



AMERICAN CONTRACT BRIDGE LEAGUE

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March 28, 2007

St. Louis Spring Board Meetings

The playing areas - NABC+ events in the hotel ballrooms and Regional events across the street in a huge convention centre - were both excellent. The evening hospitality was substantial and appreciated by the players. A nice St. Louis Arch T-shirt was awarded as a section top prize. Nashville in July and San Francisco in November are two great destinations. Make plans now to attend at least one of these great tournaments.

A. Financial Issues

Accurate forecasting and budgeting continues to be a problem for the ACBL. For 2006, the excess of expenses over revenues was \$175,000. This result was \$240,000 worse than the budgeted gain of \$65,000.

In Hawaii, a 2007 budget was approved, predicting a surplus of \$175,000 for 2007. That figure has now been revised downwards to \$36,000.

Nonetheless, the ACBL remains in a very sound financial position. Cash reserves are a record \$7,066,000; current assets \$3,520,000; current liabilities \$1,811,000; current ratio 1.94X; Net Assets \$6,370,000.

The ACBL Treasurer and ACBL Board Finance Committee have been working very hard with management. There has been an internal realignment of responsibilities in Memphis, and the ACBL CEO has assured us that at least one new senior financial position (primarily to work on budgets and forecasting) will be created.

B. Marketing and Juniors

Between 1990 and 2006, the ACBL expenditures per year on marketing and education randomly ranged from as little as \$250,000 to just over \$1,000,000. Regardless of the amount spent, since 1992 the number of new members in any given year has remained relatively consistent: from ten thousand to just under thirteen thousand every year. Since 1994, the number of ACBL junior members has ranged from 586 to 1,158.

In the last five years, there has been a significant increase in the retention rate of new members (50% to 65%) from year one to year two. This is very positive.

ACBL's Director of Marketing, **Linda Granell**, resigned her position, effective January 23, 2007. The ACBL Board Marketing Committee had a productive and freewheeling discussion with ACBL CEO **Jay Baum** over the direction the ACBL should pursue. Jay informed us that he has two distinct options: either to hire a new Director of Marketing, or to outsource well-defined specific marketing programs with clear goals. There are pluses and minuses with both approaches.

The ACBL Junior Committee is reviewing the entire ACBL junior program from top to bottom. The 2007 Chair, **Don Mamula** and his team intend to formulate a long-range plan to present to the ACBL Board by the end of this year.

ACBL members are not only indispensable volunteers, but also a major source for new ideas. If you have any thoughts pertaining to marketing or juniors, please e-mail your suggestions to Jay Baum and/or Don Mamula.

In his front cover editorial "*Go for the Youth*" in the January 2007 edition of the *World Bridge News*, WBF President **Jose Damiani** explained some of the reasons why marketing to youth must be the first priority:

"A matter of numbers: if we do not replenish the Bridge population with youngsters, the game will simply die; although there will always be those in the 60-plus category who take up Bridge when they retire, without significant recruitment of young players, we will not keep pace with numbers we lose to natural causes.

The inevitable competition from other sports both physical and "mind," all of which enjoy a strong base of young participants. Bridge must not accept a characterization as an activity reserved for older people.

Our own image and real development: if we cannot attract young people to our sport, we will never be a vibrant part of modern society, and Bridge will merit the neglect and limited respect of the media."

C. Board Actions From St. Louis

1. The ACBL policy for NAP reimbursement was revised. The major change is a philosophical one: previously, the reward for winning the NAP was a free trip (travel and accommodations) to the national final. The new policy gives cash awards. Carried 13-12 (the only 13-12 vote all week). I voted no because I believe the philosophical change is significant. That said, the new rules will make it much easier for ACBL management to administer, and the ACBL Board ensured that the changes would be revenue neutral (although there will be individual financial winners and losers that will balance out). Here are the new rules:
 - a). First place qualifiers will receive \$700 per person, second place \$300. Third place shall be invited to participate in the national level finals, but shall not receive any prize.
 - b). In Districts with four qualifiers, first and second will receive \$700 per person, third place \$300. Fourth place shall be invited to participate in the national level finals, but shall not receive any prize.
 - c). Invited defenders shall receive \$700 per person.
 - d). The monetary reward will be available on site. Qualifiers must play in the national final until eliminated in order to receive the award.
 - e). There will be no entry fee for the national level of the event.
2. The creation of the **Albert H. Morehead** Library Foundation was approved. The non-profit tax-exempt foundation will exist for the purposes of:
 - a). Acquiring, preserving, interpreting, and exhibiting objects and materials related to bridge.
 - b). Identifying and recognizing those who have made significant contributions to bridge.
 - c). Serving as the North American repository for objects and materials related to bridge.
 - d). Engaging in fundraising activities to support the above purposes.
3. The maximum duration of a Regional was changed from 6 to 6.5 days. In addition, a one session event that is run for the ACBL Charity Foundation, ACBL Educational Foundation, the Junior Fund, International Fund, or the Canadian equivalent of these, may be scheduled the afternoon before the start of a 6.5 day Regional.

4. Previously, players were allowed to request a **one-time only** exemption to play in the Blue Ribbon Pairs. The new regulations allow ACBL members who do not otherwise qualify to request an exemption from the ACBL Chief Tournament Director in writing. Carried 15-9 (1 absent). I voted in favour. One example is that this change will allow non-resident ACBL members (with limited opportunities to acquire Blue Ribbon Q's) to play in the event if their level of expertise so dictates. Note: the above change does NOT apply to the 0-5000 Blue Ribbon Pairs.
5. A motion to establish May as Educational Foundation Month that would have allowed clubs to hold Educational Foundation games consistent with all other special club games failed 8-16 (1 absent). I voted in favour. Some felt that since the Educational Foundation has a checkoff box for donations on the ACBL membership renewal form, in addition to being the beneficiary of the Thursday evening game at all NABCs, a special month was not required. It should be noted that a club has the option to name the Educational Foundation as its designated charity when holding a club charity game.
6. A motion to replace the June Worldwide Bridge Contest (sponsored by the WBF) with an ACBL-sponsored game failed 10-14 (1 absent). I voted against. While the popularity of the worldwide game has fallen slightly, it remains a viable option for ACBL clubs and players. In addition, I firmly believe that working together with the WBF is to the ACBL's long-term advantage.
7. Eligibility rules for the GNT event were revised. The concept that you must play in the District that you reside in remains; however, it was recognized that exceptions may be granted in three situations:
 - a). "Snowbirds". Any member with seasonal residences who spends more than half of the GNT qualifying period (Sept. 1 – Feb. 28) in a district other than the district of his principal physical residence may play in the district of season residence.
 - b). A player who lives near district borders and who is a member of a unit in a district in which he does not reside may seek to play in the district in which he has a unit membership. Such a player must have been an active member of the unit in the district in which he wishes to play for at least five years continuously prior to the start of the competition in the year in which he wishes to play, and must not have played in the GNT in another district for that period of time.
 - c). A player with multiple domiciles should apply to the Credentials Committee for a one-time choice of district in which he wishes to play. A player may be asked to document his time in each of his residences. A player must live at least three months each year in a district in order to have it considered a possibility.

E. Masterpoint Review Committee

The ACBL reviews the masterpoint formula every five years. The ACBL Masterpoint Review Committee, chaired by **Rich DeMartino**, started working in 2006. It presented a preliminary report to us in St. Louis. Firm proposals will be voted upon in July (first reading). Second reading will be in the fall, and implementation will be January 1, 2008.

I believe the committee has been doing outstanding work. Here are some of the preliminary highlights:

1. NABC events: Overall masterpoints will be awarded to all pairs that qualify for the finals of the 6 session LM Pairs and Blue Ribbon Pairs.
2. KO events: A new formula for overall awards will be based on a **strength of field** formula, rather than the number of overall tables in the event.
3. Brackets with 12-16 teams: They will receive full overall awards. For brackets with 9-11 teams, awards will be at 85%.

4. Match awards in KO's: A new formula is being proposed that will slightly increase the award for winning the first match, decrease the award for winning the second match, and then slightly increase the award for winning the semi-final and final.
5. Two session pair games: It will be proposed that awards for 5th overall and lower be increased (more places, higher awards).
6. Swiss teams: The match awards will increase from .36 to .43 for Fl. A & X in Regionals; .26 to .31 for Sectionals.
7. Clubs: All special event games will be limited to some maximum overall award (either 6 or 8 masterpoints based on a maximum of 28 tables).
8. The maximum award for a regular club game will increase from 1.5 to 2.5 masterpoints. It would require a 25 table game to reach the maximum.

F. Memphis Office

It is expected that the sale of the Memphis office will be finalized as of this Friday, March 30, 2007. However, the ACBL will remain as tenants for 18 to 24 months. The ACBL Real Estate Committee is working to come up with recommendations as to where and when the ACBL should relocate.

At this time, I have no idea if the head office will remain in the Memphis area, or move to another part of North America. One downside is that the uncertainty affects the ACBL employees, and at the same time makes it difficult to attract and hire new personnel.

G. Miscellaneous

Andy Pedersen's long-anticipated documentary, "*The Secret World of Professional Bridge*," featuring **Gavin Wolpert** and **Vincent Demuy**, will air on CTV on Saturday, April 7, 2007 at 7 p.m. Try to tune in if you can.

Thanks to all of the volunteers at our clubs, sectionals, regionals and to those who serve on various bridge boards. You keep the game going. Keep up the great work.

All the best in bridge.

Dick

Dick Anderson
District 18 rep on ACBL Board of Directors