

This update is intended to cover the time period since mid- July, my last update to you.

On 7-26 Guest membership policy was updated to be less punitive, and the percentage was increased to 15%. I was a strong advocate for that. ACBL sent you an email copy.

On 8-2, I provided my recommendations on goal setting for the Executive Director, to the Executive Director Review Committee. I think this process is very important, as it solidifies that the Board and the executive director are totally in alignment on our strategy.

On 8-18 we had a BOD "Special meeting". The online task force made recommendations that were subsequently publicized to you so I won't cover all that here. Basically it was a first step and from there the BOD and Management will review all of their recommendations and decide what actions need to be taken. I see 6 main things: a possible aggressive revenue share model for teacher recruiters, BBO and ACBL brand positioning, ownership of teaching model, technology direction, and tournament blending face to face and online. Not addressed and needs to be is how will we manage local conflicts when face to face resumes while still having online games. The transition task force made a presentation of the committee work being "offloaded" to others, to be completed by the November BOD meeting. We passed 20S3-01 by 25-0-0 "Conditions of Contest for Online Play (attached below). We listened to disciplinary hearing reports, approved appointment to ACBL Laws Commission and to the ACBL Disciplinary Committee. We passed 24-1-0 that all masterpoint awards shall be 80% of the amount that would be awarded in face to face, a practice that management had already implemented. Withdrew motion 20S3-03 by a vote of 24-1-0 reducing masterpoints in shortened games.

On 9-4 ACBL sent out update on the 2021 GNT to District Presidents and District GNT coordinators, dealing with rules for club qualifying, player eligibility, and required response to several questions.

On 9-17, we had a 4 hour zoom board "Special meeting". We passed 2 very minor masterpoint award codification issues. Appeals and Charges presented several actions taken against online players; there is quite a bit in the "pipeline" right now. Can you imagine, on one case alone there were 309 pages of documentation with 3 days' notice! Other than that, 2 major initiatives were presented:

### **Management presented their response to the online bridge task force**

**recommendations.** Management suggested that we incentivize clubs and teachers to drive recruitment and retention, much more dramatically than we do for recruitment now. There is discussion, but not close to any decision, about possibly modifying the 11% of membership fee reimbursement that Units get now, that is supposed to be used to recruit and retain members. (We recognize that many do not know what this is for and many Units do not actively promote recruitment or retention.) They are considering developing a "home club" concept, to be used to determine virtual club eligibility, and possibly other things. Some future systems development they want to do for clubs, are: Include virtual clubs in "find a club", allow for "special games "online – "coming soon" they said, balance master point awards for club games so that when we return to face to face players have an incentive to play face to face vs. online. (how to do this, still under discussion). Investigate possibility of at club level playing online and at club face to face in the same game. Management is starting to think about when we go back to face to face tournaments, should there still be a few online tournaments, and what kind. The boards initial reaction is concern from some about doing any online Sectionals, and also concern about Regional timing being in conflict with face to face timing. It was suggested the best time for online regionals after we are back to face to face would be the week immediately after the Nationals which is historically a tough time for Regionals. No decision on this is close to being made. There are quite a few things in Education in the pipeline, as a result of collaboration between management, ABTA, and the Education Foundation: Self-directed video series using whiteboard videos, bimonthly online live courses, certification of teachers to teach online since teaching online is quite different than face to face (This is being tested now), creation of better tools to bring teachers and players together, and

developing online content for new players. For 2020 and 2021, management plans to treat online pigmented points as if earned in person.

**Strategic committee, made a major presentation on membership and retention.** As a part of the strategic committee that I am on, we are in the process of a major membership initiative, biggest in at least 15 years, and quite possibly the best ever. This involves a huge upgrade in the “tool kit” for clubs and units. It involves better systems, so clubs and units know what their numbers are and sharing of best practices from clubs throughout the country. Peak membership was 191,000 in 1991, currently 162,000. Last major effort to grow membership was early this century. Decline from 2013 to present. Long term growth seems possible due to there being 15 million Americans over age 45 that know how to play bridge, and 5 million of them play at least a few times a year. 2 million of those play at least once a month. Among those that don't know how to play, one in 5 say they are interested in learning – a whopping 11 million people! WOW!! Numbers on new member recruitment have been steadily declining as well as retention percentage. This is a very challenging time for membership. Decline since the pandemic has increased from 1% per year to a rate of 7% per year last month mostly likely because around 50,000 players who did play in clubs before the pandemic, are now not playing on line. When that group comes up for renewal, their rate of renewal is much worse than before, understandably so. With most clubs not open, it's a lot harder to work on this at club level. The best medicine for renewal woes is getting more of these people playing. In September marketing has started a “campaign” to engage the members not playing online. As far as recruiting new players, our new “guest” membership program, sent out by email on 9-9-2020, is being worked by marketing to try to sign up those who are playing online who are not members. I believe that will help us some. The biggest thing though, is we want to equip and energize the local level by providing a framework for continuous improvement based on performance data and replication of successful practices. In other words, not a top down directive but more of a here's how other clubs have been successful and what kind of numbers are possible. The board passed an action item by a 2/3 vote to assign management to develop a comprehensive 3 to 5 year plan to grow recruitment and retention. The plan is to accomplish alignment of the entire organization to address membership issues. More resources will be required to be successful. Numerical targets will be established and tracked.

Since the board reorganization has passed, there is a lot of District level codification that must be updated to remove “District Director” by the time this change happens, which starts at the end of 2021 and is complete at the end of 2023. “Regional Director” may or may not have the same role in District 10 governance, your choice. I am on the Governance committee and have been tasked with others to work on communication to each District about this, a letter coming soon to Larry. District 10 will need to update their Bylaws in that regard.

I have co-authored a soon to be presented major initiative for a comprehensive overhaul of communication protocols. Its working its way through the “process” and I hope to be able to tell you more about it by later this Fall and that it is underway. There are a lot of pieces to this. Stay tuned!

The tournament task force is working on evaluating the number of regionals we have in the country. While it is early in the process, the sentiment of committee members is to reduce the number. The criteria they will use is still being developed. Point being we do need to think about this as a District, and to develop a District 10 point of view about how we feel about it. Once we do that I will make sure you get heard by the task force. I am not on the task force but will communicate D10 needs to the chair.

Longest Day raised around \$ 800,000.

Something Units or Districts can do to support online beginner lessons is to pay the fee for Zoom or the like.

The ACBL will not be able to run STACs for Units or Districts this year.

Table count was down about 80 tables from the last regional.

89 clubs are open as of the end of August out of over 3000, less than 3%. District 10 has 2 clubs open in Louisiana and 4 in Tennessee.

NABC's will no longer require an opening party. Board approved via straw poll managements question, 22-2-1.

I am still pushing for the online regionals to have more than 18 boards. The next regional in October will not have some with more, preferring instead to not reduce from 4 sessions per day to 3 due to the systems limitation issues for both BBO and ACBL. NAOBC pair games in November will be expanded to 24. Will re-evaluate again after the October regional.

Please contact me anytime with questions or concerns, by email or phone. 501-922-8608

Thanks

Ned Irving  
District 10 Director, ACBL Board

## **Appendix O: Online Play**

1. Cheating: Cheating online is a serious offense, subject to the same penalties as cheating in live play. It is illegal to communicate with your partner during a hand via any means other than chat to the full table, to communicate with a kibitzer during the game, to play using an account that is not yours, to gain advanced knowledge of a deal, or to play in one event using multiple accounts. Any accusation of cheating must be made privately to the director of the event, to the ACBL recorder, or to a reporting mechanism provided by the online platform.
2. Alerts: Alerts (including announcements) are made by the player making the call. An alerted call should be accompanied by an explanation. Stating the common or popular name of the convention is not sufficient. You are encouraged to explain calls even if those calls do not require alerts. Any call that would be alerted after the auction in live bridge should be alerted at the time of the call.
3. Any contestant may request information concerning an opponent's methods. Such inquiries should be directed to the player who made the call and must be asked in a private chat. Replies to these inquiries must likewise be given in a private chat. When playing with a Zoom (or the equivalent) screenmate follow up questions are permitted regardless of which player made the call or play.
4. Tempo: In general, bids and plays within 10 seconds are considered to be in tempo.
5. Claims and concessions: If you reject an opponent's claim or concession, and continue play, the result of the board will stand as played. Instead of rejecting the claim or concession, you may call the Director for an adjudication of the result.

6. Unfinished hands: A hand that is partially completed when time expires is adjudicated as equitably as possible to both sides. Any doubtful point will be resolved against the partnership that is considered most responsible for not finishing in time.
7. Undos: Unintended calls or plays will be rectified under the Laws of Duplicate Bridge. A contestant who makes an unintended call or play should summon the Director immediately. As in live play, undos are permitted only upon instruction of the Director.
8. Table Chat: All chat is authorized information for opponents and unauthorized information for partner.
9. Convention Cards: Partnerships are encouraged to have a convention card that includes the players' real names. Pairs without cards will be at a disadvantage in misinformation rulings. If the system loads a default card for pairs without a convention card, then you should not assume that your opponents are playing those methods.
11. Information Available in the Software: All information provided by the software is authorized. For example, if the software has a button to view your convention card during the hand, then it is legal to use that button to view your own card. Consulting a written defense is allowed in any situation where it would be allowed in face to face bridge. Using any other aid to memory is illegal. Illegal aids include consulting a system notes document or tracking the cards played on paper.
12. Irregularities: The Director must be summoned electronically for any irregularity. Once the Director has been summoned, all play and bidding shall cease until the Director authorizes its continuation.