

Zoom Video Conference.

Attendance: Steve Moese, Jeff Bayone, Steve Gaynor, Rich Carle, Betty Starzec, Kathie Macnab, Henry Meguid, Ellis Feigenbaum, Susan Miguel, Silvana Morici, Judy Elbogen

Key Links:

Committee Documents: <http://www.district11bridge.com/BoG/2017BoGTCODocs.html>

BoG Reports: http://www.district11bridge.com/ACBL_board_reports.html

BridgeWinners Clubs & Teachers Forum: <http://bridgewinners.com/forums/browse/clubs-and-teachers/>

Priorities - Grow Membership, Grow Tables, Grow Classes

NEXT MEETING Tuesday SEP 26, 2023 - 8 PM ET, 5 PM PT

Executive Summary

1. Evidence VACB games are dying. Big games are sucking players from small games.
2. Big alliances have abused online NAP games (ran too many, allowed robots). ACBL slow to act.
3. **Play Local – Online and F2F.** Avoid big alliances. New Campaign.
4. **Susan M. will draft a framework to fix the VACB Game model – We will all provide our input in the next 2 weeks.**
5. How do we create competition for BBO? **We need people working now on how to construct the online contracts for 2025 when the current contract expires.** We support competition among Swan, RealBridge, BBO, and any capable bridge service provider.
6. Peter Marcus won his law suit against the ACBL and \$400K in legal fees.
7. Inability to advertise small games (F2F or VACB) hinders success of all small clubs.

AGENDA

VACB Games rules change

AC Meeting Topic – Clubs and Change

Discussion

Ellis F. – Discussed the direction of the ACBL and what the future might look like for clubs. ACBL is running their own 0-50 MP Games, club games, sectionals, and regionals online – blocking business that each of those stakeholders has a tangible expectation to benefit from. The League is not working for the good of its membership. It is working for its own good.

Steve M. – noted that the polls reported on at the AC Meeting painted the club owners as unwilling to change.

Ellis F. – I hope the ACBL is a roaring success. I hope they can bring in 42,000 new members on their own, without the help of clubs.

Kathie McN – Halifax sent notices for Tuesday Night 0-750 and got 11 tables but 9 pairs were playing with robots. Now they have 6 tables. Players said the experience was horrible – played people we don't know and didn't like playing against robots. Meanness and rudeness of visitors noted by local players.

Steve G. – Amazed games are played with multiple robot pairs. We only use a robot to complete a table.

Rich C. – No change since Aug 1 for my club. As a player I am delighted to play in many different places. Like going to a VACB game instead of BBO Clear Point Games. BBO Clear point games have rude players and more cheaters.

Ellis F. – VACB should have always been open. Remit 80% back to the home club. If you don't run F1F, you get no cut of the online pie. If I had \$2 per player from my club from online games, I'd be making 15,000 per month. Jay Whipple wrote the algorithm for the U100 evening games where this sharing still occurs. Did not market this game to other clubs. There is a clear demand for U100 games. Should have been in the hands of the clubs. Now the ACBL wants to run black point games.

Rich C. -What is the ACBL vision?

Kathie McN. – How many players in your club under 40 years old. Several responded zero Susan said 2 Kathie said 2. Younger players play online because they work and they play with people of their own age. Given this direction clubs will disappear in 10-15 years. BBO getting neighborhood, casual bridge, etc. just gearing up to an online existence. ACBL sees income with little overhead and little disruption. ACBL wants us to recruit players because they know the young will end up playing online. In 15 years many of us club owners will be in our mid eighties.

Susan M – Shared data from VACB games list from 8/22 from 9-10 AM. At the top, most games are alliances and mega clubs.

Pending	Running	Complete	Search	Cl
Host	Title	Type	Tables	
vacb248732	SOUTHEAST/Knox NAP 499er 9:30 50% Rec	Pairs	33	
vacb183376	200% <2500 Florida SE1 200% NAP 50% Re	Pairs	25	
vacb248732	SOUTHEAST/Knox NAP Open 9:30 50% Rec	Pairs	17	
vacb244657	Knox/Big Orange 749er 9:30 #7608	Pairs	15	
vacb277178	7NTWorld 599er game 9:50am #7616	Pairs	11	
Vacb241364	NAP Hamilton Bridge Centre #10004	Pairs	11	
vacb185736	TBC Ottawa 0-750 #67475	Pairs	11	
vacb266064	ALLIANCE GREEN 0-500 10:05/7:05 #7624	Pairs	9	
vacb165449	Viking DOUBLE POINTS 1/2 Red nap #8313	Pairs	6	
vacb238154	KHATIB 9:45 AM Open Pairs #7614	Pairs	5	
vacb225938	BCON 499er Pairs 10:00 am #7620	Pairs	4	
vacb275388	Bridge21.ca /G&B //Open #7621	Pairs	4	
vacb275388	Bridge21 // PRIVATE Renfrew Club only #76	Pairs	3	
vacb276949	Marssan BC 999er Tues 9:45 AM #7615	Pairs	3	

The second chart shows the number of VACB games that don't run because they have too few tables. This number of non-run VACB games is growing since August 1.

vacb266064	ALLIANCE Blue-299er 10a/7a #761	Pairs	1	0	6 BB\$
vacb266064	ALLIANCE OPEN 10am/7am #7618	Pairs	1	0	5 BB\$
vacb275388	Bridge21.ca /G&B / /Open #7621	Pairs	3	7	4 BB\$
vacb262410	< 649 SE Carolina S1 #7623	Pairs	4	1	5 BB\$
vacb225938	BCON 499er Pairs 10:00 am #7620	Pairs	4	8	5 BB\$
vacb236471	WFB Pairs #7622	Pairs	4	0	5 BB\$
Vacb241364	NAP Hamilton Bridge Centre #1000	Pairs	5	20	6 BB\$
vacb262410	<2000 SE Carolina S1 #7625	Pairs	6	0	5 BB\$
vacb266064	ALLIANCE GREEN 0-500 10:05/7:0	Pairs	6	17	6 BB\$
vacb262410	Open SE Carolina S1 #7626	Pairs	9	1	5 BB\$
vacb258459	PETOSKEY 199 10:25 #7627	Pairs	26	0	6 BB\$
vacb239152	BC of St Paul 0-2000 Pairs 9:30 #76	Pairs	31	0	3.75 BB\$

Susan M. – People don't understand the situation with the Alliance games. They don't understand that in a limited point game they get fewer masterpoints. One large game had 10- 15 robot pairs – totally illegal. Complained more than three times about these violations. When Bronia investigated there were 88 games run as NAP games with robots.

CAMPAIGN – PLAY LOCAL – play face to face or in your local VACB game. Don't play in the mega clubs.

Susan M. - Had people register in my game, then went to another game and never delisted from my game. People are signing in and then looking for a bigger game. Also, people are signing in with robots at the last minute when the filters are off. This is unacceptable. Send feedback to ACBL and Jay Whipple. Bronia wanted the limits on attendance for VACBs lifted immediately so that management would not have to waste energy on this. Bronia has asked us to get our feedback to her.

Kathie McN. – Send information about benefit of playing in smaller clubs. Clubs should have a maximum number of tables for each VACB sanction (25 tables, say).

Susan M. – Big VACBs can flight their games. Instead limit the MP payout to 12 tables. ACBL runs black point games once every two hours. Proceeds are paid back to the clubs where the players originate/identify. Limit attendance to withing District for limited MP Games.

Ellis F. – Told to pound salt when proposed in the past. ACBL scrapped profit-sharing limited MP games for other tiers.

Henry M. – Alliances vs F2F – what %age of revenue from VACB games compared to f2f games?

Steve M. – BBO 63% tables, VACB 17% tables, Clubs 20% tables,

Henry M. – At least \$500,000 of ACBLs income comes from online alliances (7-9 clubs). After I recruit new players, they discover community games and go play online. As soon as they get their legs, they play online. They love online play.

Steve M. – mentioned that recent data says online players play more times per day than a face-to-face player. Multiple 2-hour games throughout the day compare to one 4-hour session in your club.

Ellis F. – Nothing wrong with this. We are creating an ecosystem where players were created in clubs. We created new players through hard work and tenacity. Now, we are still generating players but we are not seeing them in our clubs. As clubs and Units where we used to generate new members, we'd pay their first year because we expected to earn back that investment over time. Now we are not – because we cannot expect payback from player loyalty. Clubs and units are creating the new players. ACBL is not letting Clubs, Units and Districts to move onto the new online business model.

Susan M – Alliance VACB clubs are paying \$5.10 per table in fees to the ACBL while regular clubs are paying only \$1.10. Clear VACB games will helped to grow.

Steve G. – Aaked ab out the response to our letter to Management.

Steve M. – Reviewed what he learned from Larry Sealy and Bronia J. Bronia is willing to make changes if the Aug 1 decision doesn't work. BBO is the problem, not the VACB clubs. There are about 4MM club games and BBO owns 63% or more than 2.4MM tables. They also take a cut of all ACBL games. If your sell products to consumers, you want WalMart to help distribute them efficiently and competitively. What you don't want is for WalMart to manage your marketing strategy too. BBO is managing the ACBL's marketing strategy. We need a team working on options for the renewal of online contracts for ACBL bridge NOW, not later.

Susan M – BBO isn't the issue. BBO players don't want to play in local clubs anyway.

Steve M. – The idea is that BBO as a business should not own an ACBL online club game. Individual members should

Susan M. – That's not going to help deal with the dominance of the alliances. Not going to help the income for small clubs.

Kathie McN – Why can't we negotiate with other platforms.

Steve G. – Doesn't Swan have the right to run MP games online.

Jeff B. – The contract with BBO will expire in June 2025. We do not know why an extension was signed in Feb 2020. ACBL got no additional benefit from the renewal. Only three online sanction granted for online bridge: BBO, Swan, OKBridge. Swan had a 20-year-old platform. After close to 2 years and \$1MM we are about ready to launch the new version of Swan. We saw the BBO contract. Only BBO can run robot games. (Can have robots fill out a pair). Pigmented points is the sole right of BBO. Any new type of game shall be given only to BBO. We need to discourage the ACBL from continuing with such a restrictive contract. Allow any platform to run ACBL games, not just the 3 sanctioned providers. Swan will reward clubs who bring players to Swan with a portion of their entry fee (SAYC-like sharing). Profit sharing is what we should encourage.

Ellis F. – Many clubs did not register for SAYC benefits. Money is left over – and redistributed by the ACBL.

Ellis F. – Cant upload STaC to ACBL LIVE4Clubs.

WHAT CHANGES DO WE MAKE NOW

Blow up the current system

Limit MP to 12 table maximum.

Need to compare to BBO clear point games. Swan will go after clear point games.

Jeff B. – Wants to see if Swan's marketing strategy can compete with BBO. Have to show someone else can be viable.

Steve M. – If a VACB game attracts 120 tables, what stops them from running 10 sections of 12 each?

Susan M. – VACB can run one game at a time.

Ellis F. – VACB games are loaded into ACBL LIVE4CLUBS. MP Book is used. They create overall awards.

Discussion ensued about MP awards differences between VACB and BBO club games online.

Ellis F. – Bridge has a bright future online, however we have to create the right ecosystem to compensate the stakeholders.

Eric C. – BBO has an unfair advantage offer F2F Clubs. F2F can run only one session in every daytime segment (Morning, Afternoon, Evening). BBO can run as many events online as they want.

Susan M. – ACBL allowed the unfettered construction of the large alliances. Now they are interfering with small clubs. I cannot advertise my offerings from my small club to anybody. We are prevented to market a small game to anyone unless they have already played at your club. Many players in my club are getting illegal emails from clubs where they haven't played. Teachers can advertise to anyone in their district, not outside.

Steve M. – mentioned Pianola Marketing Management tool. There are many officials who share member lists with club owners. How do we get an aligned set of recommendations to Management?

Susan M. – Don't use the attendance data in summer months when NAP is in play. Can judge all games NOT running. My games have declined since August.

Steve M. – Discussed the need for a first party list by day, time of day, and by vendor of all online ACBL games. We need a public forum for finding what's available without having to be on a given bridge service.

Ellis F. – Mused out loud about setting up an online game with a service provider other than BBO by a club. Would the ACBL survive a legal challenge?

Susan M. – The platform is not running the game, it's the club.

Jeff B. – Brenda England tried to do this and failed. Did not have a sanction for it.

Steve M. – Needs a legal opinion. Get a lawyer.

Susan M. – BBO sends messages with ACBL logos that don't reflect ACBL Brand norms. Hideous.

Jeff B. – Expressed concern about possible financial interest in BBO by principle influencers and decision makers.

Ellis F. – Greg Coles is working for 52 Entertainment now.

Jeff B. – Expressed his experience with Swan. (We all shared experiences with the new platform).

Steve M. – Agree we should promote competition among the three or four (or more) service providers.

Jeff B. – BBO must not be able to renew its contract.

Steve M. – Wants to see 4-5 services competing for ACBL bridge volume. No exclusive contract. Need a minimum of 3 providers, or more going forward. Need competition to create better experiences for players and more income for clubs and ACBL. Can't give BBO carte blanche without expecting that they do more than they do for the ACBL and online bridge.

Jeff B. – F2F clubs created the current BBO users. Never should have had an exclusive contract.

Kathie McN – CBF played on RealBridge last year. Players loved it.
CBF will do round robins online again this year.

Ellis F. – RealBridge is a breath of fresh air in online game management. Video great, interface great. From the director's perspective it is a great platform.

Kathie McN. – older players don't want to learn new platforms.

Susan M. – Send illegal emails to Gwynne Garthright at the ACBL gwynn.garthright@acbl.org

From Susan Miguel :

Hi Susan,

There is a Terms of Use that clubs, teachers and cruises must adhere to; however, there are occasionally some who violate the Terms of Use. Those who violate are subject to consequences described in the CDR. We do not ever sell lists.

You can view the Terms of Use here: <https://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/about/termsfuse.pdf>

Here are some key points:

Clubs may only contact those who have played at their club

Teachers can contact prospective students in their district

Teachers must have an accreditation recognized by the ACBL

Cruises usually fall into either the club or teacher requirements depending on the content of the email

If you ever receive any unwanted email, we can certainly reach out to the sender to see if they got the email addresses via the ACBL (this is not always the case) and follow up if a violation of the Terms of Use has happened.

I hope this helps.

Thanks,

Gwynn

Jeff B. – I don't understand why we cannot advertise to anyone on the internet.

Ellis F. – Districts, Units, and Clubs have limitations on use of PII. Bridge teachers do not have any limitations.

There was disagreement about who can contact potential students from other areas/clubs. We discussed paid advertising vs the use of emails and addresses from an ACBL source. ACBL hasn't caught up with the online world.

We adjourned the meeting at 9:44 PM ET.

NEXT MEETING Tuesday SEP 26, 2023 - 8 PM ET, 5 PM PT

Submitted Respectfully,

Steve Moese

Chair Advisory Council Teacher & Club Manager Committee