

MANAGEMENT REPORT
January 2008

To: ACBL Board of Directors

cc: Linda Mamula
Peter Rank

From: Jay Baum, CEO
ACBL

Date: January 2008

2007 = A VERY GOOD YEAR!

MEMBERSHIP:

2007 membership finished with an increase of 983 members. The number of active unpaid LM only increased by 21, a very significant number. New members in 2007 increased by 240 versus 2006.

http://web2.acbl.org/bb/bod/ActiveMembership12_07.pdf

TOURNAMENT DIVISION:

2007 tournament tables surpassed the previous high mark set in 2004 in spite of 5,000 fewer NABC tables. Regional counts were particularly impressive, topping 176,000 tables, the third highest total on record. The 1,491 tables per regional set a new high that will be a challenge to meet. Sectionals and STaCs both had small gains with tables per tournament remaining flat.

<http://web2.acbl.org/bb/bod/1991-2007TC.PDF>

http://web2.acbl.org/bb/bod/2006_2007tc.PDF

FINANCE:

Final 2007 financial numbers will be available in Detroit.

LAS VEGAS NABC:

The local committee for Las Vegas has opted for 24 board sessions for all regionally rated events. This will be well advertised in the Bulletin and in our promotional flyers.

EDITORIAL:

There were some printing problems with the January issues -- some with duplicate pages or missing pages. It is the second occurrence in the past three months. Quebecor World in Covington TN have been alerted and are taking this very seriously. They have assigned extra personnel to the binding process for the next issue and are investigating what went wrong. They plan to compensate the ACBL for the postage for replacement issues and other expenses.

We have also been advised that Bulletin costs will increase approximately \$2,500 per month due to paper cost increases.

EDUCATION:

The teacher manuals for the first three courses (Bidding, Play of the Hand, Defense) are all available for free download at the ACBL web site. The contents for all three texts have been sent to Baron Barclay for printing and the first two texts are now available. The Defense text will be available in about a month. We are working on the updates for the two convention books at this time.

The National Open Pairs at the first Youth NABC in Atlanta this summer has a sponsor. Baron Barclay Bridge Supply is providing \$2,000 in scholarship funds to the winners of the pairs event, which has been renamed the Baron Barclay National Youth Pairs. Each member of the winning pair will receive a \$1,000 scholarship. More information will be available at on our web site.

CLUBS:

We are sending a second notice of the changes in the masterpoint plan to club managers this week. They were notified in November that the changes were included in ACBLscore Version 7.5 or later.

Online clubs hosted nearly 340,000 sanctioned tables in 2007. December saw tables reach nearly 35,000. We have no reason to believe this trend will not continue.

Final 2007 table counts will not be available until after Detroit, however, given our reported numbers we will achieve the 3,000,000 table number with a few thousand

extra. Based on the data available, we believe this will be the first time ACBL has reached this level of sanctioned tables.

ELECTRONIC SCORING:

We have heard from a few clubs that have now purchased some electronic scoring systems and are very pleased with the product. There are still a few minor glitches that need to be corrected. There is a third manufacturer who has not released their product. We would like to see that in operation as well as a comparison of price points. Our expectation is to include dollars in the 2009 capital budget for the purchase of enough to use in some major pair event.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

We are developing a motion with the Senior TD staff to address the issue of electronic devices. This will be in the journal and will allow time for discussion prior to the board meeting.

LEGAL ISSUES:

We have retained a law firm in Connecticut to assist in the defense of the lawsuit that was filed in November. The firm is a Philadelphia Insurance recommended firm. Portions of the enormous legal costs will be covered by insurance. However, ACBL will be liable for a substantial portion.

SITE VISITS:

I visited Orlando the first week in January and will visit Atlanta next week. The Dallas visitation is scheduled for early February.

SCREENS, CAMERAS, RECORDER SYSTEM QUESTIONS:

- 1. What are the current ACBL policies regarding when screens are to be used in ACBL events?** Management is committed to adhering to the CoC that have been approved by the BoD as circumstance dictate.
- 2. How many screens do we currently have?** We own 72 screens.
- 3. What are management's plans for the 2008 NABCs regarding the use of screens?** In so far as possible, Management will continue to use screens in a

manner dictated by the CoC. Should the BoD wish to investigate increased use of screens some factors that will need to be considered are:

1. What is the appearance to others when they discover that screens are used increasingly?
2. Space considerations are a primary consideration, Do we contractually have or are we able to obtain sufficient space to increase the number of tables using screens? Future contracts will be affected and current contracts may have to be renegotiated. It takes approximately 200% - 400% more sq. ft for a screened table as opposed to a non-screen table. In addition, if screens are to be used when the attendance is unknown (i.e. at the first session), we may be limited in accommodating considerably more tables than predicted.
3. Cost effectiveness will have to be considered as, depending upon the extent of use, cost of transportation and setup could be increased markedly. This includes moving tables after the initial setup. In addition, cost of space may be increased and we may be limiting the venues that could contain an NABC at one site.

As an example, if we had used screens in all sessions of NABC+ events, the San Francisco NABC would not have been contained in the Marriott. We would have had to have additional space for several days.

4. **What are the current ACBL policies regarding playing conditions for NABC+ events at NABCs?** We attempt to provide the best space to NABC+ events taking into account the space necessary for all events. Preliminary arrangements, based upon estimates, are made to place each event in each session in appropriate space given the starting time and type of event. Sometimes, as we saw in San Francisco, estimates are incorrect and on the spot accommodation have to be made and the preliminary mapping revised so that all participants will be able to enjoy the tournament as much as possible. Even when the overall estimate for a session may be relatively correct, the attendance in each event may cause participants to move from one playing area to another. Sometimes participants play in an NABC+ event rather than a regional event and vice versa.
5. **What is the current status of the ACBL cameras used to monitor players and the playing areas at NABCs? How often are they being used?** Some of the current cameras are in need of repair and refurbishing. The firm that we dealt with when that part of the system was purchased and which designed the system is no longer in business. We had originally planned on purchasing additional and improved equipment. Some cameras are still being used routinely; however, these cameras do not have sufficient magnification for really close surveillance.
6. **What are management's plans to purchase and use new monitoring and recording equipment in 2008?** After extensive review, management now believes it would be best to employ a firm to do video surveillance. Arrangements have been concluded to use a firm in Detroit for video surveillance and

monitoring. If the Detroit video surveillance and monitoring by this firm is acceptable to ACBL, we have an option to sign an additional agreement covering the other two NABCs in 2008.

There are several advantages to using a firm rather than using our own equipment and personnel.

1. We do not have to be concerned with maintenance and shipping or degradation due to shipping.
2. ACBL personnel, other than those involved in an investigation, would have no access as to the identity of a specific pair or person being monitored as the firm will take care of setup and operation with the guidance of the investigation team.
3. There would be an operator on-site with professional expertise rather than having untrained personnel try to work out problems with the equipment.

Previous recorders were unable to eliminate rumors of cheating even after the recorder had satisfied himself (after investigation without confirming evidence of cheating) that pairs about whom there was rumor, innuendo and unofficial reports were not cheating. While there are no set procedures in place and there never have been with regard to investigations, each investigator known to us (Rich Colker, Ralph Cohen, and others) has used pretty much the same methodology.

Without naming names, some reports of alleged unethical actions have been addressed and there has been success in eliminating behavior that gave the appearance of cheating whether there was cheating or not. We say success because although these cases were not public, comments from players who had originally complained or who had become aware of the issue from other sources had commented that the pair was no longer as successful or no longer behaving as though they were cheating.

As we have seen from San Francisco, rumors and innuendo about pairs or teams who are successful, especially those not from ACBL-land, will continue to abound. Even after investigations are made and no cheating is discovered, since there is no way to publish the results of that investigation, rumors continue and probably would even if the results of the investigation were known. Further, just because an investigation does not unearth evidence of wrong doing, the pairs may still be monitored from time to time as circumstances permit - i.e. most investigations are never completely closed when suspicion remains.

Presently, there are pairs that are being monitored from time to time as the recorder has received and continues to receive off the record reports. They are monitored by someone who would not be suspected by the subjects and by tournament directors in an unobtrusive manner as well as video surveillance when available. No evidence of wrongdoing has been observed yet.

We do not know what sort of oversight and monitoring Jonathan would propose. If he or anyone else wants to present some definite procedure, it would be discussed and

considered. It is the recorders current practice to consult with League Counsel, in particular, and ethical and expert players on a confidential basis when a claim of unethical conduct is being reviewed or investigated. I am always kept apprised, in a general way, of situations that could become public and/or charges made to the EOC..

7. **What is the current status of the ACBL Recorder System? What are the problems? How can it be improved?** If this is meant to address the global recorder system, we are slightly improved. The fact is that all units do not have a recorder. Most districts have a recorder. Very few units and districts forward "recorded" reports to Memphis to be placed in the ACBL database as the recorder regulations suggest/require. The ones that do are the ones that have recorders who have been in that position for several years and have had the opportunity to consult with the ACBL recorder directly.

The system is working fine as those units and districts that do not have a knowledgeable recorder seldom have an issue to address. When they do, they usually call and get one on one advice.

The same is true for most volunteer positions concerning discipline. Some unit or districts may have had no disciplinary complaints with which to deal for years and when they do are unprepared. Most call and are guided through the process. Some turn it over to an oldtimer who handles it as it would have been handled 20 years ago. Sometimes these cases do not turn out so well.

We have tried to establish a recorder's forum with scant success.

We have lots of information on the ACBL web site, which when it is read, has drawn excellent reviews.

We have e-mailed.

We have spoken on the telephone.

We have had seminars. The one in San Francisco had only two people attend.

The recorder system ACBL-wide is reasonable considering that this is a volunteer position. No one, volunteer or not, really wants to have to continually address bad conduct or ethics. If there are a lot of complaints, resolving these tends to be depressing for our volunteers.

At an NABC, the recorder system is better than it has been. This is because each report received is usually addressed as the procedures indicate. The subject is found at the tournament or talked to after the tournament. The reporter usually receives a message that the player memo has been addressed and whether it has been recorded. Jim Miller has been added as an assistant recorder which has proven to make the system more efficient. It could be improved if people would call a tournament director to the table for bad behavior and the behavior dealt with by the director rather than waiting until after the event to submit a player memo. In that way, the reports that reach the recorder would be decreased and the others would be addressed and resolved with all the parties present at

the time. This would also leave the recorder more time to deal with allegations of unethical conduct.

Most reports of unethical behavior are vague. Even those that have been specific have not been confirmed by investigation - yet.

As far as improvement:

BoD members could speak to unit and district organizations to:

- a. Ask unit and district recorders to forward "recorded" memos to Memphis to be placed in the database.
- b. Encourage units and districts to appoint recorders and have each recorder review the material on the web site - the regulations, the flow chart, etc. At least review it when a player memo is submitted before the recorder investigates and resolves the submission.
- c. Encourage recorders to call or e-mail any questions to the ACBL recorder.
- d. Ask each unit and district tournament manager to confirm with the DIC of the tournament to whom player memos are to be given.

Perhaps it would be wise to turn the unit recorder into a recorder/ombudsman. If a unit member had a complaint or problem, the recorder/ombudsman could call Headquarters to get help in having the issue addressed properly. We have several good unit recorders who have prosecuted cases at the unit level.

The same is true for other disciplinary matters. Unit and District presidents should review the material on the web page about handling complaints as should unit and district disciplinary chairmen. At a minimum, it is better for the president to call about proper procedures about how to handle rather than to proceed if any of the procedures are in doubt.

8. **Does management foresee any changes in 2008 relating to the Recorder system?** No. Management plans to make a presentation to the board in Detroit and will ask for any questions that will help the board better understand the procedures.