phases of our conversation:

- 1) sharing ideas,
- 2) creating proposals, and
- 3) adopting change (including changes to the Codification or Bylaws as necessary).

We are at the first stage here.

We are not making a specific proposal because we understand that many factors must be weighed to get to the best answer, and that no one person or small group has best data. We recognize that some ideas deserve testing in real life before they are adopted. We also recognize that playing in-person bridge is not at the same point in our journey back across the ACBL. Help must be available to clubs working to transition from online to in-person (or a mixed offering of both).

Online bridge appears to have helped the ACBL remain solvent, protected some clubs from bankruptcy, and provided large alliances with a very profitable venue at very low overhead cost.

Given where we are, we believe it is premature for the ACBL to pick a side between online and in-person bridge. It is very clear that in-person bridge cannot compete on cost compared to online bridge when it comes for earning the number of masterpoints. We believe there is more value for in-person play than quantity. Because we believe the social benefits from in-person bridge drive recruitment and retention, we recommend against giving online clubs free reign at this time. Instead, we advise that leadership help in-person clubs return and stabilize at their new business level.

Here are a set of ideas that we believe could balance the playing field for in-person and online bridge while encouraging growth in both during the coming transition months. We ask your consideration for the next 6-12 months until 90% or more of the in-person bridge clubs are open and at steady state attendance. (Some ideas might have more permanent value).

- 1) Restrict BBO ACBL Robot, Fast Pairs and 18 Board Pairs games to **Clear** points (this is the *status quo*).
- 2) Define a new masterpoint color – **White** – for online VACB (and SAYC) games.
- 3) Award **Black** Points for in-person games, and any online VACB game that is concurrent with an in-person game at the same time by the same sanction holder.
- 4) Allow tables from online and in-person bridge to complement table counts used for masterpoint awards overall. Reduce the online total tables by proportional board count. e.g., 18/24, or 18/27*. Devise an acceptable approach for multi-club alliances. We feel strongly that an

alliance should not have a disproportionate advantage in table count adjustments. Some ideas to spark discussion:

- a. Each member of an alliance separately claims additional tables played in the alliance online game by one of their original accept list players (difficult to manage). When claiming additional in-person tables, alliance members must list the player numbers of their online players to be added to the in-person game.
 - b. Cap the maximum number of additional tables that can be boosted at 30.
 - c. Allow the online game to boost its table count by tables from all members run in-person by members of the alliance at the same time.
- 5) Require a substantial number of black points for every rank including GLM. We recommend at least 200 for Life Master and at least 2000 for grand Life Master.
 - 6) Consider separate masterpoint® races by pigment for the calendar year to complement existing Mini-McKenney and HS Ace of Clubs races.
 - 7) Allow Units to give U100 games online a Unit-wide accept list. A sanction by a sanction holder residing within the unit can run any U100 game using the unit U100 membership as the accept list. U50, U20, U-Any-under-100 can use the list, subject to MP limitations. This idea should be allowed only where club games fail to cater to the U100 players, and game times should avoid as much as possible overlapping other limited (\leq NLM) games. Multiple online U100(any) sanctions may not run at the same time within a unit. Units can help manage this detail. Consider allowing Units to merge their accept lists within a District or with boundary Units (shared physical border).
 - 8) Restrict players from playing online when there is a championship regional in their District or a championship sectional in their Unit. Do this by deleting any MPs won playing online when a tournament is underway. This would not include online sessions started after the in-person tournament day has ended. In-person midnight games do not bar players from playing online.
 - 9) Consider foregoing the extra STaC fees charged to clubs to help them financially for Calendar Years 2022 and 2023. Charge the \$1 per table as for a regular club game instead.

We recognize that there is much discussion already among Board Members and Management. We hope you find these ideas helpful and we look forward to answering any questions you might have.

Respectfully Submitted for the Advisory Council Teachers and Club Managers Committee by Steve Moese (Chair)

***Example:**

A club runs a 10-table online game and a 10-table in-person game. In-person plays 27 boards. Online plays 18. In-person gets credit for 20 tables. Online gets credit for 10+ (0.667×10) or 16 tables. Neither online or in-person bridge can boost the other's tables more than 30 (before the game-length adjustment).