

DISTRICT 5 DIRECTOR'S REPORT
FINAL REPORT
APRIL 5, 2022
BRIAN R. ELLIS

This is my final report. A few things were done well, in my opinion. Unfortunately, many things were done either poorly or not done at all.

The one best thing to happen is still in process. Cheating cases are expected to be shifted to arbitration with expert players and to no longer be in the jurisdiction of the Appeals and Charges Committee of the Board of Directors.

Also, some things were helped by the Finance Committee. The results for 2018 were awful. I suggested, privately to the Finance chair, that we could do a better job of matching expenses to related revenues. Some changes have been made, which are now in place, and the accounting is improved.

There is more which was favorable, but these items were relatively minor and I have no comment here.

MEMBERSHIP DECLINE

This has been an ongoing subject. The Board's Strategic Committee made this its major issue in 2020, my second year on the Board. The idea was to look for ways to interest people in duplicate bridge. In retrospect, I view this as primarily a marketing issue, with the Board serving in an oversight capacity.

I now think that we should look at this from what ACBL is selling at least as much as what members are buying. There are 4 distinct goods and/or services which ACBL sells. One is a

graduated structure of duplicate bridge games/tournaments. Another is a graduated structure of master points. And another is the monthly bulletin, a magazine which in my opinion alone is worth the membership dues or more. The fourth is directors for tournaments and headquarters staff. There is a fifth item which has not received adequate research. This is whether, and if so, how, to better integrate online duplicate bridge with our tournament structure. This is perhaps the most important issue facing ACBL and has had very little consideration by the board.

I see another issue which is related to membership. I believe that the board should always have a spreadsheet which shows how much and how often the members play and also the levels (club, sectional, regional, national) at which they play. And now we would also like to know how many play on BBO or other platforms, and the frequency thereof. These are significant matters for both the board and management to have a good working knowledge.

MASTER POINTS

There is, or has been, a master point committee which at least in part has dealt with some inequities. I believe that a much broader outlook is called for.

There are club games which offer points for overalls which equal and sometimes exceed the points for sectional overalls. This seems wrong to me.

We need to look at the overall master point structure. It would also be good to know what impact, if any, bonus points have on attendance. These bonus points have at least some result of cheapening points won in the past when there were few bonuses.

The color scheme also poses some questions. How many members quit attending tournaments once they reach the life master goal? What percentage of membership has little or no interest in master points? Does travel, and the expenses that are part of travel, have an impact on tournament play?

NABC'S

NABC's are expensive. The parts of the country with lesser incomes may result in members having to decide which activities to decline. If I, with my wife, attend an NABC, the cost can easily reach 5,000 or more if staying at a host hotel, playing in national events as much as possible, and having a couple of nice dinners. I normally play one event with my wife and other events with other partners.

Also, the entire air travel experience is less than pleasant. Masking may be temporary, but sitting in baggage class is terrible, especially for larger people. Changing planes, especially in large airports, can be a trying matter. Many of my recent NABC's have resulted in a substantially lost day in each direction.

Membership continues to age and only a limited number can chase elusive national event goals. At \$60 per day, or more if the screens portion of the event is reached, this is a cost level which some members will decline. Some will opt for club games or BBO games for their bridge fix.

RESTRUCTURING

To call this restructuring abominable would, in my opinion, be charitable. And this has nothing to do with my losing a seat on the board. While a smaller board which deals with fewer issues may be a good thing, there are at least two significant flaws with the result here.

First, nothing has been done to increase the skill set of the board. Skills are improving in a negative way in that fewer matters require the attention of the board. However, over the years, the board has made a number of meaningful errors. The board is normally composed of bridge players who are popular in their district and who frequently have shown some administrative skills. However, big picture items have seldom been at the forefront of board activities. It seems that there should be a better way.

Second, the primary feature of the restructuring is the implicit endorsement of rigged elections. In some cases, two districts have been paired to elect one board member. Many of these cases involve one district having double, or even more, members than the smaller district. The smaller district will seldom elect a member to the board. And the paired districts need not have anything in common except shared borders which in some cases are nominal. What will a board member do when his or her district has conflicting interests with the smaller district?

Another question which could be asked relates to the composition of the restructuring committee. How many on the committee have relatively safe seats as a result of the restructuring?

The board may have voted to approve this restructuring, but the actual vote did not make it into the bulletin and neither were pros and cons in the bulletin. For me this is a very poor performance.

SUMMARY

While the board did some things well during my three year term, I believe that things could have been much better. Good luck to the new board and I hope that the smaller districts will be treated fairly when overall issues are considered.