

From the President

## **WE ARE CLOSING DOWN FACE TO FACE ONCE AGAIN!**

I am sorry that I have to report to everyone that we are shutting down all Face to Face games that we were attempting to open back up with immediate effect and until further notice. This means that those of you who had already made reservations to play in the coming days will not now be able to do so.

Additionally any classes that we had scheduled in the immediate future will not be run in a Face to Face manner. Alternative arrangements for these may be made and if so those involved will be informed via email communications.

This is a decision that the Board is taking based upon several known facts. Firstly, the newest variant of the COVID virus is proving to be more contagious and more efficient at spreading itself, and (most importantly), even making inroads into the population of people that had already received full vaccination.

On Friday of last week, Florida saw its highest daily number of newly confirmed cases since the pandemic began and accounts right now for one fifth of all new cases across the United States.

The ACBL has responded to the latest surge in numbers by cancelling all Sanctioned Tournaments that were due to be played throughout the month of August.

And finally, there is a growing number of people living in The Villages that are known to members who have now contracted the virus despite having been fully vaccinated previously.

While it appears that there is evidence that those who have been fully vaccinated are less likely to become seriously ill, or be at risk of dying from the virus, we still have a lot of people in The Villages who, for various reasons have not had their vaccinations. Across Europe, and elsewhere, almost 100% of those who are very sick, hospitalized, or who are dying have come from the unvaccinated population.

At this time there remains much uncertainty as to the possible long term effects if you become ill from contracting COVID, or what part vaccinated people may be playing in the spread of the disease amongst the unvaccinated population.

For all of these reasons, the Board is taking this precautionary step and it will continue to monitor events as closely as possibly with a view to once again opening up when it is felt safer to do so than right now.

We are very aware that this decision will not be to everyone's liking. But we believe this action is necessary to protect our members, many of whom are at a stage in their lives where they are most vulnerable to complications should they become sick.

Meanwhile, we will reschedule those online games that were cancelled previously when we were moving towards F2F games. A new schedule will be posted to the website as soon as possible.

Finally, as we know there are some of our members who choose not to receive this email, nor look at the website on a regular basis, I would ask that if you know of anyone who may be in that category you might call them to let them know of this decision to help them avoid a wasted journey to one of the centers that would have been holding a F2F game had this not happened.

Please bear with us, have patience and understand that what we are doing is attempting to protect against, and avoid sickness or long term problems for all of our members. We all wish for this situation to improve and for us to be able to return to more normal times and the Board of Directors share that wish alongside everyone else. But our first and foremost duty to you all is to make sure that our activities are conducted in as safe and secure a manner as possible. That is the driving force behind this move.

Bob Matthews