

## 2025 - 26 NORTH AMERICAN PAIRS CONDITIONS OF CONTEST

**THESE CONDITIONS OF CONTEST MAY NOT BE CHANGED AT ANY LEVEL OF PLAY DURING THE COURSE OF THIS EVENT. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE CAUSE FOR EXCEPTION TO THESE CONDITIONS OF CONTEST.**

### INTRODUCTION

There are many changes to the North American Pairs this year, including changes to the organization of this document. **Please** read the relevant sections carefully as many things are different. Players need only read the first section (but may, of course, explore the rest of the document if interested). Districts (NAP Coordinators, Tournament Coordinators, District Presidents, etc.) should refer to the District section for important information about requirements for District Finals, District-level Conditions of Contest, and key dates. Clubs (Club Managers and Directors) should read the Clubs section for specific technical information needed to run qualifying games.

### REGIONAL DIRECTOR AUTHORITY

All ACBL tournament regulations and Conditions of Contest, though not specifically included in these Conditions, apply to this event throughout. In the case of an unforeseen situation, the Regional Director (or their designee), in consultation with the ACBL NAP Coordinator, may make exceptions to these conditions. In emergency situations only, the Regional Director, on their own, may make decisions consistent with the spirit of these Conditions of Contest. In cases of dual residence, active military duty, school attendance or similar cases of extended temporary or permanent relocation, the ACBL NAP Coordinator has final authority of the residency and/or the qualification requirements (see Appendix). The Regional Director has final authority on any item not specified in the Conditions of Contest.

### INFORMATION FOR PLAYERS

#### OVERVIEW

The North American Pairs is a grass-roots competition where each District selects representatives to compete at the Spring North American Bridge Championship (NABC). The event begins with qualifying games in Clubs during June, July and August. These games are followed by Unit- (optional) and District-level competitions to select players for the NABC. Financial subsidies are provided by ACBL to the top two pairs in each flight in each District to offset the cost of travel to the NABC.

The competition is divided into four separate flights, based on masterpoint (MP) levels, so players of all levels of experience have the opportunity to compete and represent their District in the National competition.

## **SCHEDULE**

1. **Club Qualifying** June, July and August
2. **Unit Finals** Between Sept 1 and the District Final (note: most Districts do not have Unit-level competition.)
3. **District Finals** Between Sept 1 and the third Sunday in January (this year this is Jan 18, 2026)
4. **National Finals** 2026 Spring NABC in St. Louis, MO
  - a. **Championship Flight and Flight A** Wed/Thu February 25-26, 2026
  - b. **Flights B and C** Sat/Sun March 7-8, 2026

In all flights the NABC Final is a four-session event played over two days. Approximately 50% of the field will qualify for day two, with carryover per ACBL formula. In the Championship flight and Flight A, day two will be an all-play-all format when possible.

## **FLIGHT ELIGIBILITY**

**This is the first year that the NAP will feature four flights instead of three.**

Eligibility for the various flights is as follows:

1. **Championship Flight** Open to any player
2. **Flight A** Players with fewer than 6000 MPs
3. **Flight B** Players with fewer than 3000 MPs
4. **Flight C** Players with fewer than 750 MPs who are not Life Masters

For purposes of NAP Flight Eligibility, ACBL uses the June masterpoint cycle, which runs on May 6, 2025. Points won after this cycle do not affect flight eligibility.

Players with significant playing experience in non-ACBL events may have this experience considered when determining their appropriate flight.

Partnerships consisting of players at different experience levels are only eligible to compete in those flights for which both players are eligible. For example, a 1000-MP player playing with a 3500-MP player is not eligible for Flight B even though the average of the partnership is less than 3000 MP.

Players may participate in any flight for which they (and their partner) are eligible. However, a player may play in only one flight at the NABC Final.

## **QUALIFICATION AND ADVANCEMENT**

The qualification process begins at designated club qualifying games held during June, July and August. Players qualify for advancement by placing in the top half of their field or by scoring 50% or higher in the club qualifying game. Players may qualify in any club in any District, but only qualify for advancement in their home District. (See Appendix for more information about District membership.)

Players may play in as many club qualifying games, with as many different partners, as they wish. Players whose partner is not an ACBL member may still qualify; players whose partner is an online “robot” may not.

Once qualified at the club level, players may play in future stages with any qualified partner. In other words, new partnerships may be formed at the Unit or District level. Qualification to the NABC final (at the District-final level) is by partnership; players will play at the NABC with the same partner they competed with at the District final. For all stages beyond the club level, all participants must be ACBL members whose dues are current.

The top three pairs in each District Final in the Championship Flight and Flight A qualify for the NABC Final; the top four pairs qualify in Flights B and C. Additionally, the defending champion in the Championship Flight will be invited to participate in the NABC Final, provided they meet all eligibility requirements. (Note that since this is the first year of the Championship Flight, this clause applies to the winners of Flight A from 2024.)

In a stratified game at any level, players who achieve qualification in any flight also qualify in any lower flights for which they are eligible. In other words, a Flight C-eligible player who qualifies in Flight A is also qualified for Flights B and C at the next level. In a flighted game, qualification is only earned in that specific flight.

## **CONVENTIONS**

The Open Convention Chart applies in stratified games at any level. In flighted games, the Basic+ Chart applies in Flights B and C, the Open Chart applies in Flight A, and the Open+ Chart applies in the Championship flight.

## **INFORMATION FOR DISTRICTS**

Each District must appoint a District NAP Coordinator. This person serves as the point of contact for communication to and from ACBL, clubs, players, and Unit and District leadership. They are responsible for preparing the District's Conditions of Contest and scheduling Unit (if any) and District finals.

## **DISTRICT CONDITIONS OF CONTEST ARE DUE TO ACBL BY JUNE 1, 2025**

***Because so much has changed this year, there is a grace period; Conditions will be accepted until July 1.*** Conditions submitted after this date will have the following defaults imposed: club qualifying **will** be required, Unit Finals **will not** be permitted, and District Finals **will** be a two-session, play-through event in all four flights.

Conditions must be submitted by email to [tournaments@acbl.org](mailto:tournaments@acbl.org). District Conditions must address:

- Whether club-level qualifying is required (almost all Districts require club qualifying)
- Whether Unit-level qualifying is required or permitted (almost no Districts require Unit-level play)
- The format (number of sessions, number of boards per session, etc.) for Unit (if any) and District Finals
- The date and site of Unit (if any) and District Finals. If these are not yet known at the time the Conditions are submitted, they may be provided later. The due date is June 1, or 3 months prior to the date of the Finals, whichever is later.

All Conditions of Contest, requests for Finals sanctions, and any questions should be submitted by email to [tournaments@acbl.org](mailto:tournaments@acbl.org). Sanction requests DO NOT use the submission/approval process in TourneyTRAX that is used by most other tournaments; simply email your requested dates and sites to [tournaments@acbl.org](mailto:tournaments@acbl.org).

## **FEES**

The table fee for club qualifying games is \$5.15 (USD), which is billed directly to clubs via ACBL Live for Clubs. Districts may impose an additional fee, supporting the District Grass Roots Fund, payable directly from clubs to the District. Table fees at the Unit and District level are \$7.15 (USD). District Finals held at the site of a Regional or Sectional tournament pay the same table fee as the tournament.

## **EVENT FORMATS**

- District Finals must follow one of the following formats:
- Two-session playthrough
- Three sessions, where approximately 50% of the field after the second session qualifies for a one-session final (carryover per ACBL formula)
- Four sessions, where approximately 50% of the field after the second session qualifies for a two-session final (carryover per ACBL formula)
- Four-session playthrough

Unit Finals, if held, may follow one of the above formats. They may also be single-session or a two-session event with a 50% cut after the first session.

Any format which includes a cut may schedule a consolation event for pairs who do not qualify.

All sessions at both the Unit and District level must be at least 24 boards and no more than 30 boards.

District Finals may be held in-person or online. An ACBL Tournament Director will be assigned for all District Finals. District Finals may be split among multiple sites; the District's Conditions of Contest must specify the basis on which the District's qualifying "slots" will be apportioned.

Unit Finals may not be held online. If requested, an ACBL Tournament Director will be assigned. Otherwise, any club director who is certified as a Tournament Assistant or as qualified to run a Local Sectional may run the game.

## **Substitutes and Replacements**

At any stage of the competition, the Regional Director (or their designee), the District NAP Coordinator or the tournament committee may approve a substitute in an emergency. A substitute must meet the flight eligibility requirements, may not appreciably strengthen the partnership and is subject to the following limitations:

- At the club or Unit stage, if a substitute plays more than 50 percent of the boards, they become the contestant of record if otherwise qualified.
- At any stage beyond the Unit stage, a substitute is not permitted for more than 50 percent of the boards played in a qualifying session or sessions; for more than 50 percent of the boards played in a final session or sessions; or more than one session in any case.

Beyond the District Final stage, a replacement is permitted only if one member of a pair that qualified to play in the National Final stage is either:

- Deceased - The surviving qualifier may select a new partner, who must be fully eligible to play in the National Final stage, or,
- Medically diagnosed as being unable to travel to or play in the National Final stage and the medical condition that renders the member unable to travel to or play in the National Final stage was unknown to the member at the time of the District Final.

The otherwise-qualified member may request permission to obtain a substitute. Either member will have an opportunity to provide medical documentation of the condition. The NABC leadership team will decide the request fairly and promptly and are the sole judge of whether a substitute will be allowed. Their decision will be final. If the request is approved, the remaining qualifier may select a new partner, who will be fully eligible to play in the National Final stage. The new partner must meet all of the eligibility requirements of this event. The replacement may not appreciably strengthen or weaken the partnership.

### **Flights**

At the District Final, each flight plays separately. Each flight requires at least five pairs (2.5 tables) to be considered “viable”. In flights B and C, if between one and four pairs register to play, all such pairs will be considered qualified to play at the NABC upon payment of the District’s entry fee. If fewer than five pairs register in either (or both) of the Championship Flight or Flight A, those two flights may be combined. This combined flight is not stratified for masterpoint purposes; awards are as per the Championship Flight. The combined field is ranked, with the top three pairs qualifying for the NABC in the Championship Flight. The top three Flight A-eligible pairs qualify for the NABC in Flight A; any such pair which also qualifies in the Championship Flight must declare in which flight they choose to advance.

Districts which have historically attracted low attendance in Flight A may wish to schedule the Championship Flight and Flight A concurrently to allow for a combined field.

Only in the event of multiple flights not being viable should the District Final run as a fully-stratified event. Pairs earning NABC qualification in multiple flights must declare in which flight they choose to advance.

## INFORMATION FOR CLUBS

Club qualifying is in June, July, and August. Each club may run up to two NAP qualifying games per month for each of their scheduled weekly sessions. Both face-to-face and virtual (VACB) clubs may run NAP qualifying games. Players in club qualifying games need not be ACBL members, but only players who are current ACBL members may advance to the next stage of the competition.

Most club qualifying games will be fully-stratified games. Clubs **MUST** use strat limits of Unlimited/3000/NLM 750 for a stratified game. Strats are based on the player with the most masterpoints, NOT the pair average. Stratified games use the Open Convention Chart.

Clubs may also offer fully-flighted games, with each flight playing separately. Clubs need not offer all four flights in every session; for example, sessions which are normally a limited game may choose to offer only Flight C. Flighted games are NOT stratified within the flights, with one exception: a Flight C game playing separately may be stratified using whatever limits the club deems appropriate, provided that the top strat is NLM 750. Lower strats in such a game award black points only and do not impact qualification for further stages.

Flighted games use the Convention Chart appropriate for their flight: Open+ in the Championship flight, Open in Flight A, and Basic+ in Flights B and C. Club qualifying games award 50% Red, 50% Black masterpoints. See the District section (above) for information on table fees.